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# The Lake Report

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



Speed cam coming | Page 5

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Canada's most-awarded community newspaper

May 8, 2025

## Strong mayor powers 'still a democratic process'

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The province's "strong mayor powers" have now come into effect for Niagara-on-the-Lake and its lord mayor, after councillors voted against rejecting them in a split vote last Tuesday night.

During the April 29 council meeting, councillors voted 5-4 against a motion brought forth by Coun. Sandra O'Connor, requesting that the province rescind the powers for NOTL.

Speaking on her motion, O'Connor quoted the mayor of Newmarket, John Taylor, who said the powers would show the province trusts the mayor's opinion more than that of other councillors in a municipality.

"This power is not needed to fulfil council's duty," she said.

NOTL would not be alone in rescinding the powers, O'Connor added.

"Nine other municipalities passed motions already,

*Continued on Page 2*

## Muddy mess closes tulip farm

Rain and traffic complaints force operation to shut down for a day



Tours of TASC tulip farm were rained out as visitors' vehicles got stuck in the mud and had to be pushed or dragged out. Heavy traffic was also a problem, sparking anger from residents who live nearby and apologies from the owners of the operation. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Andrew Hawlitzky | The Lake Report

April showers brought trouble to a Niagara-on-the-Lake tulip farm's May flowers, as their opening weekend devolved into a muddy, gridlocked headache for its staff

and many, many visitors.

A five-hour traffic jam stretching 2.6 kilometres along Line 3 Road paralyzed access to the TASC Tulip Pick Farm on Saturday.

The traffic situation worsened after heavy rain flooded TASC's 20-acre grass parking lot, stranding over 50 vehicles in mud and forcing TASC to close the parking lot completely.

Cars sat bumper-to-bumper on May 3 from Concession 2 to Four Mile Creek Road after the farm closed its waterlogged lot at

*Continued on Page 4*

## Hotel tax will fund \$1.32 million reconstruction of Mississagua Street

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

For the next two years, NOTL residents can expect major upgrades to the roads and places tourists

and locals use every day, including the \$1.32 million reconstruction of one of Old Town's main roads, thanks to \$1.71 million in funds from the town's hotel tax.

Over the past three years, tourists have

brought more than \$4.46 million into Niagara-on-the-Lake through its municipal accommodation tax, with half of it going to the municipality itself, after administration costs. Now, the town has de-

cided how its share of that money will be spent.

The municipal accommodation tax, which started in 2022, adds a fee to hotels, motels, inns, resorts, cottages, villas, country inns and vacation rentals, cur-

rently at four per cent.

The town will use its funds to improve roads, sidewalks, travel direction signs, parks and public washrooms, said Kyle Freeborn, the town's treasurer, in an email to The Lake Report.

From now until 2027, all of the town's share will go toward repairing and upgrading spaces in areas that see heavy tourist traffic, including Mississagua

*Continued on Page 3*



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# Zalepa votes to **keep** strong mayor powers

Continued from Front Page

rejecting the strong mayor power," she said.

These strong mayor powers, rolled out for 169 municipalities across Ontario by the provincial government in early April, came into effect May 1.

They give the lord mayor more control over key parts of municipal governance, allowing him to introduce bylaws that aim to advance provincial priorities, veto council decisions if they interfere with provincial priorities, table the town's budget and hire certain municipal department heads.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita asked Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa how he felt about the powers, but he refused to answer.

"You don't strike me as the type who would take advantage of it," Cheropita said.

In an interview with The Lake Report, Zalepa said that when used properly, the powers give the ability to help move government processes along faster.

For example, rather than waiting for a meeting to bring forth a community

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa was one of five councillors to vote against rejecting the province's "strong mayor powers," which allow the mayor to overturn council decisions that interfere with provincial priorities. FILE

matter to town staff, the mayor can ask staff in writing to investigate something, he said.

"Whatever information they find, they bring back to the committee," Zalepa said.

"At the end of the day, council still makes the decision."

Zalepa was one of the five council members who voted against rejecting the powers, along with Couns. Tim Balasiuk, Andrew Niven, Erwin Wiens and Cheropita. Couns. Gary Burroughs, Maria Mavridis, Adriana Vizzari and Sandra O'Connor voted in favour of rescinding the powers.

Wiens said there are benefits to the strong mayor powers, including budget preparation.

A two-thirds majority vote from council members can overturn a veto used by strong mayor powers, Wiens said.

"What's happened is the process has changed, but it's still a democratic process," he said.

During the discussion about O'Connor's motion, Wiens said he would rather discuss the positions of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Association of Ontario Municipalities before making a "knee-jerk" decision for

Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"I'd like to hear what the rest of the Niagara region mayors are saying," he said.

Cheropita said she agreed with Wiens' feelings.

"I agree with Councillor Wiens just said, about gathering information before making a decision on the fly," she said.

Zalepa told The Lake Report he has meetings scheduled with staff to discuss proper process, before using the powers — if at all.

The powers are available for use, but do not need to be used, Zalepa confirmed.

According to a news release from the province, the expansion of power aims to help deliver on the provincial government's priorities, such as building more homes, transit and infrastructure.

The goal of the powers is to allow mayors, as heads of council, to support government priorities shared by the province and these municipalities.

Before May 1, 47 municipalities had these enhanced powers, which were rolled out in 2022, first for Toronto and Ottawa.

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Looks like **asparagus** is back on the menu, boys



Inside Thwaites Farms' packing plant, workers Joseph Hutchinson, Henry Senior and Rodine Allan sort through just a portion of the 500,000 pounds, or 226,796 kilograms, of asparagus the farm is harvesting and shipping this spring. Known as one of Niagara's earliest crops, asparagus is hand-harvested daily during its short but abundant season, typically lasting from early May to mid-June.

DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Work to begin on **Mississagua Street** in the fall

Continued from Front Page

Street, one of Old Town's most prominent roads. Running through the middle of the settlement at 1.27 kilometres long, visitors and residents regularly use it to get to Queen Street.

"(Municipal accommodation tax) funds will fund the reconstruction of Mississagua Street, including the road, storm and streetlighting infrastructure," he said.

The town has budgeted \$1.32 million for this project, with construction expected to start this fall, he added.

The goal is to spend money on things that will not only improve the visitor experience but will also help manage tourism's impact on the town, minimizing the effects on both residents and the town itself, said Coun. Maria Mavridis in an interview.

General repairs or upgrades, high-risk projects with unclear benefits, or ideas meant to balance taxes or replace existing budget items are not recommended by staff for funding.

"The policies are that it has to be tourism-related," said Mavridis, adding that things which are mainly meant to primarily benefit residents, like a community pool, would not qualify — even if tourists may use it, too.

"One resident's idea was that we get the indoor pool funded through (municipal accommodation) tax. You can't do that," said Mavridis.

As part of this year's budget, council approved \$51,000 of the town's share to help cover the annual debt for the Mississagua Street road reconstruction.

The budget also has \$32,571 to pay for a quarter



Funded by the hotel tax, reconstruction of Mississagua Street is set to start this fall. It will include work on its road, storm and streetlighting infrastructure. PAIGE SEBURN

of the economic development, government relations and tourism budget, including salaries.

NOTL's hotel tax rate started at two per cent in 2022, rose to three per cent in 2024 and hit four per cent this year.

As of the end of last year, the amount made from the tax was \$4.45 million, before administration costs — expenses of running the program, like staff time to collect and manage funds, software, or future audits — according to a Feb. 18 staff summary report.

The tax applies to stays of 28 consecutive days or less in accommodations with five or more rooms to rent, unless exempt, like some bed & breakfast operators.

All the money made from the tax is split between the town and Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake, the municipality's official destination marketing organization, independent from the town, which promotes the area to visitors.

"The hotels are collecting it on behalf of the town, handing it all over to the town, and then the town issues a check for the split — for the shared amount — to whatever entity that we have an agreement with. And right now, it's Tourism NOTL," said Mavridis.

After the split and administration costs, the

town's total as of Dec. 31, 2024 was \$2.21 million. But after using \$500,000 last year for the museum's expansion, \$1.71 million remains — a number that could change after the town finishes its financial auditing for 2024 and finds any figures that haven't been recorded or that need to be changed.

Starting in 2027, the town's portion will then be divided: 20 per cent for repairing and upgrading town spaces with heavy tourist traffic, 20 per cent for grant projects under \$100,000, and 60 per cent for grant projects over \$100,000. Grant applications will open that year.

Community groups, event organizers and town departments can apply, but grant projects must also clearly benefit tourism and align with at least one of the four goals (pillars) outlined in the town's strategic plan — and the new tourism strategy, once it is finalized.

Staff will manage all the funds, subject to council's final approval for spending and approval within the town's budget cycle.

Originally, the municipal accommodation tax committee proposed splitting the funds into 20 per cent, 20 per cent, and 60 per cent right away. But staff recommended allocating all the

money this and next year to town spaces with heavy tourist traffic.

Freeborn explained to council that the town needs more time to figure out how the grant system will work.

But Couns. Wendy Cheropita and Gary Burroughs still raised concerns at the meeting about the future funding split.

Cheropita suggested putting more money toward town spaces with heavy tourist traffic long-term and less toward grants, but council ultimately stuck with the proposed split for 2027.

While the town's share has been set aside for future tourism initiatives until now, Tourism NOTL executive director Kathy Weiss told The Lake Report that its portion is used for advertising and promotion.

This includes a rebrand of its website, which is expected to go live within the next four weeks, she said.

"That was an expensive endeavour," Weiss said. "So we have a marketing plan that we follow."

With all these criteria now approved, staff will report back by July 31 with a list of tourism-related town repairs and upgrades proposed for 2025 and 2026 — and again by Dec. 31 with more details about what resources are needed to roll out the program.

Staff will also create a municipal accommodation tax investment program, which will involve designing rules, setting up grant applications and procedures and informing council of evolving program needs.

To ensure the public keeps benefiting, staff will consider who owns and takes care of any projects funded by this tax in the long run.

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Left: TASC staff help a tulip farm attendee to free his car from the mud as tire spins out. Right: Good Samaritan Evan Agnew-Stewart pulls a white Toyota out of the muddy parking lot as TASC staff help push. The rainy, muddy conditions caused the tulip farm to close early Sunday and invest in hay and mulch to stabilize the parking lot. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

# Traffic turmoil tests tulip farm’s blooming popularity

Continued from Front Page

2:30 p.m., despite forecasts predicting rain would stop by 11 a.m.

Staff barricaded entrances, shouting “We’re closed!” to confused drivers, several of whom demanded refunds. Staff explained to drivers being turned away that their pre-purchased tickets would be valid until May 11 and refunds would be given.

TASC kept the event itself open until about 5:30 p.m. without access to the parking lot, leading people to illegally park on both sides of Line 3, congesting traffic even more as deter-

mined pedestrians walked along the road.

“We relied on a forecast that said rain would end at 11 a.m., but it never stopped,” said Jill McCourt, wife of owner Frank Boendermaker. “We painstakingly tried to make this a great event for everybody, and unfortunately, the rain was something we couldn’t control.”

The misfortune escalated as parked vehicles spun tires in mud, some buried axle-deep.

Evan Agnew-Stewart, an attendee unaffiliated with TASC, used a personal truck to rescue cars.

“The only reason I came

out here was to get my girlfriend, but why not help a couple people out, right?” Agnew-Stewart said.

