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Canada's most-awarded community newspaper

March 20, 2025

#### Town's buy Canadian policy waiting on staff report

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-onthe-Lake has approved a Canadian purchasing policy, but it'll still be a while before any action is taken.

As is often the case in NOTL, council is waiting on a staff report.

U.S. President Donald Trump imposed 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian goods on March 4, after a monthlong delay, prompting Canada to retaliate.

On March 6, the U.S. paused tariffs on some Canadian goods until April 2, but only those compliant with the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement.

Responding to the situation, Coun. Sandra O'Connor reflected Welland's earlier move and proposed a temporary procurement policy, to favour Canadian products and services — just a week before tariffs would take effect, on Feb. 25. The motion was passed unanimously.

To support Canadian businesses and protect its economy from U.S. tariffs, the mayor of Welland, Frank Campion, quickly directed staff to create a temporary policy that focuses on buying Canadian-made products.

"I am exercising the

Continued on Page 3

# NOTL goes green

St. Patrick's Day crowds celebrate with music, Guinness and cabbage



Helmi Moehl, George Watson (front), Marguerite Luczay and Mary Watson, celebrate St. Patrick's Day at the Legion Branch 124. The Legion served corned beef with cabbage and champ, and cold beer to wash it down while John Claus entertained the crowd. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

#### Andrew Hawlitzky | The Lake Report

iagara-on-the-Lake embraced the luck of the Irish this week as local hotspots hosted packed St. Patrick's Day events.

The Sandtrap Pub & Grill celebrated Monday with sold-

out festivities. Co-owner Paul Dietsch called it "one of the busiest single-day events" of

The pub served plates of Irish stew and corned beef and "lots of Guinness" while Barley Brae's performed live to a shoulder-to-shoulder crowd from 4 to 8 p.m.

"There wasn't a chair left — people were sitting on top of each other, and there were smiles all around," said Dietsch.

The Irish Harp Pub celebrated with giveaways and a prize wheel as part of its 12-day festival that drew in a full crowd starting at 10 a.m.

Continued on Page 6

#### Glendale industrial development approved amid environmental concerns

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

NOTL councillors have approved a draft plan for an industrial subdivision on Townline Road in Glendale — but not without some conversation about how the developers plan to ensure environmental protection.

The draft plan for 353 Townline Rd. was approved during Tuesday's committee of the whole meeting and includes plans for nine blocks totalling 11.34 hectares, or 28 acres

— four blocks for industrial development, two blocks for environmental protection, a block for stormwater management, a block for an

existing drainage channel and the extension of a public road

The lands are designated for employment and industrial uses, with no zoning changes required to approve the proposal.

Before approval, Coun. Sandra O'Connor raised concerns about environmental impact.

"This file has significant environmental considerations," O'Connor said.

O'Connor listed concerns

around amphibian habitats, woodland impact, watercourse erosion, negative mitigation, stormwater management and more.

"This subdivision will

Continued on Page 2





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#### Draft plan for Glendale development approved

#### Continued from Front Page

result in direct impact to regional designated significant environmental features, resulting in their partial or entire displacement of their current conditions," she said.

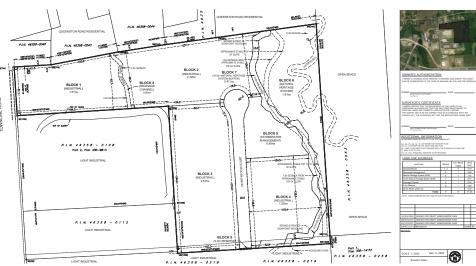
She said her understanding from the latest documentation from the region is that the region staff are unable to support approval of the application.

Kirsten McCauley, the town's director of community and development services, explained planners have been working closely with the region and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority to develop a number of conditions to address environmental features.

McCauley also clarified the draft plan is subject to the conditions outlined.

Many conditions will end up in the subdivision agreement, where it will return to council and councillors can see how they were cleared, she said.

O'Connor attempted to amend one condition in the plan regarding the vernal pool habitat creation plan.



The proposed Glendale subdivision is set to include nine blocks, with several dedicated to environmental preservation, including a relocation of a small wetland. SOURCED

A vernal pool is a type of wetland: A seasonal pool of water that provides a habitat for specific types of plants and animals.

The goal of O'Connor's change was to ensure the condition around the vernal pool meets the region's specifications by adjusting how the condition is phrased in the plan, she

McCauley clarified that town staff had cleared all conditions with the region and received its sign-off.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said that because the region agreed with all the conditions of the proposal, he is comfortable with the condition around the vernal pool as it stands.

Coun. Erwin Wiens agreed.

"I'm confident the region, the (conservation authority) and the town can come together to address those issues," he said.

McCauley said she is confident the region will receive adequate information to clear the condition.

O'Connor's amendment was defeated 5-4, and the main plan was approved, with O'Connor voting in

The plan and its conditions will come back to council for review, which will include the conditions around environmental protection.

Kevin Freeman, the director of planning for Kaneff Group, also took questions during the meeting and confirmed that valley lands east of the site will be protected.

"The other wetland located on the site is rather small," he said, adding that a replication of that wetland will be created elsewhere on

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#### NOTL working toward Canadian purchasing

Continued from Front Page

strong mayor powers under the Municipal Act, 2001 to direct staff to investigate," Campion stated in the direc-

Other municipalities, like NOTL, did not immediately use these powers, instead passing the motion later on through town council ap-

St. Catharines did the same. On March 17, its city council approved a temporary procurement policy to focus on buying Canadian.

In an interview with The Lake Report, O'Connor said she, too, was waiting for a progress update, but then remembered — staff still has to present a detailed report to council before the town will take any actual action.

There is no timeline for when staff will complete it.

The policy was updated in the first place to ensure all of the town's procurement decisions prioritize Canadian-made goods and services, while also staying in line with trade agreements and existing policies, the motion states.

Such as preference being given to NOTL businesses first, followed by those in the Niagara region, and then Ontario-owned businesses.

The town's new policy calls on federal and provincial governments to remove any barriers that prevent municipalities from choosing Canadian suppliers for projects and purchases.

It also urges these governments to keep working together to protect the Canadian economy.

This includes offering



The Canadian flag flies beside the NOTL flag at town hall in Virgil. PAIGE SEBURN

financial aid to businesses affected by tariffs, expanding export opportunities beyond the U.S. and pushing for tariff reductions to help Ontario stay competitive.

The motion states how deeply the town and region's economy relies on U.S trade and the potential risks posed by the proposed tariffs, like how they could cost Ontario 500,000 jobs.

In 2023, 532 businesses in Niagara exported \$5.9 billion worth of goods to the U.S. — which makes up 72 per cent of total exports from Niagara businesses.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake alone, more than 80 businesses export goods, supporting almost 1,700 jobs, according to the motion.