Agnew-Stewart, whose girlfriend Jessica Lear worked parking duty, got down in the mud to attach his tow strap and got his own truck stuck a few times, to help a few grateful people — one of them thanked him with a tip.

TASC deployed their tractors to tow stranded cars so residents wouldn’t have to rely on tow trucks.

“We don’t want anyone to have to pay for a tow truck, so we’re pulling out the tractors as fast as we can,” said Lear.

Keegan Hill-Brown, who was exiting the event after TASC announced they were closing the parking lot at 2:30 p.m., wished TASC had made the call sooner.

“They could have announced it a bit earlier, just because a lot of friends are having a hard time getting out. Hopefully, we’re not one of them,” Hill-Brown said.

Despite frustrations, many attendees embraced the pandemonium. Local Josy D’Amico, who visited Friday, praised TASC’s setup.

“They had umbrellas, boots, food — it was wonderful. People need to make the best of it and

welcome this to the area,” said D’Amico.

TASC closed Sunday to address the crisis, investing \$30,000 in hay and mulch to stabilize the grass parking lot.

Owner Frank Boendermaker declined to comment on Saturday, but he met with Line 3 neighbours Monday, pledging improved drainage and traffic management.

Residents who attended the meeting say Boendermaker is committed to being a part of the community and listened to residents’ suggestions about improving the traffic and parking to prevent similar situations

from happening again.

One local farmer who attended the meeting acknowledged that the land the parking lot is situated on has about one foot of topsoil, then two layers of clay, making drainage difficult.

The farm reopened Monday with drier conditions.

McCourt emphasized tickets remain valid through May 11, with fall events planned for sunflowers and dahlias. For now, Niagara’s tulip fever continues — rain or shine.

“Mother Nature brought the tulips, and Mother Nature brought the mess,” said McCourt.

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# Region restricts councillors from work-based U.S. travel

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

For the remainder of this year, Niagara Region councillors and staff are not allowed to attend the United States for conferences or trade shows on behalf of the region — whether attending as attendees, presenters or exhibitors.

The motion does not prohibit councillors’ personal travel to the U.S.

The motion, brought forward by Lincoln regional Coun. Robert Foster, and passed Thursday night, will be implemented immediately.

“No discretionary trips for conferences or trade shows are to be made to the U.S. on behalf of the region, be it staff or council, for the remainder of 2025,” said Foster at an April 24 regional council meeting.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said that as a regional council-



Niagara Region councillors are restricted from U.S. travel for conferences and trade shows for the rest of 2025. Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa says he wouldn’t have supported the restriction. FILE PHOTO

lor, he would not advocate for this and as lord mayor, he would not implement anything like this.

“I wouldn’t have done that,” said Zalepa. “I wouldn’t advocate for that.”

Advocacy efforts and government relations opportunities that are “required to advance Niagara in this economic turmoil” may be exempted from the pro-

hibition, according to the motion.

Staff training or education critical to the future of the region, only available in the U.S., may also be exempted.

But all other staff development, training and education will now take place in Canada to save money and support Canadian schools and service providers.

Regional councillors will instead focus on Canadian partnerships that promote collaboration and knowledge-sharing, while any financial savings that come as a result of the motion will go into the region’s reserves to support programs and services aimed at helping during these uncertain economic times.

U.S. President Donald Trump’s threats to Canada’s sovereignty and imposed tariffs were mentioned as one of the threats to Canada’s economic stability at the meeting.

“All of us are hearing the concerns of our communities. Businesses, residents (and) support organizations have all been really clear,” said Foster.

Niagara is especially vulnerable, with 72 per cent of goods produced in Niagara exported to the U.S. and 54 per cent of the region’s input materials imported from the U.S., states the motion.

“We as councillors in the

region need to acknowledge what I refer to as the economic tsunami coming at us,” said Foster.

Zalepa decided not to attend the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative conference in the U.S. this year, but said it was based on the agenda and cost.

“It had nothing to do with, you know, about a ‘right’ — like the region has done. I just don’t think that makes sense,” he said.

Zalepa was a regional councillor from 2018 to 2022 and still is one, due to being lord mayor.

“I don’t remember any time as a regional councillor having to go to a U.S. conference anyway,” he said. “I don’t see it as very consequential at all.”

Zalepa argues that officials should, rather, weigh a trip’s pros and cons and relevance to the municipality before deciding if it’s worthwhile.

“It’s really important for elected people today, right

now, especially at this sensitive time, to really make sure that they evaluate the importance and the benefit of going,” he said.

The goal should be to encourage American visitors to come to Canada, he said.

So he questions how consistent that goal is with restricting elected officials from travelling to the U.S. for business on behalf of the region.

The town’s current policy for attending conferences requires participants to consider the conference’s value to the town.

Zalepa said the policy hasn’t changed in response to tariffs or U.S. threats, nor does he see a need to change it.

“The town’s travel to the United States is pretty limited,” he said.

The other regional councillor that represents NOTL, Andrea Kaiser, was not available for a comment by press time for her thoughts on this decision.

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# Council seeks feedback on NOTL transit costs

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake council is seeking answers regarding the Niagara Regional Transit Commission's ongoing expansion, namely, how much of the regional transit service people in town will be able to access and the cost of the fare for NOTLers.

During Tuesday's committee of the whole planning meeting, councillors discussed Niagara Transit's annual report and commingled stats.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita noted that areas of expansion within Niagara Transit's program do not include NOTL.

Cheropita emphasized the ongoing efforts of representatives to advocate for increased service, particularly to support the town's tourism and business community.

"I just wondered if there was an update we could ask for down the road, that could provide us some answers," she said.

Coun. Maria Mavridis is the council representative for Niagara Transit and mentioned there are four different options being presented at public engagements happening around the region.

"Option three includes expanding bus service to Niagara-on-the-Lake," she said.

"I encourage option three."



Currently, NOTLers who need public transit use Niagara Transit's OnDemand service to get around. Some areas of expansion within Niagara Transit's regional program do not include NOTL, noted Coun. Wendy Cheropita. FILE

Cheropita also raised concerns about the apparent cost imbalance between Niagara-on-the-Lake and other municipalities.

The report notes the cost per ride as \$5.22 for taxpayers.

"Last time I calculated it in Niagara-on-the-Lake

— what we pay and the number of rides — it was \$60 per ride," she said.

Cheropita suggested that NOTL taxpayers may be heavily subsidizing regional transit use elsewhere.

"The fee that we pay is attached to impact home assessments," Cheropita said in an interview.

"We have a higher rate of assessment so as a result we always pay more. It's the same thing with police service."

Mavridis said the average of \$5.22 is the average over all of Niagara Transit.

"I have requested — and maybe we can request again — a breakdown of our services here in Niagara-on-the-Lake and the actual data and numbers," she said.

Council agreed that staff should compile a response to the concerns raised, potentially without requiring a formal presentation from Niagara Transit.

"I would look for solutions, as opposed to just raising concerns," Cheropita said.

Mavridis told The Lake Report that it is important for residents to speak up as Niagara Transit is seeking feedback — and some options do not include NOTL.

Only a few residents showed up at the public engagement forum, she said.

To explore the options and respond to the survey, visit [nrtransit.ca/about-niagara-transit/roadmap/master-plan-project](http://nrtransit.ca/about-niagara-transit/roadmap/master-plan-project).

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# Virgil speed camera in current rotation, but not issuing tickets until 'later' in May

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Starting later this month, drivers going past Crossroads Public School on Niagara Stone Road will need to look out for one of the Niagara Region's automated speed cameras that will be actively recording vehicles going over the legal limit.

The Niagara Region, responsible for its installation, would not confirm the exact date and time the speed cameras would begin issuing tickets, with transportation officer Scott Fraser saying it would begin "later in May," running until late August.

Also being added to the site are flex-post bollards and updated pavement markings. Crews are finishing up their installations and conducting final testing, following which the camera will be ready to go, Fraser said.

This is part of the region's Vision Zero program, which aims to improve road safety. As part of that, the region rotates the placement of speed cameras every 90 days throughout Niagara, placing them in community safety and school zones, to prevent serious collisions.

A sign currently at the site reads "Municipal speed camera in use," but Fraser confirmed the camera is still inactive, though the region's website states the sign indicates active cameras, at [niagararegion.ca/living/roads/vision-zero/automat](http://niagararegion.ca/living/roads/vision-zero/automat)



Despite the sign on Niagara Stone Road that says a municipal speed camera is in use, the Niagara Region says enforcement won't start until later in May. PAIGE SEBURN

[ed-speed-enforcement.aspx](http://ed-speed-enforcement.aspx).

A May 1 news release by the region outlines new safety measures approved by the regional council, stating that during the installation phase, "some signs may read 'In use' as part of the testing process."

It can take two to three weeks to get a speeding camera up and running safely in a new location, he said, adding that the cameras do not switch on or off exactly at the start or end of the month.

Data collected before, during and after installing the speed cameras showed a clear impact on speeding in the region, said Fraser. Average speeds dropped by seven kilometres per hour when cameras were first set up and by nine kilometres per hour once everything

was fully in place.

Speeding violations per hour also dropped by 86 per cent when cameras returned to the same spot a second time and drivers kept speeds low even after cameras were removed, he said.

Drivers are expected to follow the posted speed limit, but the region does build in a buffer of how many kilometres over the posted limit a driver can go before issuing a ticket — but it will not say what it is.

"There's a moderate threshold before a ticket is issued," said Fraser. "But we don't disclose it to avoid suggesting there's an acceptable margin above the speed limit."

The camera only captures rear license plates, he said, adding the region's traffic monitoring shows cameras reduce speeds in both directions, regardless of which way the camera is facing.

New measures aim to make signs and speed limits clearer and more consistent in school and community safety zones, after the region received complaints following the launch of its speed camera program in 2023.

The region will set clear criteria for approved school zones and when speed limits should be lowered, use consistent and constant speed limits at all times of day in most school zones and add better signs and traffic calming tools for safety.

Including NOTL, the region is rolling out these

changes during May in the eight Community Safety Zones as part of this season's rotation.

Residents will see new speed limit signs that apply all day, directly in front of schools in most school zones. Other parts of the zone will keep their regular speed limits.

Crews will also install traffic-calming tools, like flex-post bollards and fresh pavement markings, at these sites.

Fraser confirmed the automated speed enforcement system itself remains unchanged from last year, with "no changes to the equipment or how it operates," he said.

The speed camera on York Road, near St. Davids Public School, is not part of this latest rotation, and Fraser said there is no confirmed date for its return, as construction in the area may affect the schedule.

The Niagara Stone Road and York Road cameras likely would not be active at the same time, he said. The region plans its camera rotation based on geographic coverage, so it typically avoids activating cameras that are close together at the same time.

"But this isn't a firm rule," Fraser said.

This is the first phase of the region's broader road safety plan. Speed limit and sign changes in other community safety zones will continue through 2025 and 2026, Fraser added.

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


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# Removal of ‘wine country’ from tourism vision sparks controversy

Jill Troyer  
The Lake Report

NOTL has a new tourism strategy, approved by council on April 29, but not everyone is popping champagne to celebrate. Various people, from Tourism NOTL, the wine industry, and some councillors have expressed serious concerns about a change in wording.

The differences of opinion centre around the use of the term “Wine Country” in the original vision statement. The original vision reads: “Niagara-on-the-Lake is an extraordinary wine country destination, known for its natural beauty, and unrivalled cultural experiences.”