All levels of government have some kind of procurement policy to ensure things are done fairly and appropriately, O'Connor said.

This motion is a circumstantial update to the town's current one, she said.

So, it's the focus of the

policy that has temporarily shifted, she said, from keeping costs down and promoting sustainability to simply just prioritizing Canadian providers.

The largest purchases the town makes are usually tied to major contracts like roadwork, infrastructure projects and services for stormwater and water systems, O'Connor said, adding that she's unsure if the town has hired any outside-of-Canada companies in the past.

"I didn't think I needed that information," she said. "I think we just needed to say we support Canadian businesses."

"The first purpose for me, I would say, is that every little bit helps band together," she said. "But the second one is for us to stand up and say we're Canadian and we're going to support Canada."

By making purchasing Canadian-made goods and services a priority, it can serve as a symbol of support for local businesses and national pride, she said.

O'Connor argues the policy itself acts as a statement of the town's commitment to making its economy stronger and reducing reliance on external markets in light of tariffs. It symbolizes how the town protects its community and economy through intentional decision-making, she said.

Essentially, she said, it serves as a symbolic step toward town staff updating the policy.

The City of Welland announced its procurement policy update in early February. At that time Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa told The Lake Report that the town wasn't rushing to follow suit but was monitoring the situation.

On Feb. 25, Zalepa backed the motion.

At the beginning of February, he said any changes would take time and require community input.

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#### NOTL has a new option for grinder pumps

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake town council unanimously agreed to endorse a new service agreement with Kimbel Donayre Plumbing, providing residents with grinder pump service.

The town began working with Service Line Warranties of Canada in 2015 as a third-party service provider for the grinder pumps.

In 2024, the town was notified that Service Line Warranties of Canada's warranty program was expiring for sanitary sewer coverage on private property, including grinder pumps.

The new compancy will provide an alternative for NOTL residents who may



Councillors voted unanimously in support of the newfound grinder pump service provider on Tuesday. JULIA SACCO

be stuck without a grinder pump service.

"This is another good example of our staff listening to the residents," Coun. Wendy Cheropita said.

Cheropita thanked operations staff, noting they located the service provider themselves and put a report

together in a very short amount of time.

The request for new grinder pump service was initiated by residents, with the town receiving a number of requests.

Grinder pumps were a key topic of discussion at Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa's open house in St. Davids, where many residents were affected by Service Line Warranties' cancellation of

The motion also includes a \$100 partial reimbursement to property owners who have private coverage upon cancellation and signup for the new service.

Coun. Andrew Niven pointed out the importance of communicating the new service to residents.

"Last time there were only nine who took advantage of this program," he said.

"It's a great program, but it's only as good as getting the word out there."

The town will also continue to stock around five grinder pumps for emergencies.

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# Blood moon rising

The night sky put on a spectacular show on March 13 and 14, as a total lunar eclipse cast its mesmerizing glow over Niagara-on-the-Lake. Often called a "blood moon" due to the deep reddish hue the moon takes on during totality, the celestial event was captured by The Lake Report's award-winning photographer Dave Van de Laar — from the unique vantage point of his own driveway. The eclipse unfolded over several hours, beginning just before midnight on Thursday, March 13. The penumbral phase started at approximately 11:57 p.m. EDT, followed by the partial eclipse at 1:09 a.m. on Friday, March 14. The total eclipse, when the moon was fully immersed in Earth's shadow, began at 2:26 a.m., reaching its peak at 2:58 a.m. Totality lasted until 3:31 a.m., with the partial eclipse ending at 4:47 a.m. and the final penumbral phase concluding around 6 a.m. A total lunar eclipse occurs when Earth aligns directly between the sun and the moon, casting its shadow across the lunar surface. The deep red or orange tint of a blood moon results from sunlight filtering through Earth's atmosphere — similar to the way sunsets appear vibrant. Interestingly, March's full moon is traditionally known as the "worm moon," signalling the arrival of spring. This year, the rare combination of events led some to call it the "blood worm moon." The final image produced by Van de Laar is not a single shot but rather a composite of several images taken at various stages of the eclipse, from the initial faint dimming as the moon entered Earth's penumbra to the dramatic red glow during totality and the subsequent phases as it emerged back into full sunlight. These individual photographs were then combined into a final image. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

#### Monday's Learn and Live session tackles seniors housing

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

A group advocating for housing options for seniors has found that many of NOTL's seniors don't want to leave Niagara-on-the-Lake, and they want more housing options so they can stay in the community where they live.

During the next public library Learn & Live session on March 24, Cindy Grant, one of the group's leading members, will update residents on the ongoing discussions and latest survey findings.

Late last year, Grant host-



Cindy Grant will give a breakdown on what her seniors housing group has learned and what the next steps are at Monday's Learn and Live session.

ed a series of sessions to discuss the group's housing options survey conducted earlier in the year and take in more NOTLer feedback
— the Learn & Live session
will expand on that.

The presentation will start with a summary of the survey results and continue with who the group has been talking to and working with since then, ending with an open discussion sharing what living options residents in town currently have and new choices they'd like to see in the future.

"It'll be a chance to get some ideas from other people in terms of what they would like to see as options," Grant told The Lake Report.

The next step is presenting these finds to town

council, Grant said.

"This presentation will be a dress rehearsal for it," she said.

The group is also hoping to contact developers who are building retirement residences to get them interested in NOTL, Grant said — living options from independent homes with full supports in place to full-blown long-term care homes.

Spots are filling up fast for Grant's Learn & Live session, "Senior Housing Options in NOTL."

To register online and receive your spot, visit notl-publiclibrary.org.

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Left: Brenyo Irish Dance brings St. Patrick's Day spirit to Niagara-on-the-Lake, performing lively Irish steps in front of Irish Design on Queen's Street. The dancers toured around Niagara on Monday. Right: Irish Harp staff, along with owner Jovie Joki, give out St. Patrick's Day swag and prizes in front of the restaurant on Monday. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

# Irish culture celebrated at NOTL pubs and beyond

Continued from Front Page

The Business of the Year award-winning pub had to impose a three-hour table limit to accommodate the high demand.

Co-owners Jovie Joki and Jeremy Buckland were at the prize table in front of the pub, where all guests and passersby were free to spin the wheel to win St. Patrick's Day attire.

"We did the 12 Days of Paddy's again this year,

including a draw where you could win a trip to Ireland, plus a lot of other fun gifts as our little way of giving back to the community," said Joki.

The pub sponsored the 25th-anniversary Rhythm of the Dance last Sunday at the First Ontario Performance Arts Centre, featuring signature Irish dances and Celtic music.

"That event was great, it was a packed performance," said Buckland.

The pub's 12-day lineup featured musical acts including: Paddyman, The Danny Boys, The Feverish Lemons, Kayar, The O'Deadlys, The Other Band, Pat Matthews Duo, Moonlight Co., and Fiddlin' Around.

Kilrish Triple Distilled and the pub's house band Patsy & the Muscle performed last Monday.

Over at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124, members of the commu-

nity came out to enjoy the legion's annual St. Patrick's Day dinner.

For \$25 per person, over 70 guests dined on corned beef, cabbage and bread pudding starting at 5 p.m., while guitarist and multi-instrumentalist John Claus performed.

"He's always a great show," said branch president Allen Howse.

The dinner, a six-year tradition, required weeks of preparation by loyal volun-

teers and Howse believes they've perfected the event.

Howse spoke about the Legion's plans going forward during the dinner.

"We've had some passionate discussions over the past couple of months about what we're going to do, looking at our future needs, and we're still working at that," said Howse.

Renovation plans are still in their early stages, with no dedicated fundraising events planned yet. "We want to upgrade the look and the comfort of our clubhouse and the hall upstairs as well," said Howse.

Members will elect a new executive on April 23, transitioning leadership on June 1. Howse will be running for president of Legion Branch 124 again.

"We're working to ensure this space serves Niagaraon-the-Lake for years to come," said Howse.

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#### NEWS 🕞

#### NDP's Gates won popular vote in NOTL

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

When it comes to the latest provincial election, half of Niagara-on-the-Lake's residents who cast their ballots saw their choice for the riding's leader, NDP Wayne Gates, come out on top.

New poll-specific results from Elections Canada show that 52.6 per cent of people who went to the polls in NOTL voted in favour of the Gates, from the New Democratic Party, who has held the Niagara Falls riding seat since 2014.

Gates was sworn in on Monday, along with MPPs from across Ontario.

Looking at the five villages that make up NOTL and votes cast at six polling stations across town, the numbers indicate the NDP's biggest support came from voters in Old Town, while the Progressive Conservative party put up the biggest fight in Glendale and long-term care home Radiant Care Pleasant Manor.

The Lake Report analyzed individual poll results from votes cast on election day, Feb. 27, at the NOTL Community Centre, Bethany Mennonite Church, the Centennial Arena, Holiday



Wayne Gates won the popular vote at four of six NOTL polling stations. PC candidate Ruth-Ann Nieuwesteeg took the win at the Holiday Inn Express and Radiant Care Pleasant Manor. FILE/PAIGE SEBURN

Inn Express NOTL, the St. Davids Lions Club and Pleasant Manor, as well as votes from the town's advanced polling station on Feb. 22.

Gates was the top votegetter at four of NOTL's six polling stations, with some of his biggest support coming from voters at the community centre, where he got 837 of the total 1,533 total votes.

Progressive Conservative candidate Ruth-Ann Nieuwesteeg was well behind with 485 votes. With a 352-vote difference, this station saw the widest margin between its two leading candidates.

Nieuwesteeg put up the biggest fight at the Holiday Inn Express poll in Glendale and Pleasant Manor, the two stations where she outpolled Gates.

She got 281 votes (43.3 per cent) in Glendale, while Gates received 244 votes — just 37 votes separated them.

Similarly, the race was closer among those voting at the Lions Club poll in St. Davids: Nieuwesteeg received 659 votes, 36 fewer than Gates.

At Pleasant Manor, Nieuwesteeg took home 42 votes (46.7 per cent), where Gates received 35 (38.9 per cent) — an even smaller margin of seven votes between them.

The closest race took place at Bethany Mennonite Church, where the vote was neck and neck, with Gates edging Nieuwesteeg by just three votes. The NDP took more than 35 per cent of the votes at each poll, garnering 54.6 per cent at the community centre, 48.2 per cent at the Centennial Arena in Virgil, 45.7 per cent at the St. Davids Lions Club, 42.7 per cent at Bethany Mennonite Church, 40.7 per cent at the Holiday Inn Express and 38.9 per cent at Radiant Care Pleasant Manor.

When including votes at Radiant Care Pleasant Manor and NOTL's advance poll at the community centre, an even 4,000 ballots were cast for Gates to represent the Niagara Falls riding, while Nieuwesteeg received 2,968.

The town's advanced poll, in particular, showed the largest margin of support for Gates, with 58.7 per cent of early votes cast for him, while Nieuwesteeg received 32.1 per cent of early-bird votes.

Voter results from the other five candidates, including early ballots, were: Shafoli Kapur (Liberal), 630; Celia Taylor (Green Party), 130; Gary Dumelie (New Blue Party), 109; Andrew Soifert (Ontario Party), 38; and Joedy Burdett (Independent), 26.

Ontario's legislature is scheduled to open at Queen's Park on April 14. juliasacco@niagaranow.com

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#### Website aims to connect locals with farms

Andrew Hawlitzky The Lake Report

A new website and Facebook group looking it make it easier for locals and tourists to find farm stands across Niagara-on-the-Lake is taking off online this spring, as the national "shop local" movement continues to gain momentum.

Shannon Fletcher, who runs a daycare from her home, launched the Facebook group NOTL Farm Stands and Local Goods and website YourNOTL.ca earlier this month.

"It's like a scavenger hunt for delicious local homegrown food," she said. "A choose-your-own farm stand adventure."

More than 200 people joined the Facebook group within 24 hours of its creation.

The tools allow users to locate nearby farm stands selling produce, eggs, honey and other goods via an interactive map.

"With everything going on with our neighbours to the south of here, I don't think it's ever been so



Shannon Fletcher in front of Kauzlaric Farms' stand on Concession 4. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

important to support local," said Fletcher.

The idea to create this group started last fall, she said, as she was "on a mission for pumpkins."

"I thought, 'How do I streamline this search? I need a map. A list of all the stands in one place.' It didn't exist," said Fletcher.

The project is volunteerrun and relies on local vendors to register their farm and/or stand on the website. More than 20 stands and local growers are currently listed with more expected to be added.

Farmers and vendors can register for free on YourN-OTL.ca to manage listings, including hours and products. Residents and tourists view the map without creating accounts.

"It's so important to support the local farmers in our communities, and lucky for us, we live in one of the richest agricultural areas in Ontario, if not Canada," said Fletcher.

Jason Chow has been the project's "tech whiz" developing the website's technical framework and is an admin on the Facebook

"I hope hotels in the area will be willing to use our website to show tourists local farms to find fresh produce, but it's still in its early stages," said Fletcher.

No formal partnerships with hotels exist yet, but Fletcher is hopeful about the future of YourNOTL.ca as a resource for residents and tourists to support local growers and agri-tourism.

andrew@niagaranow.com



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#### Come in costume to Yellow Door's 'Beauty and the Beast Jr.'