The vision was revised by staff, following comments from at least one councillor, Coun. Sandra O’Connor, who says, “I definitely suggested the vision be changed. We need to address more comprehensively all we have to offer.”

“Wine country is too



Some people aren’t happy the Town of NOTL has removed the term “wine country” from its tourism strategy, in favour of a more diverse description. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

limiting, it is important, but so is our heritage,” she adds. “We were the first capital, we had the war of 1812, only NOTL has the best soil for tender fruit, so (saying) food and wine is more representative.”

The revised vision statement, which was approved by council, reads: “Niagara-on-the-Lake is an extraordinary destination, known

for its natural beauty, food and wine, and unrivalled cultural experiences.”

Tim Jennings, executive director of the Shaw Festival, wrote to council to explain his concerns prior to the vote.

In his view, “It’s a significant shift. I think it reduces the effectiveness of the brand framework. I think we have a really clear

specialty in this region.” “Everybody has the other things, but we have a very mature wine district, which is very unusual,” he adds. “We use it in our marketing when we say ‘great theatre in the heart of Niagara wine country.’ It’s part of the package.”

Jennings says he asked council and staff “to bring forward data to show why they were making this recommendation against the suggestion of both the volunteer committees and the paid consultant they hired.”

Arterra Wines’ vice president of corporate affairs, Del Rollo, says it’s “unfortunate wine country was removed.”

“It’s an all-encompassing term that draws in consumers and tourists, it evokes an emotional response,” he adds. “It tells a story, and it’s not only about wine, it’s about the type of experience people will have.”

One of the three councillors who voted against

approving the strategy with the revised vision was Coun. Wendy Cheropita, who has extensive experience in marketing and tourism.

She argues, “Wine country is part of the romance that draws people here, it’s about the place, the people, that feeling you get when you come off the QEW and see the vineyards spread out.”

“If you’ve got wine country, you leverage that, and use it to bring attention to all the amazing experiences we have, like the amazing artist studios, live theatre, history and heritage, wellness and spas and trails,” she adds. “It was focused on getting people to experience more, stay longer, and spend more.”

O’Connor points out that even though wine country isn’t in the revised vision, “it shouldn’t be a problem to use wine country in marketing.”

Rollo says while he wishes the decision didn’t go this way, “it won’t impede

us, as an industry we will continue to promote wine country, which we see as an all-inclusive term.”

“I do think more of us will in the larger tourism operators will lean into what we already know is the right choice but what that means to us is that we’re not totally in alignment with the town’s plan,” said Jennings.

For him, “the proof will be in the pudding. One thing that’s really lovely about this process of the towns accepting something is if it’s not working, we can go back and ask them to re-examine it.”

He says, “I’m strongly in favour of them getting the chance to show us that this is going to work great, and if it doesn’t, I’m strongly in favour of coming back and saying, ‘Remember, we said there was a problem, here it is.’ Let’s take a year and give them a shot and see how the staff are able to actualize this plan, and then we can all celebrate.”

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ISSUE 7

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

A GUIDE FOR DISTINGUISHED EXPLORERS

NOTL

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The Lake Report

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# NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

## IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER 0.18 AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LANDS AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

**TAKE NOTICE** that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake intends to designate the property at **167 FOUR MILE CREEK ROAD, THE BLACK HOUSE (Part Lot 91, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Township, ON)** as a property of cultural heritage value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter 0.18.

**Description of Property**

The subject property is located on 167 Four Mile Creek Road and is known as the Black House. The subject land is located east of Four Mile Creek Road with a moderate setback. The residence is set on a decent sized parcel which is flat towards the west of the parcel but slopes down towards the east, which is the rear of the property. The landscaping on the subject property includes a few trees towards the front and rear. The access to the residence is directly from Four Mile Creek Road through a paved pedestrian walkway and a separate gravel driveway.

**Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest**

The property known as the Black House has cultural heritage value or interest for its design and physical values, its historical and associative values and its contextual values.

The residential structure on 167 Four Mile Creek Road is a representative example of the Queen Anne Revival style with influences from the Italianate style. The one and a half storey detached dwelling was constructed in 1902 and has a T-shaped plan. The subject property features a slightly asymmetrical façade with a tower protruding out on the façade, a central entrance and a pair of double windows on either side of the entrance. The façade also contains a covered porch with a pediment, which is supported on wooden posts and wooden railings. The frieze detail on the porch features a wooden cornice with dentils and pairs of wooden brackets. The main construction material of the residence is natural Queenston cement with partial stucco finish. Apart from the stucco finish, the central tower, side gables and dormers on the side elevations are clad in fish-scale and cedar shake shingles respectively. Black House also contains a complex roofline with the central tower having a steeply pitched hipped roof and the main structure of the residence with a cross-gable roof with gable ends on both the side elevations as well as the rear elevation. The gable ends feature moulded fascia with dentils. The overhanging eaves in the roofline contains wooden cornice with dentils and pairs of wooden brackets. The house has a bay window on the south elevation with a mansard roof, topped off with metal cresting detail. The window openings in the subject property range from segmentally arched openings on the first storey to rectangular vertical openings on the second storey. The windows on the first storey contain plain wooden trim within the structural openings of the windows with plain concrete lug sills. The windows on the second storey, on the other hand, contain plain wooden trim on the outside of the structural window openings with wooden slip sills.

The Black House displays a high degree of physical value as being an early example of poured concrete construction in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Research into the construction methodology indicates that floor joists were set on ledgers, and then cast into the concrete for all the floors. This method of construction varied from the general wooden frame structures found in the Town and therefore gives an insight into the alternate construction craftsmanship being utilized in the early 1900s.

167 Four Mile Creek Road also has historical associations with Queenston Cement Works company also known as Isaac Usher & Son. The company was run by Isaac Usher and Hudson Usher, between 1885 to 1904. The cement plant was established in 1885 towards the east of St. Davids and on the face of Niagara Escarpment. The raw material for the plant was sourced from the Niagara Escarpment. At the height of its operation, Queenston Cement Works, supplied natural cement to Sault Ste. Marie and St. Lawrence canals. Apart from the major infrastructure projects, Queenston Cement Works also supplied cement to residences in the St. Davids urban area. Among these houses, the Black House is one of the few surviving examples of a residence constructed using natural cement. The house reflects the work of Isaac Usher as a cement masonry contractor. During the early 1900s the most common material for the construction of residences was considered to be stone or brick masonry with wooden frames. During this time, he experimented with cement as a construction material.

The Black House has contextual value because it is important in maintaining the character of the area. 167 Four Mile Creek Road is part of the historic fabric of St. Davids urban area as it lies in close proximity to various other historic buildings and also buildings listed and designated on the Municipal Heritage Register. It acts as a character supporting resource for St. Davids. The house also has contextual value because it is historically linked to its surroundings. It was constructed using natural cement produced by the Queenston Cement Works. The company was run by Mabel's father, Isaac Usher, and brother, Hudson Usher, between 1885 to 1904. The natural cement material used in the construction of the house was mined from the Niagara Escarpment.

**Description of Key Heritage Attributes**

Key exterior attributes that embody the heritage value of 167 Four Mile Creek Road in Niagara-on the-Lake include its:

- Two storey Queen Anne Revival style residence with Italianate influences
- Main entryway featuring a transom and moulded trim with dentil details
- Pair of double windows on facade
- Frieze, cornice with dentils and pairs of wooden brackets on porch
- Fish-scale and cedar-shake shingles on central tower and side gables
- Overhanging eaves with denticulated cornice and pairs of brackets
- Bay window on the south elevation with a mansard roof, topped off with metal cresting detail
- Segmentally arched openings on the first storey and basement and rectangular vertical openings on the second storey
- Location on Four Mile Creek Road
- Asymmetrical façade
- Tower on façade
- Covered porch, wooden posts and railings
- Natural Queenston cement used for construction
- Cross-gabled roof with hipped roof on the central tower
- Moulded fascia with dentils on gable ends

**Objections**


Any objection to this designation must be filed no later than 30 days after the date of publication of the Notice of Intent to Designate. Objections should be directed to Grant Bivol, Town Clerk, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S 1T0. The last date to file a notice of objection is **Queries**

Any further queries should be directed to Sumra Zia, Heritage Planner at (905) 468-3266 ext. 327 or through email at [sumra.zia@notl.com](mailto:sumra.zia@notl.com).

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake this 8th day of May 2025

GRANT BIVOL, CLERK






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# Families can register now for summer softball

Staff  
The Lake Report

Batter up!  
Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Softball has begun accepting registrations for this summer's season.  
The association is offering a number of developmental and recreational programs for players from as young as age three to teenagers.  
NOTL Minor Softball president Peter Flynn said families can sign up by using the online form on the association's newly updated website, [notlsoftball.com](http://notlsoftball.com).  
Cost is \$150 per player and all games will take place on the diamonds at the Virgil Sports Park.  
Flynn says that anyone who has questions — or is willing to volunteer as a coach — should contact him by phone at 905-327-1620 or email at [offlynner16@yahoo.com](mailto:offlynner16@yahoo.com).

The following programs are being offered this summer:  
Introduction to Softball, for kids aged three and four, will run every Wednesday, 6 to 7 p.m., from June 4 to Aug. 6.  
Learn To Play, for five-



Registration is now open for Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Softball. FILE

and six-year-olds, will be Thursdays from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., from June 5 to Aug. 7.	for Wednesdays, 5:45 to 7:15 p.m., from June 4 to Aug. 17.	June 2 to Aug. 17.
Coaches Pitch, for kids from seven to nine years old, is scheduled	Kids Slo-Pitch, for players 10 to 13, goes Mondays from 6 to 7:30 p.m., from	Older Kids Slo-Pitch, for 14- to 17-year-old players, will be held Mondays from 6 to 7:45 p.m. starting June 2.

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# NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

## IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER 0.18 AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LANDS AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

**TAKE NOTICE** that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake intends to designate the property at **238 FOUR MILE CREEK ROAD, THE DUGGAN HOUSE (NIAGARA PT TWP LOT 90)** as a property of cultural heritage value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter 0.18.

**Description of Property**

The subject property is located on 238 Four Mile Creek Road and is known as the Duggan House. The subject property is located west of Four Mile Creek Road. The residence has a moderate setback and is set on a deep parcel which also contains an accessory structure at the rear of the property. The access to the residence is directly from Four Mile Creek Road through a paved pedestrian walkway and a separate gravel driveway.

**Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest**

The property known as the Duggan House has cultural heritage value or interest for its design and physical values, its historical and associative values and its contextual values.

238 Four Mile Creek Road is a representative example of the Edwardian Classicism style. The two storey residence is constructed using alternating layers of rusticated and plain concrete blocks with a narrow block stringcourse between the two storeys. The façade of the subject property is balanced while the north and south elevations are symmetrical. The north elevation also contains a two-storey bay window. The subject property features a covered porch on the façade that is supported on colonnettes with concrete bases and wooden railings. Typical of the Edwardian style, the structure has a high-pitched roof with a double hip on the façade, hipped dormers on the façade and south elevation, a polygonal dormer on the north elevation, and hipped roof on the covered porches. The subject property also features deep overhanging eaves that are supported by wooden brackets. The openings in the subject property are rectangular vertical openings, with the window openings containing plain wooden trim within the structural openings of the windows and the main entryway containing sidelights with wooden trims within the structural opening. The windows also feature plain concrete lug sills and lintels.