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Attention parents with youngins — dress them as their favourite Beauty and the Beast character for a chance to win Disney merchandise at Niagaraon-the-Lake's Yellow Door Theatre Project's production next week

Wrapping up its latest season, Yellow Door's production of "Beauty and the Beast Jr." will be hitting the stage March 26 and 27 - ashortened version of the classic 18th-century French fairy tale about Belle, a young woman who finds herself in an enchanted castle with a cursed prince.

With its first stage show of the new year, the production company is also celebrating its 10th anniversary since it opened its door in Niagaraon-the-Lake to aspiring young performing artists.

The show will run at the Greg Frewin Theatrical Centre in Niagara Falls. Matinees will be at 10 a.m. and evening shows at 7:30 p.m.

General admission tickets range from \$14.95 to \$23.80 per person and booth seating is available for \$82.21





Left: Sophia Palpallatoc and Kayla Fraser, who will be performing the role of LeFou in Beauty and the Beast. Right: Nate Haick, performs the role of Chip. The show hits the stage March 26 and 27 at the Greg Frewin Theatre. SUPPLIED

to \$124.68 for four people. Six-person booths have sold

Tickets are selling fast, which is why Andorlie Hillstrom, artistic producer of Yellow Door, recommends getting your hand on them as soon as possible.

Directed by Jacqueline Thair, with music direction by Shane O'Regan and choreography by Madelyn

Miyashita, the production features 34 young performers aged 10 to 17 from the Niagara region.

The audience should gear up for production surprises and visually engaging layers added by director Thayer, said Hillstrom.

"It's going to be one of our best shows," she said.

The production choice was because of its powerful message, she added.

"It's all about the importance of valuing inner qualities over outward appearance, the power of love (and) the transformative nature of personal growth," she said.

The cast will share roles — 17-year-olds are performing lead roles that require more experience like Belle and the Beast,

and 10-year-olds have roles like Chip, a magical teacup in the Beast's castle.

Hillstrom said she can't wait to see people's reaction to the prop for Chip.

The 10-year-old performer playing Chip will be positioned under a table with their head poking through the top, wrapped in materials to create the appearance of a teacup.

"It's really cute," Hillstrom said.

Production has been filled with overwhelming amounts of dedication and commitment from the cast, she said.

"These are kids who are bright, they're energetic, they're enthusiastic, they're passionate," she said. "They all, without exception, love performing."

Rehearsals started right after New Year's and have continued every weekend right up until this past weekend, Hillstrom said.

"They did a full week of intensive music rehearsal and choreography."

Hillstrom sometimes wonders how these kids manage it all, balancing performance projects with other activities and school.

"If there's stress in their lives, it's because they're so busy."

Yellow Door is marking its 10th anniversary this year and plans to celebrate at NOTL's community centre on April 27, with live performances by alumni and current members.

Starting at 2 p.m., you can join in on the fun — since there will be lots of it, Hillstrom said.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

#### Behind the scenes: Champions for Niagara film office gain ground

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Filmmakers love Niagara, but without a regional film office, getting productions off the ground can turn into a logistical nightmare, says location scout and production manager Peter Donato.

Niagara-on-the-Lake's historic charm and scenic views attract film and television productions, but disorganized regulations and permit hurdles drive companies elsewhere, he said.

Donato and television producer and scriptwriter Nigel Napier-Andrews have been pushing for a Niagara film office for nearly two years to streamline the process and boost the region's economy.

The two champions formally proposed the idea to the region in July 2023, which received support from Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

Part-time NOTL resident Donato and full-time resident Napier-Andrews have their own production company, recognized by the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, called Two



From left, James McGuire, Peter Donato, Barbara Mantini and Steve Gill gather at Peller Estates to celebrate progress in establishing a Niagara film office. PAIGE SEBURN

Mile Creek Productions they know what the hassle is like.

On March 7, Donato hosted a gathering at Peller Estates and discussed the initiative's next steps. While Napier-Andrews was unable to attend, the gathering helped set up meetings.

One meeting was with Dean Spironello, economic development officer for the city of Niagara Falls, on March 10 — which was encouraging, he said.

Spironello is working on a film permit policy for the city, looking to Hamilton, Kingston and London as models.

Hamilton alone issued 900 film permits worth \$73 million in 2022, Donato said.

"Because of what me and Nigel are doing, we're waking up some of these regions," he said.

But Donato said the entire Niagara region needs to act. He met with George Spezza, director, and Marco Marino, associate director at Niagara Economic Development, on March 12 and questioned whether film is receiving fair investment compared to other regional economic strategies.

Marino mentioned upcoming marketing funds and how they could promote Niagara as a film destination to, for example, Toronto International Film Festival audiences.

But Donato was skeptical and thought Marino didn't provide enough detail.

It's good to remind people that Niagara is a great place to film — but, Donato argues, promoting the region without proper infrastructure for permits, locations and resources won't help.

"To me, that's just throwing more money out the window," he said. "We're not ready for that."

Donato wishes he saw more effort from Niagara Economic Development.

"We're doing all the dirty work, me and Nigel, on film research."

Niagara Economic Development's Eric Chou previously launched a film page on the region's website, featuring a survey for productions looking to film in Niagara.

But Donato said trade and investment manager Chou is too busy with his job to properly handle inquiries and coordinate logistics and that the region's approach needs to go beyond its online survey.

The form asks questions like types of locations productions need, i.e., street scenes, rural areas, etc. and asks which municipalities film productions are interested in filming in.

"It's not very efficient," he said. "And the key to film and television is to be professional, quick, thorough, (and) efficient."

A film office, he argues, would function as a one-stop shop for permits, location scouting, industry connections and logistical support.

"We could list the right, direct contact to call if, for example, it was a production wanting access to NOTL and we knew that the events person at the Town was the first key contact," he said.

It would also ensure Niagara's full range of filming locations is listed, which would attract more film projects to the region and result in more revenue, such as from permits and tourism.

So a film office would need a team who's experienced on sets, passionate about film and knows the industry, he said.

Donato recalled how a production company wanted

to film in Niagara-on-the-Lake last August, drawn by Old Town's aesthetics and horse-drawn carriages.

But the town's economic development officer, Ashleigh Myers, said shutting down Old Town in peak season wasn't feasible.

Donato said he would have suggested alternatives, such as filming early in the morning or in other Niagara

"A good film office fights for that production to come."

With 12 governments in Niagara, he said, having a centralized office becomes particularly important to prevent delays and inefficiencies in the permitting process.

Film offices generate revenue through permits, but Donato said the value lies in growing a thriving film industry.

He and Napier-Andrews are actively seeking grants and funding for the initiative, and with a summer fundraiser in the works.

They hope to see the curtains rise on Niagara's film scene soon.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com





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# Carter Simpson earns two bronze medals for alpine skiing at Special Olympics in Italy

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Carter Simpson is bringing home some well-earned bling from the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Italy, winning two bronze medals in two alpine skiing events on Thursday and Saturday.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake athlete scored his second bronze medal on Saturday, March 15, in the Intermediate Slalom, with a third-place time of 37.92 seconds, coming ahead of fourth-place competitor Ron Greenhorn by 0.72 seconds, but 3.12 seconds short of second-place skier Ekk Logren.

Simpson scored his first bronze medal in the Super G for alpine skiing on Thursday, March 13, after his fourth-place finish in the Intermediate Giant Slalom the day before.

With a third-place time



Carter Simpson celebrates his third-place finish and bronze medal at the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Italy. SOURCED/SPECIAL OLYMPICS CANADA INSTAGRAM

of 48.26 seconds, Simpson was just 0.17 seconds shy of surpassing Laurin Schedereit, 30, for second.

Taking gold was the United States' Jesse Rohrer,

35, who finished with a time of 47.77 seconds.

The competitions took place at Sestriere and Alpette with athletes from across the globe.

To check his results, you can visit results.specialolympics.org/world-gamesturin-2025/competition-schedule/alpine-skiing.



# **OFFICIAL PLAN UPDATE**Public Information Centres

Niagara-on-the-Lake is continuing work to shape the community's future through the update of its Official Plan, a critical document that guides growth, development, & municipal priorities.

You can participate in several ways:

- O Join a Public Information Centre (PIC):
  - March 27 | St. Davids Fire Station (745 Warner Road)
  - April 1 | Community Centre, Simpson Room (14 Anderson Lane)
- Session Times:

4:00 to 5:30 p.m. & 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Presentations at 7:00 p.m.

Have Your Say: Take the online survey at www.jointheconversationnotl.org/officialplan by April 16, 2025.

**Heritage Conservation District Study:** 

The April 1 PICs will include information on the Queen-Picton (Old Town) Heritage Conservation District project!



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#### NOTL Wolves U13 rep team runner-up in district final

The Lake Report

The U13 Niagara-onthe-Lake Wolves rep team wrapped up their season Tuesday night, finishing as runner-up in the Niagara District Hockey League championship playoffs.

In a best-of-three series versus the Haldimand River Kings, the Wolves lost two extremely close games, 2-1 Monday in Cayuga and 3-1 at home on Tuesday.

"Despite the disappointing finish, it was a memorable and rewarding season," NOTL head coach Gary Friesen told The Lake Report.

The team finished the regular season with a record of 10-10, placing sixth out of 10 teams.

One of the year's highlights was handing the Thorold Blackhawks their only regular-season loss, Friesen said.

"Thorold finished with an impressive 19-1 record, mak-





Left: NOTL Wolves #4 Jack Friesen takes a break on the bench. Right: The team lost 3-1 to the Haldimand River Kings. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

ing our victory against them a memorable achievement."

For the Niagara District playoffs, the top four teams competed to qualify for the Ontario Minor Hockey Association's tier 1 championship tournament, while the bottom six teams, including NOTL, faced off in the Tier 2 category.

The top two teams from that round-robin — NOTL and Haldimand - advanced to this week's bestof-three series.

It would determine who represents the Niagara district in the OMHA tier 2 championship tournament March 28 to 30 in Halton Hills.

Friesen noted that NOTL's opponents in the roundrobin included the Garden City Falcons, Port Colborne Sailors, West Niagara Flying Aces, Welland Tigers and Haldimand.

Strong playoff performances by NOTL and Haldimand in that round-robin set the stage for this week's pivotal series.

"In Game 1, played in Cayuga on Monday, we battled hard in a closely contested match," Friesen said.

"The game remained tied for most of the night until we surrendered a late goal with just 30 seconds remaining. It was a heartbreaking finish, as everyone in the arena believed we were poised for a draw."

Game 2 was the next night in Virgil, with NOTL facing possible elimination.

"The boys gave their best effort, but we ultimately fell short against a big, strong Haldimand team," Friesen said.

"After a slow start, we gained momentum and closed the gap to 2-1 late in the game before giving up an empty-net goal."

The team's offence this season was led by standout performances from August Felice and Ben Bayne, while Nello Pagnotta anchored the defence, Friesen said.

"In my opinion, we also had the league's top goaltender in Mason Nichols, whose outstanding play kept us competitive throughout the season."

#### NOTLer conquers world's major marathons

Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Marathon runner John Bobrel always makes sure his shoes are in his carry-on when participating in overseas races — just in case his luggage is lost.

"Shorts and shirts can be replaced, but you can't buy a pair of broken-in shoes," Bobrel told The Lake

Both Bobrel and his shoes made it to the Tokyo Marathon in Japan on March 2, where he received a Six Star medal after completion.

The Six Star medal was introduced by Abbott World Marathon Majors in 2016 to honour runners who compete in the original six major marathons: Boston, London, Berlin, Chicago, New York and Tokyo.

The 68-year-old NOTLer's journey to the Six Star medal started around 1994, when he began his running career.

"I started because of the stress at work," he said in an interview.

When he started running, he says he was only doing five and 10 kilometres at a time until he met a running group in 2005.

"We ended up doing a whole series of races together and travelling," he said.

The running group is where Bobrel met his



John Bobrel with his Six Star medal. JULIA SACCO

coach, Benny Ralston, who manages Runner's Edge in St. Catharines — the spot where Bobrel sources his gear and coveted shoes.

Bobrel's first marathon was the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C. in 2006, followed by Boston and Chicago in 2007.

The social aspect of marathon running adds a new dimension to the activity, Bobrel said.

He recalled coming toward the end of the Boston Marathon and catching up to one of his running partners.

"I caught up with him and it sort of re-energized me," Bobrel said.

"We finished the race together and it ended up being my second fastest ever."

After his first Boston Marathon, Bobrel took time off marathon running due

to work and time constraints, until he ran New York in 2018.

After he retired from the role of head electrician at the Shaw Festival in 2022, Bobrel could focus on training and began gearing up for London, Berlin and Tokyo.

"I usually do a 20-week program," Bobrel said.

His marathon training involves four days of running and two days of cross-training.

"It gives me a nice, gradual (preparation), so I don't injure myself," Bobrel said.

Training has its hardships, Bobrel said, remembering a day in the winter when he had to run 28 kilometres on a treadmill.

"I think any runner will tell you, running on a treadmill is mentally challenging," he said.

Looking back on all the marathons he has run, Bobrel names Death Valley Marathon his number one - but the marathon in the springtime, not the Badwater Ultramarathon in the summer.