The Duggan House displays a high degree of artistic value as an example of rusticated concrete construction in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, especially in the St. Davids urban area. The neighbourhood around the Four Mile Creek Road and York Street contains a wide variety of historic structures. Most of these structures are stone, brick or clapboard construction. With its concrete block construction, the subject property provides design value as a unique construction material.

The Duggan House also has historical associations with Charles E. Duggan and his family. Charles was a physician from St. David’s and was an active physician in the area. He graduated from Trinity Medical College in 1903 and practiced medicine in St. Davids. Charles Duggan also constructed the Duggan House after purchasing the property in 1913. Apart from Charles, the house is also historically associated with both his sons, Frederick and Richard Duggan. Frederick and Richard both enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force where Frederick went on to become a qualified fighter pilot. He died during the Second World War and is commemorated at Queenston Cenotaph. Richard followed in his father’s footsteps and graduated from Queens Medical School in 1941, and after the war, he took over his late father’s practice.

238 Four Mile Creek Road reflects the work of James Calvert. James Calvert, started his career in the Niagara Region as a carpenter in 1912 and went on to become a contractor in the Village of Queenston. In 1921, He started a construction business with William Armstrong, known as Armstrong & Calvert, in St. David’s. Around 1921, Calvert also appears to be working as a manager at Larkin Farms.

The property has contextual value because it is important in maintaining the character of the area. 238 Four Mile Creek Road is part of the historic fabric of St. Davids urban area as it lies in close proximity to various other historic buildings and also buildings listed and designated on the Municipal Heritage Register. It acts as a character supporting resource for St. Davids urban area.

**Description of Key Heritage Attributes**

Key exterior attributes that embody the heritage value of 238 Four Mile Creek Road in Niagara-on the-Lake include its:

- Two storey Edwardian Classicism style residence
- Balanced façade with symmetrical north and south elevation
- Rusticated and plain concrete block construction with narrow stringcourse
- Two-storey Bay window on north elevation
- Covered porch on the façade with colonnettes with concrete bases and wooden railings
- High pitched hip roof with double hip on facade
- Hipped dormers on façade, and south elevation
- Polygonal dormer on north elevation
- Hipped roof on porches
- Deep overhanging eaves with wooden brackets
- Rectangular vertical openings
- Concrete lug sills and lintels
- Concrete block chimneys
- Location on Four Mile Creek Road

**Objections**

Any objection to this designation must be filed no later than 30 days after the date of publication of the Notice of Intent to Designate. Objections should be directed to Grant Bivol, Town Clerk, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S 1T0. The last date to file a notice of objection is **June 5th 2025**.

**Queries**

Any further queries should be directed to Sumra Zia, Heritage Planner at (905) 468-3266 ext. 327 or through email at [sumra.zia@notl.com](mailto:sumra.zia@notl.com).

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake this 8th day of May 2025

GRANT BIVOL, CLERK



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Left: Members of the NOTL Golf Club's Woofs recreational league prepare for their annual opening scramble on Tuesday. Right: The NOTL Golf Club's women's nine and 18-hole leagues had a colourful kickoff to the golf season with their annual scramble on Tuesday morning. **DARREN SMITH**



# Golf leagues **scramble** to kick off season

Staff  
The Lake Report

Three of the men's and women's leagues kicked off their seasons with their annual scramble tournaments at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club on Tuesday.

The women's nine and 18-hole leagues hosted their joint scramble in the morning

and the team of Judy Mantle, Sandie Boyer, Lucy Brookhouser and Sally Miller was tops with a 1-over 37.

One shot behind in second place with 38 were Carroll Baker, Gayle Tanner, Susan Horne and Barbara Hastings while Louise Robitaille, Marion MacIntyre, Penny Bannister and Nikki Jenkins finished third.

They were among three groups tied at 39 but came out ahead via retrogression.

At noon, the men's Woofs league teed off and the foursome of Don Allen, Ron Planche, Rai Lauge and Bill Smethurst carded a 5-under 31 off the forward tees to take top honours.

Several groups were tied one shot back at 32 but

through retrogression John Reynolds, Ian Adams, Todd Watson and Kevin MacLean were second. In third were Mark Harris, Randy Busbridge, Ted Baker and Mike Mott.

Blair Cribb was closest to the pin on #4.

Bad weather forced cancellation of the Thursday men's league last week.



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# NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

## IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER 0.18 AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LANDS AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

**TAKE NOTICE** that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake intends to designate the property at **1023 EAST AND WEST LINE, EPP FAMILY FRUIT FARM (NIAGARA PT TWP LOT 69 RP 30R7654 PART 1)** as a property of cultural heritage value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter 0.18.

**Description of Property**

The subject property is located on 1023 East and West Line. The subject land is located near the intersection of East West Line and Concession 3 Road towards the south of East and West Line. 1023 East West Line contains a residential structure, and a detached garage towards the east of the residential structure. The structure on the subject land is located with a moderate setback from the road. Access to the subject lands is through a gravel driveway.

**Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest**

The property known as the Epp Family Fruit Farm has cultural heritage value or interest for its design and physical values, its historical and associative values and its contextual values.

The residential structure on 1023 East and West Line is a representative example of a Gothic Cottage. The subject property is one and a half storeys in height with a symmetrical façade and balanced side elevations. The exterior walls are clad in plain fieldstone, laid in a random course which feature red brick quoins, radiating voussoirs, lintels and a stringcourse to differentiate the basement level. The roof of the subject property is a cross-gable roof with gable ends on the façade, and both the side elevations. The gable end on the façade is located centrally. The roof also contains overhanging eaves with plain fascia. The subject property contains rectangular window openings on the first storey while those on the upper storey are lancet windows. The openings on the first storey contain flat red brick lintels and the lancet windows on the upper storey contain radiating red brick voussoirs. All the windows also feature plain stone lug sills. The subject property has a celebrated main entrance which contains a pointed arched opening with glass panelled door with sidelights and transom. The transom contains decorative wooden fretwork. The main entrance also contains hood mould detail with carved label stops on the base of red brick voussoirs.

1023 East and West Line has associative value as being a part of the Epp family fruit farm. The lands were acquired by the family sometimes in the late 1900s and were converted into a fruit farm. The Epp family has contributed to the agricultural growth of the rural areas of Niagara-on-the-Lake through their farmsteads. Research also indicates that they also lend a hand to their neighbouring farms whenever the need had risen, and sometimes at the cost of their own harvest being affected.

1023 East and West Line has the potential to yield information that contributes to the understanding of the cultural phenomenon created by the immigrant workers coming into Niagara Region as part of Seasonal Agricultural Work Program that was introduced in Canada in the mid-1960s. These workers have contributed to the local agricultural industry not only through physical labour but also through bringing in diverse knowledge from their countries.

The historic Gothic cottage has contextual value because it is important in maintaining the historic character of the area. East and West Line streetscape majorly consists of farmsteads, orchards and residential properties that are one to two storeys high with a large to moderate setback from the road. Most of the building are recent built structures or have been modified. The historic Gothic Cottage style structure reiterates the historic character of the area and connects the context to its historical agricultural roots. The subject property also has value because it is historically linked to its surroundings as being part of the Epps family fruit farm. The house structure was once a part of a larger farmstead. The land appears to have since been subdivided but the farms still exist towards the south and east of the subject property.

**Description of Key Heritage Attributes**

Key exterior attributes that embody the heritage value of 1023 East and West Line in Niagara-on the-Lake include its:

- One and half storey Gothic Cottage
- Symmetrical façade and balanced side elevations
- Random fieldstone courses on exterior walls
- Red brick quoins, radiating voussoirs, lintels and stringcourse
- Cross-gable roof
- Gable ends on the façade and side elevations
- Overhanging eaves and plain fascia
- Rectangular window openings on first storey and lancet window openings on upper storey
- Main entrance with pointed arched opening, glass panelled door with sidelights and transom.
- Transom with decorative wooden fretwork.
- Hood-mould on main entrance with carved label stops on the base of red brick voussoirs
- Location along the East West Line
- Setback from the road
- Historical connection to farmstead

**Objections**

Any objection to this designation must be filed no later than 30 days after the date of publication of the Notice of Intent to Designate. Objections should be directed to Grant Bivol, Town Clerk, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S 1T0. The last date to file a notice of objection is **June 5th 2025**.

**Queries**

Any further queries should be directed to Sumra Zia, Heritage Planner at (905) 468-3266 ext. 327 or through email at [sumra.zia@notl.com](mailto:sumra.zia@notl.com).

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake this 8th day of May 2025

GRANT BIVOL, CLERK





# Save The Date

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

# St. Davids Lionesses **spring market** a success

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

Rainy skies couldn't put a stop to the St. Davids Lioness Club's annual spring market on Saturday, which drew steady crowds despite having to move indoors to avoid the weather.

More than a dozen local vendors were at the St. Davids Lions Club Hall on May 3, selling their wares and mingling with attendees.

A cut of the proceeds from the participating vendors will support Project Share in Niagara Falls, which helps residents living below the poverty line with basic needs, the Salvation Army and youth breakfast programs, through the club's charitable contributions.

Though co-presidents Janet Orr Shannyn Whittaker didn't have a final count of the revenue of this year's market on Saturday, they called it a success, overall.

"We usually expect around \$1,200 in just revenue from the spring market," said Orr.

The was steady attendance throughout the 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. event, which



Despite needing to be moved indoors due to rain, co-presidents Janet Orr and Shannyn Whittaker called this years spring market a success. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

included penny sales, a bake table and mini fruit pies from St Davids/Queenston Church, with all funds funnelled into community initiatives.

Recent projects include a \$10,000 guide dog purchase for vision-impaired residents through Lions Club

bingo revenues.

"Considering how many organizations need funding, it's good whatever we do helps somebody else," said vendor Dianne Pever of Pure Art Design, who sold pinecone wreaths at the market.

Orr said the Lionesses

are looking to recruit new members to sustain their outreach, considering the club is currently down to 10 women.

"We're a small club but mighty," said Orr. "We pull our weight and always welcome more hands."

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

# Buying OR SELLING?



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# MOVING ROADS FORWARD

## Public Notice

### From May 5 to 16 tell us what you want in the St. Davids roundabout design

#### Option A - Historical/Traditional



In the fall of 2024, 80 people attended a Niagara Region workshop to talk about their vision for the St. Davids roundabout. Four designs emerged from the workshop. Region staff found common elements and used them to create two roundabout options. **Now, we are asking you to vote online or in person from May 5 to 16 for your preferred design and features.**

**Option A** focuses on the history of St. Davids. It depicts the Four Mile Creek passing through the roundabout and the traditional Indigenous trail, and it includes native flowers, colours and a focal compass.

**Option B** highlights the agricultural importance of the St. Davids area. It includes a vertical structure with a vineyard feel and trailing grapevines on a trellis that tie the design together.

Designs for the intersection of Tanbark Avenue fit with the historical and agricultural roundabout themes while adding their own distinct gateway features.

#### What's next?

Keep an eye on your mailbox starting April 30. All properties and residents in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake will receive an informative newsletter with artist drawings of the designs for you to consider before voting starts. You can also visit the Niagara Region website to look at larger images with more detailed information.

Please consider and familiarize yourself with each design and vote for the features you feel represent the ideals and spirit of St. Davids. After voting closes on May 16, Niagara Region will post the results on the project webpage. Niagara-on-the-Lake staff will present the preferred option, including costs, to the Town Council for consideration at a later date.