The desert weather during early spring is "absolutely amazing," Bobrel said.

"I was thinking it was going to be dead flat as far as you could see, but the road kind of undulates around the valley," he said.

Of the 95 people racing,

Bobrel finished fourth overall in Death Valley.

But every marathon has something special about it, Bobrel said.

"London probably had the best crowds, the most vocal crowds, cheering and the most bands," he said.

"In Tokyo, they're very subdued."

Berlin was the first marathon where Bobrel learned about the blue line, he said.

"The blue line is painted on the race course, it's the shortest route. All the leaders — the people competing for money, they would fall on the blue line."

In Tokyo, Bobrel was one of around 2,300 people who received the honour.

"After you crossed the line, you shuffle along, you get your water, you get your cake, you get your actual medal for that race and then there's a booth for the world majors — you go right in," he said.

"You walk out and everyone is clapping."

Bobrel is far from done with running even after receiving his Six Star medal.

"I think we're going to try and do Sydney next year," he said.

Bobrel and his wife Debbie usually travel together and she has never been to Australia before, he said.

"That would be in August of 2026." juliasacco@niagaranow.com

#### NOTL figure skaters head to championships



Figure skaters Ophelia Xie and Samantha Frydryk, both 15, have qualified to skate in the 2025 Skate Ontario Provincial Championships in Stratford March 21 to 22. Frydryk qualified for the STAR 7 Women and STAR 8 Women. Xie qualified for the STAR 7 Women. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



The NOTL Skating Club had 10 skaters attend the STAR 1-4 Brant competition in Brantford January 25 to 26. Sophia Jeffery and Leila Yoon earned gold assessments at the STAR 3 level while Emily Jardine and Maddie Sotola earned gold assessments at the STAR 2 level. Silver assessments were earned by Alexandra Enns, Taylor Jonah and Norah Palmer at the STAR 3 level and Gemma Fratangelo earned a silver assessment at the STAR 2 level. Julia Lebedev and Everett Oprendek both earned bronze assessments at the STAR 3 level. From left, Sophia Jeffery, Everett Oprendek, Julia Lebedev, Alexandra Enns, Gemma Fratangelo, Taylor Jonah, Norah Palmer, Leila Yoon, Emily Jardine and Maddie Sotola. SUPPLIED/DARLENE DARTONO



**Publisher: Richard Harley** Editor-In-Chief: Richard Harley Managing Editor: Zahraa Hmood Editor Emeritus: Kevin MacLean Design & Layout: Richard Harley Advertising: Megan Vanderlee Contributors: Denise Ascenzo,

Dr. William Brown, Penny-Lynn Cookson, Linda Fritz, Patty Garriock, Steve Hardaker, Andrew Hawlitzky, Brian Marshall, NOTL Museum, Ross Robinson, Julia Sacco, Paige Seburn, Kyra Simone, Tim Taylor, Jill Troyer, Garth Turner, Dave Van de Laar, Janice White, Joanne Young and many more members of the community

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#### Contributed by Patty Garriock

"Praise is like sunlight to the human spirit: we cannot flower without it." - Jess Lair

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

#### Golfers back on the links



Tony Olivero sinks a putt at the Queenston Golf Club on Wednesday afternoon, when temperatures reached over 20 degrees. With him, from left, are Rick Edge, Jesse Lebrasseur and Wolf Dorak. The hot weather had people out and about all across NOTL this week. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

#### Opinion

## Of felled trees and swirling uncertainty



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner Columnist

The chainsaws have been ripping through mature pines in Virgil. Councillors decided the score would be Developer 1 and Nature 0. In response, 700 trees are into the chipper so phase two of a housing project may proceed.

Locals argued against this, upset at the loss of habitat for birds and coyotes as a forest becomes another sea of roofs.

But they lost. Of course. Seems everybody wanting to create residential space lately is being greenlit. Bungalows in Virgil. Hulking condo towers in Glendale. Even a 41-unit beast lurking on the perimeter of Old Town. After all, who needs trees? Every time a member of council passes an open field or empty lot they must be aroused. Pave it, baby!

Well, time for a rethink. Especially now that Tariff Man's in our lives.

A hefty number of properties currently for sale in the region are vacant.

GTA real estate is far from the hot commodity it once was. Look at condos. Yikes. Eleven thousand resales available. Almost 17,000 new, unsold units up for grabs. Young owners trapped because prices have dropped 20 per cent since 2022 with buyers evaporating.

The home-building cartel calls it dire. "Despite a further Bank of Canada cut, excessive inventory and falling prices, GTA new home buyers are nowhere to be found," says the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD).

And yet, we keep approving more, even though the price of new housing has been sticky and insane.

Does Virgil need 150 more families? Can the developer even flog that many new homes from plans and a sales trailer? Now that we've got a new wave of job-sucking Trump tariffs coming on April 2, was the Great Pine Slaughter a tad premature?

"I don't see any immediate improvements in the housing market as we move into spring," says Kymberley McKee, with Sotheby's. "The economic uncertainty we're facing will most likely pervade throughout the first half of the year, perhaps longer. Housing prices are still holding but they may begin to fall as 2025 progresses."



The destruction of 700 trees in Virgil for housing has caused a bit of a stir among residents, who are concerned about the loss of animal habitat. FILE

She's not alone in her caution.

"We're back to swirling uncertainty," adds Bosley's Patrick Burke. "Given the housing market lives and dies on sentiment, the events of recent days will certainly complicate things. What nobody knows is how long the situation will be in place. Is it a short-lived few months of chaos or are tariffs here for the year and beyond? That's the biggest question."

The latest news isn't house-friendly. The U.S. wants to address its \$1.85 trillion annual deficit by gutting government (Elon has his own chainsaw) and getting the rest of the world to cough up tariff revenue for the privilege of selling to Americans. This will then enable Trump to fulfil his promise of cutting

corporate taxes. On Elon, for example.

So what can we expect? More rate cuts. Our guys will try to mitigate the tariff impact with cheaper mortgages. In a normal world, combined with those new 30-year loans and reduced downpayments, that would ignite a spring market. But not this time.

"My suggestion to buyers is don't hesitate to make an offer reflecting what you trust is a fair price," says McKee. "With offers few and far between, vendors are ready to negotiate."

As for sellers, Burke says be realistic. "You need to dig into the reality of the market at the current time. We're really in a 'week by week' market these days. Get dialed in on current conditions and make sure your pricing and overall strategy is backed up with facts."

Or, you can be like Greg Sykes, over at Re/Max. If you like it, buy it. The Trump effect won't last.

"Real estate has always been a foundational asset and people will always need a place to live, regardless of market conditions. If I may be so bold, I believe it is a good time to buy!"