**Remember, the Council of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is the approval authority for all landscaping and streetscaping upgrades to the roundabout. Niagara Region is only responsible for the road construction portion of this project.**

#### Option B - Agricultural/Contemporary



#### Voting process

Voting takes place from May 5 to May 16. Voting is limited to one vote per household and there are two ways to vote:

##### Online Voting:

- Go to [niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-81-and-100-reconstruction/default.aspx](https://niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-81-and-100-reconstruction/default.aspx), or
- Use the QR Code



##### In-Person Voting:

**At St. Davids Fire Hall and Community Center (745 Warner Road, St. Davids)** on the following dates/times:

Monday, May 5:	10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Wednesday, May 7:	10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Friday, May 9	10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Monday, May 12:	10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Wednesday, May 14:	10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Friday, May 16:	10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

**At Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library (10 Anderson Lane, Niagara-on-the-Lake)** on the following dates/times:

Wednesday, May 7:	4 - 7 p.m.
Thursday, May 8:	10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 5 - 7 p.m.
Wednesday, May 14:	4 - 7 p.m.
Thursday, May 16:	10:30 a.m. - 1p.m and 5 - 7 p.m.

If you have questions about this project, email **Stephanie Huppunen, CET**, Manager, Capital Projects – Transportation Engineering [stdavidsroundabout@niagararegion.ca](mailto:stdavidsroundabout@niagararegion.ca)





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**BKind Grateful** #27: When buying school supplies, purchase some extra items for a teacher who often has to buy supplies out of pocket.

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



**Contributed by Patty Garriock**

“The beautiful spring came, and when nature resumes her loveliness, the human soul is apt to revive also.” - Harriet Ann Jacobs

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Go, dog, go!

Atlas catches some air as his owner, Jake Mach, throws him a frisbee, as part of the NOTL Toss and Fetch Frisbee league.  
DAVE VAN DE LAAR



Editorial

Figuring out what NOTLers really want

Kevin MacLean  
Editor Emeritus

If you spend time on social media — especially on NOTL’s politically focused platforms or groups — besides reading ongoing posts mainly from Conservative supporters re-litigating the federal election and Mark Carney’s minority win, you’ll often see comments critical of the attitudes of NOTLers.

To many online warriors, Niagara-on-the-Lake residents are an entitled, privileged and self-absorbed group who enjoy nothing more than to whine and complain about how great things used to be.

And, unfortunately, on occasion that is an apt caricature.

We saw it again this past weekend when heavy spring rains turned the fields at the newly opened TASC tulip farm into a mud bowl. And long lines of traffic dangerously snarled the concession roads near the rural Virgil attraction.

Residents, who posted justified concerns about congestion and safety (what if emergency vehicles couldn’t get through?), were in turn blasted as being too quick to complain. It was unfortunate, especially since the weather is obviously beyond the control of entrepreneurs operating an outdoor attraction.

At this point, we’re not



The Niagara-on-the-Lake flag flies with the Canada flag. FILE/RICHARD HARLEY

sure who to blame, other than perhaps Mother Nature, circumstance and bad luck, for what was indeed a messy, muddy situation.

But in 2025 everyone has an opinion.

Regular themes among many community commenters are that NOTL is going to hell in a handcart; that the hordes of “bloody tourists” are here enjoying our little slice of heaven yet again; and “we’ve lived here for 50 years and why can’t it be the way it used to be?” And then there’s the plague of rampant development.

Those are all interesting sentiments but, really, the truth — and the road to a future where maybe we can take Rodney King’s advice and agree to get along — lies somewhere in the mushy middle.

Whether you want to retain NOTL as an idyllic place to live and wish we could pull up the drawbridge to keep outsiders

away, or you embrace it as “wine country” (or, as the new town strategy sees NOTL, a destination known for natural beauty, food and wine, plus cultural experiences), the reality is our wee town is growing, it is changing and it will never be what it once was.

To many, that is negative. To others, it is an exciting prospect. To some, we need more control over how the town is going to change.

Which brings us to the subject of the NOTL Residents Association, a new group focused on ensuring the town’s leadership pays more attention to the desires of residents.

Its official coming out party is next Wednesday evening at the community centre and whether you’re politically inclined or just curious, we urge you to attend and hear what the organization’s leaders have to say.

Chances are it will be the biggest outpouring of public emotion since the unprecedented protest outside NOTL’s town hall last July.

Passion is never a bad thing. It shows people care. Looking ahead, perhaps the association will manage to float a slate of candidates in the October 2026 municipal election.

Meantime, maybe it will come up with some ideas or suggestions that our current mayor and council will embrace.

All that remains to be seen. But what do NOTLers really want? It’s difficult to know.

Let’s not forget that on Oct. 24, 2022, voters opted for substantial change and rejected incumbent Betty Disero, installing Gary Zalepa in the lord mayor’s chair, giving him almost 50 per cent of the votes cast.

That was a decisive mandate.

But four years before that, Disero knocked off incumbent Pat Darte, as she garnered 50 per cent of the votes. And in 2014 Darte ousted 2010 winner Dave Eke by taking 57 per cent of the votes. All this turnover started after Gary Burroughs’ mayoral reign from 2000 to 2010.

So, on one hand, NOTLers have actively embraced change — by rejecting their municipal leader when someone else offers an alternate vision.

What does it all mean? We’re not sure yet, but, given the latest discontent, it seems the NOTL Residents Association might be destined to have some influence over who sits in the new “strong” mayor’s chair after 2026.

Will it make a difference and satisfy the desires of NOTLers? Impossible to know.

But stay tuned and get involved, if you care about the town’s future.

kevin@niagaranow.com



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# How are YOU pushing back against Trump?



Amid on-again, off-again trade tariffs, MAGA disinformation about the Canada-U.S. relationship and threats of annexing our nation as the 51st state, millions of Canadians are pushing back against President Donald Trump's endless stream of craziness.

It's #elbowsup time in the Great White North.

We'd like to know what you are doing here in Niagara-on-the-Lake in response to Trump's threats and actions.

Are you proudly flying the flag at home and displaying your patriotism for all to see? Have your shopping habits changed? What about travel plans?

In what other ways has your "polite Canadian" behaviour changed? Or has it?

Many people find Trump's endless jibes at Canada tiresome and are fed up with his tirades. What is your take and how do you think this all will (or should) play out?

Email us your thoughts, send us your photos and we'll publish them in an upcoming edition of The Lake Report.

Send them to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com).

# Fighting back against Trump in several ways

Dear editor:

How am I fighting back against Donald Trump?

- I have not crossed into the USA since Trump was elected the first time.
- I look at all labels before purchasing in the grocery store — although I may have to break down and buy some spinach as it seems to only be coming from the U.S. right now. I'm planting some in my garden this summer.
- I am wearing my "I AM CANADIAN" t-shirt which is 25 years old. I hope the Molson's Canadian beer

company will start putting their "I AM CANADIAN" flags in their beer cases again (I have two of them flying in my front yard).

- I wear this very clunky necklace that is covered in Canadian flags everywhere I go. I'm wearing it until You Know Who leaves office again.
- The cannon in this photo is a British Naval cannon from the 1700s — which my husband uses to defend our home with firecrackers!

Love the Lake Report!

**Betty Ann Chandler**  
NOTL



Betty Ann Chandler is wearing a Canadian flag necklace until U.S. President Donald Trump is out of office. SUPPLIED

# Call to action for Canadian flags along border

Dear editor:

This is in response to your question, "How are you pushing back against Trump?"

I live in a unique location in town, facing the U.S. border, along the Niagara River. I have been distributing a letter to my shoreline neighbours, asking if they would consider flying a Canadian flag facing the riverside.

Responses have been

overwhelmingly positive. We can make a dramatic visual statement that says, "We love Canada and are proud of it."

It would be so uplifting to see the whole town go flag crazy!

Please let The Lake Report know if you are onboard and we may get a drone photo of all the flags along the riverfront.

**Jackie Kevill**  
NOTL



NOTL resident Jackie Kevill wants to start a movement of displaying Canadian flags at homes along the river border.

# If candidates can't follow election laws, how are they fit to lead?

Dear editor:

I waited until after the election to give an opinion as I felt there would be many other comments in the next Lake Reports.

On April 4th Kevin wrote an opinion piece about election signs being placed on town owned properties. This is such a small issue, but it appears it was a very important one for Kevin and



it is one for me as well. It seems that when elec-

tion signs are handed out, the person putting up the signs would be told by the election committee for the party as to what the rules are. These rules should have been known by the candidate wishing to be elected.

What then prompted so many illegally placed signs — even at the homes of candidates families?

My concern is this: If we

cannot even trust the candidate to make sure a simple sign rule is obeyed, how can we trust that important issues are handled honestly.

And that is how things go astray. It starts at the small things which are ignored and eventually we cannot tell what is being done honestly or not.

**Susan Pohorly**  
NOTL



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.  
Category: **THAT'S BANANAS**

**Banana is a word in the language of these animated yellow sidekicks, whose banana song was in a trailer for "Despicable Me 2."**

**Last issue: A FLORAL CATEGORY**

**Clue:** Types of this flower include tiger, stargazer and Easter.

**Answer:** What are lillies?

**Answered first by:** Sue Rautenberg

**Also answered correctly (in order) by:** Bill Hamilton, Lynda Collet, Gary Davis, Bob Wheatley, Mike Gander, Jane Morris, Terry Nord, Ken Dewar, Becky Creager, Jeff Lake, Randie Topps, Gail Benjafield, Susan Hamilton, Sarah Boccia, Sheila Meloche, Jim Dandy, Bob Stevens, Nancy Rocca, Howard Jones, Wade Durling, Catherine Clarke, Margie Enns, Katie Reimer, Marla Percy, Sylvia Wiens, Tuija Johansson, Hedy Wiebe, Jane Andersen, Esther VanGorder, Margaret Garaugthy

Email answers to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto: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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## We welcome your letters

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

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# Another **Rand lawsuit** and urban design part two



Brian Marshall  
Columnist

Last week, I promised to delve further into the urban design issue — and we will — but first, allow me to address a couple of other notable items which have occurred in town.

First, a happy thing ... For the first time since the pandemic lockdown, on the evening of April 23, the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake held an event entitled “Celebrating Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Heritage” — an affair to recognize and celebrate the owners of properties significant to the history and character of NOTL that had received heritage designation during the past few years.

Prior to 2021, this was an annual event, and its return, championed and organized by heritage planner Sumra Zia with the able assistance of several other members of town staff, was a resounding

success.  
I always love to give credit where credit is due, and in this case, it is certainly due. Well done, Ms. Zia!  
Now, a more disturbing item related to the Rand Estate.

According to an article released by SORE on May 3, “Marotta continues Rand litigation against town and promises new lawsuit against council” — which included a copy of an email communicate from one of Mr. Marotta’s solicitors — in the event the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake did not agree to providing the developer an access to the property via the panhandle or Charlotte Street, he would cease any revisions to the original proposed development (as ordered by the Ontario Land Tribunal) and ask that this file be closed.

Further, the solicitor indicated if this should come to pass (it has), her client “has advised” that it would be directing its litigation lawyers to launch a legal suit against the town and would name all members of council as defendants.

In reading this, I found it odd, since my impression was that Ontario legislation specifically protected elected officials against this type of action.