But not to be a tree. Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.

garth@garth.ca





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#### LETTER OF THE WEEK

#### Carney is the best choice for Canadians

Dear editor:

A letter writer, Don Mustill, after denigrating the reputation and character of Mark Carney, exhorts us to "make an informed decision" in the next federal election ("Letter: The Carney coronation — what now?" March 13).

Unfortunately, Mr. Mustill fails to provide us with the choice we have in electing our next prime minister.

For me, the main ballot question will be: "Who would be best equipped as prime minister in the next four years to deal with the potentially turbulent times, with respect to relations with the U.S. and the economy?"

Realistically, there are two candidates.



Prime Minister Mark Carney. WIKIPEDIA

On the one hand is Mark Carney who, as governor of the Bank of Canada, played a key role in guiding us through the 2008 financial crisis, and as the governor of the Bank of England won praise for his handling of Brexit.

He has served as chair of two large financial organizations and has been special envoy to the United Nations. He has the gravitas and reputation to be extremely well respected (by most) and he is very well-connected nationally and internationally.

He appears to have revived and redirected what was becoming a moribund Liberal party, although he has little experience in retail politics; but he appears to be a quick learner.

On the other hand is Pierre Poilievre, who has been involved in Canadian politics his whole working life. He is a consummate Canadian retail politician, but he has no other work experience and no real international experience. Early in his parliamentary years, he was the Conservative's "attack dog," and after becoming Conservative leader, he favoured three-word, bumper-sticker slogans ("Canada is broken," "Axe the tax," "Cut the crime") with nothing by way of proposing policy solutions.

He supported truckers in their illegal occupation of Ottawa. He is the leader of a party a fair-sized minority of whose voters support Mr. Donald Trump, and a minority of whom would welcome annexation by the U.S.

I agree with Mr. Mustill on one point: Make an informed decision!

Michael Fox NOTL



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style. Category: BESTSELLING BOOKS

By Feb. 2024 this juvenile journal, the first of almost 20, had spent 778 weeks on the N.Y. Times children's series list.

**Last issue: FESTIVALS** 

Clue: An art studio called Poetic Kinetics created the ginormous floating astronaut for the 2014 edition of this SoCal music festival.

**Answer: What is Coachella?** 

Answered first by: Claudia Grimwood

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Sue Rautenberg, Lynda Collet, Jim Dandy, Sarah Boccia, Catherine Clarke, Jeff Lake, Nancy Rocca, Wade Durling, Howard Jones, Sheila Meloche, Marla Percy, Rob Hutchison, Tuija Johansson

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

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

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cleaning/maintaining, loader/excavator/back hoe/moving and

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#### Canada must lead the way in global humanitarian aid

Dear editor:

No doctor should ever have to decide which malnourished child gets to eat. Yet, this was the heartbreaking reality for American doctor Jennifer Furin, who worked in a small hospital in rural Burundi, struggling to save children with rapidly dwindling supplies of therapeutic food.

With the United States freezing activities under the United States Agency for International Development, urgent humanitarian assistance is needed now more than ever.

As a global leader, Canada has the diplomatic influence to rally other nations and institutions in the fight against global poverty.

Despite the setbacks caused by USAID, Canada has the opportunity to make a tangible difference by increasing the International Assistance Envelope in 2025.

Canada can help build a more stable, equitable, and prosperous world by addressing critical gaps in nutrition, immunization, and education.

While these crises may seem overwhelming, Canada has the power to act — ensuring doctors like Jennifer never face such impossible choices because #TogetherWeLead.

Email your MP today to show you care about global issues like lifesaving vaccines, nutritious food, and quality education. Let them know why these issues matter to you and urge them to take action.

Take action on World Tuberculosis Day, March 24: Visit a monument lit up in red to raise awareness about ending tuberculosis. If you can't make it to a monument, print and share a poster.

Share your photo on social media with the hashtag #YesWeCanEndTB, tagging your MP, and the MP representing the monument's location.

Kajanan Dayaparan Markham

#### Don't cancel the Great One — or anyone else for that matter

Dear editor:

I object to the cancellation of names such as Egerton Ryerson and Sir John A. MacDonald. I must also object to the cancellation of Wayne Gretzky as well.

There are many opinions that I at times find offensive, but in a free country, people are allowed to hold those opinions. As we reminded our troops at times "We don't agree with someone's opinion, but we will give our lives to allow them to express it."

I think our leaders should stop encouraging people

to set their hair on fire and double down on determining the real issues and addressing them.

> Mark Brown NOTL

#### For the love of Earth, we need to protect and plant more trees

Dear editor

Earth receives sunlight, and we are warmed by it. Heat as infrared energy is released from the Earth into the atmosphere and that would be OK if the CO2 layer were not there, but that absorbs it and reradiates it into the atmosphere, returning some of it towards the Earth.

The CO2 around the Earth is thus a reflective layer and as time goes on, and human activity continues, the layer increases, and more heat returns to Earth. The process is like the glass of a greenhouse, hence the name, the greenhouse effect.

There is a problem here,

however. CO2 is a very stable substance: It stays around, it accumulates. The CO2 released by an ancestor triumphantly warming himself by a coal fire is maybe still there.

The way to decrease its amount up to now has been vegetation, using it and releasing O2 during photosynthesis. Of all the vegetation, trees and forests have saved us — trees have a huge canopy, whose leaves access CO2, and so are efficient CO2 users.

They have done so since prehistoric times, and we are releasing the stored CO2 now, as oil and gas, destroying a possible stable situation.

The only way we have now

of decreasing the amount of CO2 surrounding us is to increase the green vegetation, to increase the number of trees.

We cut trees down. Can we replace them? How might we estimate the replacement number? This is bigger than we think.

Let's consider diameters

and replace trunk areas: Say the tree to be replaced has a diameter of one foot and an area of about 108 square feet. If it is replaced by trees with a diameter of two feet and a trunk area of three square feet, the number equivalent to the original is 36.

Trees are cut down for development, for farming

efficiency and aesthetic reasons. How many should be planted to replace those cut down in Virgil recently, for example?

It is essential for our existence to appreciate trees. We must plant them — in yards, cemeteries and public places and along lines and concessions.

The last could provide a wonderful opportunity for cooperation between the region and the town, between gardeners and farmers.

There is nothing that we presently know of to remove CO2, except trees!

Cynthia Rand NOTL



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#### Addressing some urban myths about heritage designation



#### ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall Columnist

Although it has happened many times and in many places during the past, U.S. President Donald Trump has provided the opportunity for a new generation to bear witness that, if a falsehood is told often enough, with enough conviction, by a figure of authority, there are people who will come to assume it is the truth.

And, as the new fiction is passed from person to person, more and more people come to believe it as fact — and thus, an urban myth is created.