Brian Marshall gives kudos to the town for “finally returning to celebrating citizens committed to our heritage.” BRIAN MARSHALL

Not being a lawyer, I sought out a legal opinion.  
As it turns out, in Section 448(1) of the Municipal Elections Act, legislation provides protection for councillors. It states: “No proceeding for damages or otherwise shall be commenced against a member of council or an officer, employee or agent of a municipality or a person acting under the instructions of the officer, employee or agent for any act done in good faith in the performance or intended performance of a duty or authority under this act or a bylaw passed under it or for any alleged neglect or default in the performance in good faith of the duty or authority.”  
In the same act, sections 279 and 283 provide that the municipality has the right and implied obligation to

cover the legal costs incurred to have such a proceeding (as threatened in the solicitor’s communique) dismissed in court.  
Arguably, since it appears that Mr. Marotta’s company(s) have continued to have the Ontario Land Tribunal’s ruling undergo a judicial review, in an attempt to have the Ontario Land Tribunal decision overturned by the Divisional Court, this is simply one more option that the developer might exercise to further bleed the town’s taxpayers.  
If you haven’t done so yet, I encourage you to read SORE’s release and the media archive on their website relative to this developer — it is quite enlightening.  
Finally, as you may be aware, during a council meeting, the majority of our elected officials voted to disband the urban design committee and directed staff to proceed with the process of developing new terms of reference for a proposed urban design review panel.  
Apparently, the writing of these terms of reference is proceeding at breakneck speed since it is staff’s communicated intent to present some during this month’s council meeting.  
May I suggest this is putting the cart before the

horse?  
After all, in the recommendation to council (CAO-25-013) on page three, the report states that an “informal search” had been performed relative to identifying municipalities using the urban design review panel model — although further down that page is written: “Staff have researched the concept of an urban design review panel, as well as reviewed multiple terms of reference from other municipalities that have successfully created an urban design review panel.”  
One must wonder how an “informal search” could yield sufficient and reliable reference data to write terms of reference for NOTL?  
Furthermore, since the town does not employ an urban design professional (see last week’s Arch-i-text column, “Arch-i-text: Why urban design and urban planning are not interchangeable”), how can any terms of reference developed by the town’s urban planning staff (a different professional discipline) correctly reflect the necessary parameters?  
Sort of like asking a dental surgeon to develop terms of reference for a cardiac surgeon — hey, they both do surgery, right?  
Finally, there are pros and

cons to what appears to be the central argument for an urban design review panel ... that “expert” members may be drawn from outside Niagara-on-the-Lake.  
Sure, despite the fact that this town has a greater depth of local, provincial, national and international expertise in multiple fields than any other municipality I’ve ever been exposed to, there is always value to including a member who currently works in broader markets.  
That said, any review panel composed of members from outside the municipality will lack “skin in the game” and a personal understanding of the history, built character and design vision necessary to ensure their recommendations are not simply an academic expression unaligned with the wishes and desires of the established community.  
Finally, without design guidelines and architectural controls (like Brampton’s), no matter where the membership is sourced from, an urban design committee or panel (if we’re having fun with words) is destined to fail.  
*Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage.*



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# Tensions rise as the rebs rally troops



**THE TURNER REPORT**

Garth Turner  
Columnist

As he looks out over an expected sea of faces, the guy at the front plans to hoist a number. It will read, “530.” That, says Stuart McCormack, is the number of sleeps between next Wednesday night and the coming election in NOTL. “I know it sounds like a long time, but it isn’t. The last thing we want is people running around on the day of nomination saying, ‘Jeez, we need someone to run. So we’re starting now.’” This is the official birth of the first integrated local residents’ association. Behind the scenes it’s grown like a weed. It’s political. It has firepower. The organizers have much to say about the current council’s blessing of honking big new hotels in Old Town. Condo towers in Glendale. Unbridled Airbnbs in Chautauqua. Tree-eating subdivisions in Virgil. Councillors that don’t seem to listen. And a lordly mayor who just voted himself strong powers. Six months ago McCormack — who briefly served himself as a local politician — figured enough was



Resident and former councillor Stuart McCormack. FILE

enough. He got word out of a rebel force forming. The first meeting had four bums in chairs. The most recent one was packed. The event next Wednesday, he says “should be a full house. We expect to be looking for chairs.” The NOTL rebs are determined to make town hall more responsive and (if necessary) punt many councillors in 530 days, likely with a slate of candidates. The open house is meant to define the issues stirring the loins of the locals and enlist more volunteers to help run a swelling army. It’s open to everyone (community centre, 6:30 p.m.) including the current elected folks. But will they show up, in an effort to stem the rebellion? “I wouldn’t be surprised if some of them don’t,” says McCormack. “They apparently feel apprehension about venturing out in the community at large. I think that is tremendously sad.” And what’s the mood back at the town’s HQ? Are council members, or the lord mayor, fussed about the troops now gathering in the woods, loading muskets? I asked them all a few simple questions. Is this a good development for NOTL, or does it polarize us? Is endorsing candidates useful, or cause conflict and strife? Does the rebel movement suggest we need improvement in the way this place is run? And will you attend the meeting? Seven politicians were asked. Only three responded to my questions — Mayor Gary Zalepa, his deputy, Erwin Wiens, plus Gary Burroughs. One was curt. One cool. The third supportive. The mayor’s not coming. And he says this is not about him. “I believe the creation of the group speaks to the

needs of those creating it. Those individuals would be best to explain their reasoning. Accountability and transparency are available as key cornerstones in the current framework of municipal governance.” In short, have a nice day. I’m busy. “Anyone wanting to make a difference in the community is a good thing,” says Wiens. But he’s not coming, either. “We have open meetings that livestream, we post agendas and are open for anyone to contact us. I encourage people to call me if they have any questions. I have lived here for 58 years and have always been approachable.” As for Burroughs, the rebs have a friend. “This will be a very positive development,” he says. “I believe a better educated residents group will help produce members that would like to run in the next election, rather than focusing on specific candidates. This was tried in the last election, and while I was not included on the list, may not have focused on the issues. In my opinion, this was very polarizing.” Burroughs and two other electeds will be there. So should you. Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister. garth@garth.ca. *Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.* garth@garth.ca

## Playing out the consequences of Canada, the 51st state

Dear editor: Last week, I asked about how we might handle an invasion, or coercion, resulting in annexation by the United States (“Letter: Difficult questions to consider with Trump’s sovereignty threats,” May 1). But this need not necessarily be resisted by violence. There are more civilized ways. In this newspaper on April 17, Don Mustill offered us an interesting thought experiment (“Letter: The fallacy of the 51st state”), which showed how the government of a unified North America would turn out to be a huge majority for the Democrats! Assuming that one way or another, an annexation has occurred, let’s continue from there. What would happen next?

Well, for starters, as Mr. Mustill has pointed out, there would be a very large contingent of Canadians sitting in the House of Representatives. Perhaps they would begin by introducing the Americans to the idea of a safety net to protect the poor people and provide them with the affordable health care they so badly needed. Just an example. But wait — we may now have made a large percentage of Americans on the right extremely angry, our solution having exacerbated the division between right and left. Let us leave that possibility aside for now and fast forward a few years, assuming we have the annexation. Along the way, we could show them the

real benefits of having a three-party system. Having only hard right or hard left to choose from when voting is a bit limiting. This is the point where the whole idea might collapse with the left/right division widening. But, on the other hand, while taking a while to settle, after 15 years or so, the newly enlightened America might have stabilized under three new parties. The population would hopefully have found benefit in the changes. Some might ponder how they could have spent so many generations focused on the supreme importance of individualism, at the expense of losing compassion for their neighbours. Fast forward again. Now, with everything stable on

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# So much going **undiscussed** on streets of our town



## Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

On a weekly basis, with a few exceptions, I tend to ramble about a subject with a local connection. Sometimes awkwardly, I may choose to employ humour while attempting to make a point.

I seek accuracy and only embellish for effect.

After ten hours flying with Flair Airlines to Vancouver and back, with lots of time to think and read, I have one major question that has left me completely flummoxed. How can one person have so much power?

We avoid discussing the situation, but an existential threat is upon us.

Not long ago, I didn't really understand what an existential threat was, but every day now we learn

more.

American politics is currently so weird. So much to talk about, such dramatic and impactful goings on, but almost everyone has been avoiding the subject. Please forgive me as I ramble way out of my lane this week.

A few chance encounters during my trip to Vancouver last week have provided fodder for this Rambling. I will not be taking sides regarding the "Trumpization" of world politics. That would force me into a sphere far from my expertise or level of knowledge. But have we ever seen such polarization?

Yes, tourism, hospitality and the theatre industry have been hugely affected by the "trade storm." But there is so much more.

Sitting next to me on the flight to Vancouver was a sharp young man who has recently started his career with CP Rail. The company is formally known as Canadian Pacific Kansas City Ltd., and he works mostly in the area near Woodstock. Most of the freight they carry is automobile industry-related. He and his co-workers aren't sleeping soundly, knowing that if major



Thanks to American tariffs, we're all facing a daily existential threat, says Ross Robinson.

automakers shift production to the States, most of them will be out of work.

I hadn't thought of that. The wide-ranging effect of potential economic contraction and the uncertainty caused by the continually shifting tariff situations are making any reasonable long-term planning impossible.

Right here on Queen Street, I had a brief chat with one of the hard-working, courteous and enthusiastic UPS delivery men. They are always working so hard, in all types of Canadian weather, under daily deadline pressures. Driving and

zippping safely around our Niagara Peninsula and our world.

The whole tariff uncertainty has thrown their lives into uncertainty, with the media informing us that UPS may be forced to lay off, terminate or redeploy some 20,000 employees. This is an unfathomable number, and I had not even thought of such a trickle-down effect of tariff uncertainty.

Rambling on about our current world status.

At YYZ's Pearson International Airport, I sat next to a 20-ish international student who was clearly nervous. She

openly told me about her status as an international student in Canada, preparing for a career in the hospitality field. She had come to our country from Vietnam, and her life planning has been totally ripped asunder. She has been studying hard, and is now forced to abandon any long-term goal setting.

I saw no value in telling her that a recent article in the St. Catharines Standard quoted Craig Youdale, a dean at Niagara College. Yes, this major employer may be forced to suspend several of their hospitality-related programs.

Government policy changes have created widespread uncertainty, causing decreased enrollment and attendant financial difficulties.

And, industry employers are unable to intelligently make plans for the future. What is the future for Niagara Falls, a world-renowned tourism destination for over a century and a half?

So, I have been rambling way out of my usual lane. Never one to encourage negative conversations, I have only been trying to point out how Canadians are doing our level best to avoid engaging in polarizing discussions.

Even when Prime Minister Carney and President Trump met with President Trump in the Oval Office earlier this week, serious topics were avoided. Pretty expensive small talk, wouldn't you say?

I am not going to proffer my opinions, but what the heck is going on? Annexing Canada as a 51st state? No more Canadian-built automobiles to be sold in the U.S.?

It's way beyond my thinking, so I will ramble to a sudden conclusion.

## St. Davids roundabout proposals are **both ridiculous**

Dear editor:

Participatory democracy at its finest! Niagara Region is now asking NOTL residents to help choose between two designs for a roundabout in St. Davids ("Future St. Davids roundabout narrowed down to two options, region asks residents to vote for one," May 1) when all evidence suggests that most locals don't want the project to go

ahead at all.

Both of the proposed designs are ridiculous. The principal design criterion for a roundabout must be that it should enhance traffic safety.

These two designs, festooned with kitschy representations of local history or agriculture, will surely have exactly the opposite effect, distracting drivers from the need to focus on their driving.

And how many people passing through the intersection will either know or care what the decorative features are supposed to represent?

Much money has already been spent on this project, and all the while, NOTL council has thrown up its hands, saying it's the region's project and the region is bound and determined to go ahead with it.

Interesting, then, to read

## **Chilling vibes** during Mark Carney's first White House visit

Dear editor:

I haven't been so creeped out in years! Years!

Yesterday, I watched a live TV production in which Pinocchio, grown up to be a man, has been to school at Harvard and Oxford, has chaired a big bank or two, and yet he is still forcibly cornered to learn false lessons from the Fox and the Cat (this time, along with the Weasel and the Joker).

He was expected to respectfully believe that

his prospects and his life will be so much better if he accepts their deceitful pitch, which they claim is trending — and thus true.

This spectacle was staged in faux gold and yellow, under an awning of menacing beaky black microphones, accompanied by a crowd of clamouring onlookers from town.

I don't think any stalwart protagonist should appear in that theatre ever again.

**Brian Emes**  
**Old Town**

## **Who's paying** for the Niagara Stone Road construction?

Dear editor:

It has been reported in The Lake Report, May 1 issue, page 7, that a section of Niagara Stone Road (Regional Highway 55) is currently being widened by Rankin Construction as part of the development,

which will facilitate access to a privately owned winery ("Roadwork begins on Niagara Stone Road for winery development").

This project has the approval of the Niagara Region. However, according to the NOTL communica-

tions co-ordinator, there is no information that has been made public that indicates who is paying for this widening to facilitate the private development.

In my opinion, this claim makes little sense when construction is already

underway and a contract has obviously been agreed to.

It is in the interest of basic transparency and the tax-paying residents of NOTL who have a right to know who is paying for this.

**Derek Collins**  
**NOTL**

## Commonwealth leaders should attend King's **throne speech**

Dear editor:

The lack of support for Canada to remain an independent sovereign country, in opposition to President Trump's annexation threats, is deafening. I am therefore calling on our

prime minister and political leaders of all parties to extend an open invitation to join King Charles in Ottawa, as he delivers his throne speech at the opening of Parliament on May 27.

Commonwealth leaders from Australia, etc. would send a resounding signal of Canadian support to remain free of our southern neighbours and further bolster the passions of all. In summation, this is a call to

action for The Lake Report and my fellow Canadians to contact your political representatives, TV shows and national newspapers to make this proposal happen.

**Samuel Young**  
**NOTL**







# Mark Carney and your household budget



**BOTTOM LINE**

Steve McGuinness  
Columnist

The recent re-election of Prime Minister Mark Carney's Liberal government will usher in a host of tax and policy changes that could impact Canadians' wallets. Some measures will take effect almost immediately, while others must await the passage of a federal budget, expected after the King delivers the throne speech on May 27.

Some changes will affect everyone; others apply in specific situations. Here's a summary of what to expect:

The rate of the consumer carbon tax has already been reduced to zero. A legislative amendment to

permanently eliminate it is anticipated. The change has led to lower gas prices at the pump but also means taxpayers will no longer receive the Canadian carbon rebate in future quarters.

The Liberals also pledged to cut the marginal tax rate on the lowest income bracket by one percentage point in the name of middle-class tax relief. This is expected to save two-income families up to \$825 a year and could take effect by July 1.

Two new measures are aimed at seniors.

First is a temporary reduction in the minimum amount that must be withdrawn from a registered retirement income fund (RRIF) by 25 per cent. Canadians must convert their RRSPs into a RRIF by the end of the year they turn 71. Once converted, plan holders must withdraw a prescribed minimum amount annually, which is included in taxable income. Seniors who do not require the full withdrawals can defer some tax by remaining invested. Remaining



Mark Carney.  
EUROPEAN UNION

amounts in these registered accounts are taxed upon death, unless transferred to a surviving spouse.

The second seniors-focused change is a temporary five per cent increase in the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), providing up to \$652 more, tax-free, to low-income Old Age Security recipients. A single senior must have an annual income below \$21,624 to qualify for the full GIS.

Homebuyers are also promised relief from GST on newly constructed homes priced at \$1 million or less, and reduced GST on homes between \$1 million and \$1.5

million. The Home Buyers' Plan and Tax-Free First Home Savings Account will continue to encourage home ownership. I will explain how these plans work in a future column on housing.

Meanwhile, the Canadian Dental Care Plan is expanding to cover eight million lower-income Canadians aged 18 to 64. The average enrollee could save around \$800 on routine dental care. The rollout is already underway, with Canadians aged 55 to 64 now eligible to apply online. Those over 65 were previously eligible. Many dentists accept the plan, with claims administered through Sun Life Canada.

In one way or another, most NOTLers should benefit from these upcoming changes.

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](mailto:smcgfinplan@gmail.com).

**HAPPY 55TH ANNIVERSARY**  
MAY 9TH, 1970

# 'Strong mayor powers' require scrutiny from town



Wayne Gates  
Special to The Lake Report

The Ontario government's decision to expand "strong mayor" powers to additional municipalities, including Niagara-on-the-Lake, is one that requires serious reflection.

While I understand the intent may be to make decision-making easier and move projects along faster, we must be clear-eyed about the implications of this change — and particularly when it comes to democratic accountability and local control.

Recently, Niagara-on-the-Lake town council voted to accept these new powers. I respect the Lord Mayor and town council's decision, and I know they are working with the best intentions for our community.

But it's precisely because I believe in our local leadership and in our residents that I think this conversation requires more scrutiny — and more caution.

At its core, the "strong mayor" system allows the head of council to unilaterally hire and fire senior staff, veto council decisions and push through budgets with only minority support, so long as they align with provincial priorities.

These are substantial powers that shift the balance away from consensus-based decision-making — something that has long been a hallmark of good governance in small towns like Niagara-on-the-Lake.

We have a proud tradition in Niagara-on-the-Lake of thoughtful, community-based decision-making.

Whether it's planning for development, protecting our agricultural lands, or promoting tourism in a way that respects our heritage, residents have always played an active role in shaping the direction of their town.

Strong mayor powers risk sidelining those voices.

This is particularly concerning when we consider the broader context of regional governance.

There has been renewed speculation about municipal amalgamations in Ontario — something that would have serious consequences for a town like Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Our residents have fought

hard to preserve our local autonomy. The imposition of strong mayor powers raises red flags about what direction this government may be heading.

It's not hard to imagine a scenario where a future amalgamation effort is made easier by mayors wielding unchecked power, supported by legislation that overrides local council consensus.

I've always said that decisions about the structure and governance of our communities must come from the people who live there — not from top-down directives issued from Toronto.

This isn't just a hypothetical concern. We've seen how previous rounds of amalgamation in Ontario often led to higher costs, reduced services, and a loss of local identity.

That's not what the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake want — and it's certainly not what they deserve.

I'm not saying that every decision made under the strong mayor framework will be wrong. I have confidence in the leadership of our local council.

But governance systems matter. Structures that reduce checks and balances and concentrate power in a single office are, by their

nature, less democratic. We should be strengthening democratic participation, not weakening it.

Instead of unilaterally imposing new powers, the province should be working collaboratively with municipalities to understand what they need to serve their communities better.

That means investing in infrastructure, supporting housing solutions tailored to local contexts, and ensuring stable funding for public services — not changing the rules of governance in a way that creates more questions than answers.

The people of Niagara-on-the-Lake are engaged, informed and passionate about their community. They deserve a system that reflects those values.

As your MPP, I'll continue to stand up for transparency, local decision-making, and a government that listens to its people — not one that tells them what's best.

Let's not lose sight of what makes our town special. Local voices must continue to shape local decisions

Wayne Gates is the member of provincial parliament for the Niagara Falls riding, which includes Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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

Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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			4					9	8
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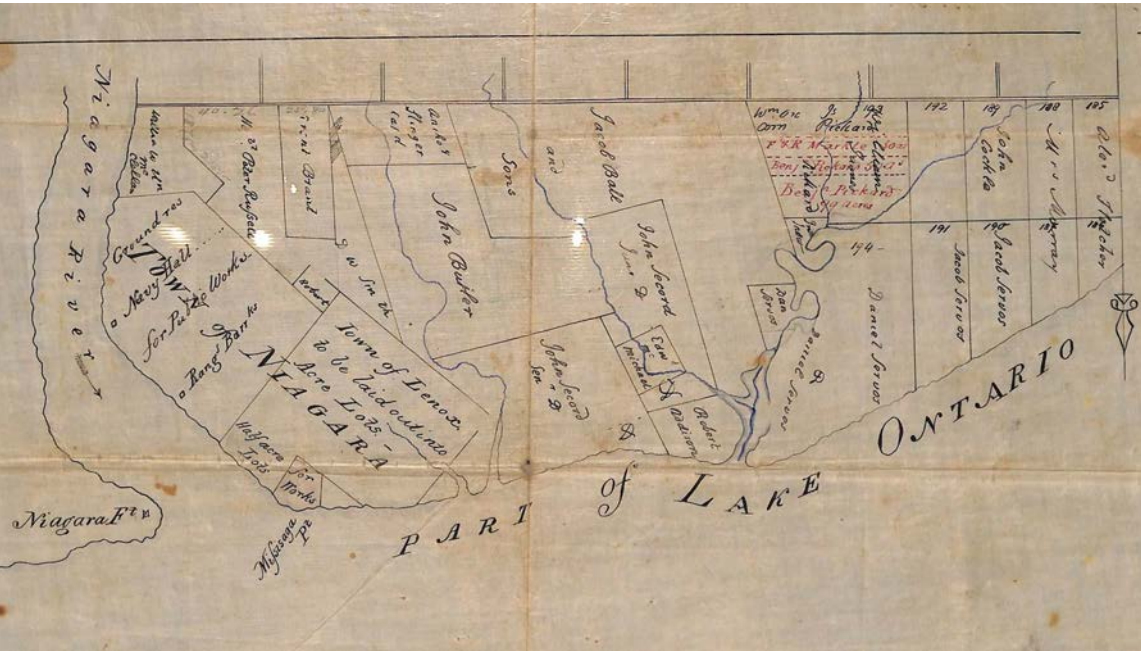
EXPLORING HISTORY  
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# What's in a name? Town of Lenox, 1791

Ouinagara, Ongiara, Butlersburg, Nassau, Niagara West, Lenox, Newark, Niagara, Niagara-on-the-Lake — this area has held quite a few names. This survey map, an 1875 copy of a 1791 original, shows the name Lenox for the town and part of the township. Historians believe that it may have been briefly named after Charles Lennox, an important member of the British government at the time. That name soon disappears, and the name Newark, after its namesake in Nottinghamshire, England, comes into use at the direction of Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe by 1792.

What is interesting with this map is that it notes that the lots were planned to be one-acre plots with half-acre lots closer to Mississauga Point (spelled Missisaga here). There are also lots in the township identified with property owners — some of the first settlers of our community! Surnames include: the Balls, Secords, Servos, Addison Butler, Brant, Fletcher, Murray, Cockle, Pickard, Markle, Snow, McMichael, Slingerland, Russell and McClellan.

While this town was the capital of the province, it retained the name Newark. Once the capital moved to York (Toronto), the inhabitants reverted to the Niagara name that they knew before Simcoe's arrival. The name Niagara-on-the-Lake (sometimes unhyphenated) is believed to have come into use around 1902 when the Canadian Post Office started using these words, probably to distinguish it from Niagara Falls.



## Approval of York Road residential units sparks school board discussion at council

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A draft plan for a three-unit development on York Road was unanimously approved during Niagara-on-the-Lake's committee of the whole planning meeting on Tuesday.

The proposal for 1490 York Rd., located in St. Davids, includes three single detached dwellings and accessory structures.

The development may be formalized as three condo units, but it is three residential buildings, Coun. Gary Burroughs told The Lake Report.

The plan's approval follows multiple rounds of public consultation, environmental review and revisions made in response to resident feedback.

"The houses have been redesigned from the previous proposal," said Kirsten McCauley, the town's director of community and development services.

Councillors raised concerns about environmental impacts and a lack of feedback from the District School Board of Niagara.

St. Davids Public School is a minute away, by car, from the site of the proposed development. The next nearest school is St. Michael Catholic School.

"The public school in St. Davids is pretty full and we keep putting more and more subdivisions,"



Kirsten McCauley, director of community and development services, says the York Road units have been redesigned after being reviewed. JULIA SACCO

Burroughs said in an interview.

Staff submit requests for feedback when new developments come before the town, to gauge how the board will accommodate new residents and very rarely receive responses, he said.

Coun. Adriana Vizzari noted the Catholic school board responded with information about the capacity of schools in its board, but the public board had yet to reply.

Vizzari said she was not seeking to delay the application, but asked staff whether there was a way to secure a response from the District School Board of Niagara before proceeding.

"Unless we hear from both school boards, I struggle understanding it as a complete application," she said.

McCauley said staff would take her comments as a directive to follow up on school capacity as it relates to development applications.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa noted the District School Board of Niagara has a paid planner and should be accountable to taxpayers.

"I know this community is sending significant dollars to the school board to operate, and I would at least expect a response to a planning application," he said.

Burroughs said the Glendale secondary plan also never received a District School Board of Niagara response. Coun. Erwin Wiens added that this has happened with many past applications.

"Maybe not every application, but most," said Vizzari.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor raised questions about

environmental protection, given that the site includes a significant amount of tree-covered land.

McCauley said the application follows a previously approved zoning amendment with smaller setback requirements than the region's standard 30 metres.

She added that detached accessory dwelling units will not be allowed under Niagara Escarpment Commission policies.

A condition of approval includes ensuring proper waste management access. Garbage collection strategies will be further reviewed during the site plan approval phase in line with regional policy.

If no appeals are filed, Zalepa is authorized to endorse the draft plan 20 days after the notice of decision is issued.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com

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# Be wary of this **invasive worm**



## **GROWING TOGETHER**

Joanne Young  
Columnist

A worm is a worm is a worm — right? Well, yes and no.

As gardeners, we know that finding earthworms in our garden soil is a good sign. It is an indication that your soil structure is in good condition and is healthy and thriving. They help to aerate our soils.

Unfortunately, there are now a couple of species of worms that have been introduced into Canada that are destroying the soil structure as well as affecting others in their path.

In this article, we are going to look at the Asian jumping worm.

Let's learn about this invasive species — the Asian jumping worm, also known as crazy worms or snake worms.

As the first name suggests, this species is originally from East and Southeast Asia. They got their names because of the way that they thrash around.

Jumping worms have spread from Asia, most likely through human activities such as transportation of cargo and goods. Once here, they have probably been

spreading inadvertently from moving adults or eggs by movement of potting soil or plants and from use as fishing bait.

Jumping worms are smooth, glossy gray or brown earthworms known for their erratic, thrashing movement and jumping behaviour when disturbed. They have been known to jump up to one foot in height.

Adult jumping worms have a pale, smooth ring or band that encircles their body. This ring is reproductive tissue called a clitellum and can be used to distinguish jumping worms from other earthworms, whose clitellum forms a raised saddle shape, rather than encircling the full body.

At three to five inches in length, adult jumping worms tend to be larger than most other earthworms. In addition, they grow more quickly and can live in higher densities than other earthworms.

Unlike regular earthworms, the jumping worm is found in the top couple of inches of soil. They are usually found in forest areas where there is a lot of leaf litter on the ground.

The Asian jumping worms feed voraciously on forest litter, leaving behind bare soil, which leads to different problems.

The layer of fallen leaves they are feeding on is known as the top layer of forest soil. This layer is home to a vast number of tiny animals. They displace other earthworms, centipedes, salamanders and ground-nesting birds and disrupt forest food chains.

They can invade more



At three to five inches in length, adult jumping worms tend to be larger than most other earthworms.

than five hectares in a single year, changing soil chemistry and microbial communities as they go. Jumping worms can rapidly change soil properties (e.g., water retention, nutrient cycling) by consuming organic material and producing castings that look like coarse coffee grounds.

Jumping worms have an annual life cycle. In a process known as "parthenogenesis," they reproduce asexually. They produce poppy-seed-sized eggs known as cocoons. Cocoons survive over winter and hatch in the spring. Juvenile earthworms then grow to maturity in two to three months, at which point they reproduce before dying in the fall.

### **Management practices**

Observe and report. Learn to identify jumping worms (see above description) and report any that you find. Visit [www.reportcanadainvasives.ca](http://www.reportcanadainvasives.ca) to learn how to report your sighting.

Don't buy or use jumping worms for bait, compost or gardening. Jumping worms are popular as bait due to their erratic movements. Do not purchase bait sold as jumping worms, Asian jumping worms, crazy

worms, Alabama jumpers or snake worms.

Check new soil, compost, mulch and plants for jumping worms. Look for the worms themselves, as well as their castings, which look like coffee grounds.

If you suspect or find an infestation, dispose of contaminated soil in plastic bags in the garbage, destroy worms by freezing them, and rinse the roots of plants.

If you're in an area infested with jumping worms, you can help manage the invasion:

Don't share soil, compost, or mulch from an area with a known infestation.

Increase soil temperatures. Jumping worms cannot survive temperatures above 40 C. You can increase soil temperatures by tarping sections of soil or compost that are in direct sunlight. If necessary, you can place soil in plastic bins to move it to a sunlit area.

The best way to keep this pest from becoming a bigger problem is by being diligent.

Keep an eye out for this worm as you work in your garden. If you spot any, make sure you report it to the website listed above.

Joanne Young is a Niagara-on-the-Lake garden expert and coach. See her website at [joanneyoung.ca](http://joanneyoung.ca).

**The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society is hosting a series of Saturday morning gardening classes, available to the public. They will be facilitated by Joanne Young and will run until May 31. For all the details and to pre-register for the classes, visit [notlhotsociety.com/classes](http://notlhotsociety.com/classes).**

## Obituaries

### David Stewart Gray



GRAY, David Stewart — Passed away peacefully with his loving family by his side at St. Catharines General Hospital on Sunday April 27, 2025 at the age of 74 after a brief but courageous battle.

Beloved husband to Joy for 52 years, devoted and loving father to Stephen

(Angie) Gray and Lesley (Jeff) Giessler. Adoring and caring grandfather to Ava, Matthew, Lea, and Evan. Dear brother of Lynda (John) Noble, Jennifer (the late Peter) Ming and Nicholas (Kathy) Gray. Brother in-law to Margaret (Derek) Nesbit. Fondly remembered by many nieces, nephews and a wide circle of friends and neighbours.

David was born in Londonderry, Northern Ireland to William James (Billy) and Joy. The eldest of 4 children, in his early years he worked at the local builders yard and was a keen badminton player. Throughout his life he loved gardening, reading, music, home improvement projects, a well-cooked meal or take out and the occasional generous serving of ice cream. He was a keen supporter of Manchester United and Newcastle United. His devotion to and love for his wife and family was clear for all to see. He was a tough man with a giant heart.

Cremation has taken place. A private family service has taken place. A celebration of his life will take place at a later date. Arrangements entrusted to Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Those who wish may make a memorial donation to either the Canadian Cancer Society or Golden Rescue charity.

Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)



### Sophie Marie Kowalchuk



KOWALCHUK, Sophie Marie —

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Sophie Marie Kowalchuk at age 96. She passed away peacefully on May 1, 2025, at Millennium Trail Manor Long Term Care in Niagara Falls.

She was born in Candiac,

Saskatchewan, on June 4, 1928, and lived on the family farm in her youth. In 1948, she moved to Fort William, Ontario, where she married Walter Nicholas Kowalchuk, who passed away in August 1979. Sophie had two children, including Gerry Kowalchuk and Kory Kowalchuk, who reside in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Steinbach, respectively.

One of the most significant changes in Sophie's life occurred in 2011 at age 83 when her son Gerry arranged to move her to Niagara on the Lake to be close to her children and grandchildren. This proved to be a blessing with close attention to Sophie's health and family relationships.

Sophie was predeceased by her parents, Joe Pielak and Stanislava Slusar; her sisters Mary, Laura, Stella, and Theresa; and her brothers Peter, Joseph, Teddy, and Eddy. Sophie is survived by her sons Gerry and Kory and her sister Bernice, granddaughters Chandi, Jill and Chelsey, and seven great grandchildren.

Cremation has taken place, and a private family gathering will be held later at the family burial plot in St. Andrews Cemetery, in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Arrangements entrusted to Considerate Cremation & Burial Services, 26 Nihan Drive, St. Catharines, 289-362-1144. Online condolences may be made at [CCBSCares.ca](http://CCBSCares.ca)



## Card of thanks

### Thank you, from the Cherubini family

The family of Mark Cherubini would like to express their heartfelt thanks to our extended family, friends, and coworkers for their love and support during our recent loss. The sympathy cards, texts, food, donations to Guide Dogs Foundation and floral tributes were greatly appreciated. His celebration of life was well attended which was a testament that he was greatly loved by so many. We laughed more than we cried as we heard many stories from Mark's former students, colleagues and friends. It was nice to see people wearing AN Myer shirts and Maple Leaf jerseys (Go Leafs Go). We would also like to acknowledge the many people who helped our family and Mark along his journey. To our family and friends who continued to visit with him even though conversation was minimal, he really did appreciate your company. To our St. Elizabeth nurses and PSW's for monitoring his condition and providing the much needed respite, we thank you. To his hockey team, The Prehistorics, for including him in the pregame locker room banter when he could no longer play the game. Thank you to the staff at the Adult Day program for accommodating him for as long as you did. He looked forward to attending. To Mike C who noticed Mark struggling on one of our walks and picked us up in his truck and drove us safely home. To Miranda and Howard for randomly stopping by with gifts, so sweet of you both. To Johnny Petrie of Niagara Trailers for clearing the snow from our driveway, one less thing for us to do. To our new friends in Cannery Park for your words of comfort, sharing your stories and listening to ours. These random acts of kindness lifted our spirits and helped us through our darkest days. Thank you to Melanie, Cheryl and Dr. Huggins and staff at Marotta Family Hospital for your compassion and professionalism during Mark's final hours. But mostly, we would like to thank Mark's brothers Alan, Norman and Rich who never gave up on Mark. For spending countless hours at his side having lunch together, reading him the newspaper and watching tv with him. Your compassion and commitment to him was unlike anything we have ever seen. We cannot thank you enough.

Forever grateful, the Cherubini Family



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