Myths permeate our society, recently widely spread, abetted and profligated by social media influencers and platforms, adversely affecting many facets of that social construct.

As a simple example, let's consider a few of the myths that surround the heritage designation of a property.

**Myth 1:** "It is more expensive to insure a designated property than a non-designated property."

This is false. In a statement to the Kingston Whig Standard's reporter, Elliot Ferguson in his Feb. 10 article, "Heritage designations shouldn't affect insurance rate, industry says," the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming (the ministry responsible for heritage in this province) declared, "Insurance premiums should not go up because of heritage designation."

This was echoed by Brett Weltman, spokesperson for the Insurance Bureau of Canada, in the same article, who stated, "Insurance companies consider a lot of details when setting insurance rates, but said heritage designations are not among them."

Reality is that it is the age of the building, electrical, plumbing, HVAC systems, etc., not designation that may impact your premiums.

So, if you own an historic home (more than 100 years old) — designated or not — and have a challenge with your insurance premiums, simply provide proof to your insurer that your home's "mechanicals" are up to code (no knob and tube wiring for example) and you



The owners of the designated 1817 Miller House have done everything right to maximize its property value.

will likely find relief.

Myth 2: "Heritage designation reduces the resale value of a property offered for sale on the open market."

This is a fallacy — a myth often perpetuated by developers who are mentally locked into a standardized 20th-century redevelopment model (such as Rainer Hummel's assertion vis-à-vis 187 Queen St. voiced at minute 22:40 of last year's May 1 municipal heritage committee meeting) and one which has been conclusively disproven.

There are over two decades of studies which have examined this issue – largest of which was Robert Shipley's "Heritage Designation and Property Values: Is there an Effect?" published in 2000, which analyzed over 3,000

residential properties in 24 municipalities across Ontario and concluded heritage designations did not negatively impact the sale price of these properties.

Studies authored by Shipley, Kayla Jonas and Jason Kovacs in 2011 and Kovacs in 2018 both concluded that the values of properties located in heritage districts perform better in the marketplace than those in surrounding (but non-designated) areas.

In 2023, Rebecca Correia, Otto (Wenhao) Liao, Isaac Kinley, Sarah Lashley, Tanzir Rahman Khan and Evan Gravely at McMaster University published a research study titled "Investigating the Impact of Heritage Property Designation on Real Estate Value" for the city of Hamilton's planning and economic

development department — you can find the study here: macsphere.mcmaster.ca/ handle/11375/28406.

This very thorough study examined the sales values achieved by properties over nearly 40 years. The authors concluded that heritage-designated properties "were associated with a positive increase in sale value" and resulted in "an increase in sale price of residential properties."

In the face of the evidence based on unequivocal data — that is, the actual positive sale values achieved by designated properties compared to non-designated properties time and time again — any argument to the contrary must simply be dismissed as an urban myth.

Myth 3: "If I designate my property, any future alteration to the building will be subject to municipal oversight that will not only limit my options but will certainly come at a higher cost."

This is a knotty one to unravel, since in a small part it is true. To make alterations to a heritagedesignated building, the property owner must apply for a heritage permit and the application is subject to review by the town's heritage planners and municipal heritage committee. Simply, this process is in place to ensure the proposed alteration(s) do not adversely impact the building's heritage values.

Aside from protecting a property's historic assets, this review can also work to ensure that the building's market value (resale price) is maintained or enhanced.

Consider the data presented on page 21 of the McMaster study, which identifies that preservation of the original exterior building materials (wood, brick, stone, stucco, etc.) notably increases the sale price of a designated property, whereas the application of vinyl or aluminum siding (etc.) markedly decreases that sale price.

Moreover, preservation does not necessarily come at a higher cost.

In a 19th-century house, period-correct single-pane wood windows are not only more aesthetically pleasing than double-paned vinyl units, but when combined with interior storms, they deliver equivalent R-value at a significantly lower price.

While there are other myths, I'm out of race track for this week.

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





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# Quiet remembrance of NOTLer on a quiet afternoon



**Ross's Ramblings** 

Ross Robinson Columnist

This edition of Ross's Ramblings takes a very unique look at a very unique life. Please bear with me as I try to capture the essence of one of the very unique heroes of old Niagara-onthe-Lake.

This week, we came together at Morgan's to say farewell to Gerry Whittaker, one of my favourite Niagara-on-the-Lake friends. A great Chautauqua neighbourhood leader, a great friend and confidante on town issues, and a great role model to the children on the streets and in Ryerson Park.

Gerry Whittaker got so much done, always working collaboratively, and his family told me at Morgan Funeral Home he never got angry. And, he never selfpromoted.

Throughout his long and interesting life, he managed to accomplish much in various fields, in various parts of North America. He would do his research and preparation, and then work strategically and as a team to get the fairest result.

What an interesting life, including being drafted into the U.S. Army to work on the Panama Canal near the end of the Second World War. Eventually, Gerry spent several decades working for our town, ending his career as NOTL's first Fire Chief. Always a class act, and he had style. Old Town was well served.

It was a quiet March afternoon as we came together to say our farewells to Gerry and his late wife of 54 years, the former Aline Giselle Poirier from Joliette,



Gerry Whittaker, NOTL's former fire chief, will be remembered fondly by many, writes Ross Robinson.

Quebec. A good cross-section of Niagara-on-the-Lake joined to pay respects to our former fire chief.

Gerry was born and raised in Canada, then lived in the U.S. and other points of the globe.

While living here on Prideaux Street and then Circle Street, he kept watch as our town underwent the inevitable development. Allow me one quick aside. I drove, ran or rode past his house literally hundreds of

times. Perhaps thousands of times. Never once was there litter on the lawn.

And if the garage door was up while he was working around the house, be certain it was as tidy and clean as the local fire hall. I learned from one of his daughters that many firefighters, both professional and volunteer, keep persnickety clean and organized residential garages.

My main contact with Gerry Whittaker was

when we Chautauquans worked with the Town of NOTL to finally get the Ryerson Park shoreline stabilized. He was very involved in this expensive project, and he made it clear to us newbies that it would be to our advantage to work in concert with the town staff.

He knew the key people at our town hall, and he helped us to get this major work done in a relatively short time frame. On time, on budget, and the result has been a jewel for countless people to enjoy.

After his wife Aline passed away, Gerry was an almost daily presence sitting in Ryerson Park late in the morning. He enjoyed the changing climate, and looking out at passing ships.

Local people and visitors to our beautiful area were all welcome to chat with Gerry. He was sincerely interested in people, and living proof of the expression, "It takes a village to raise a child."

Each of the children of Chautauqua knew that "Mr. Whittaker, the fire chief" was watching. He didn't have to say much, just a knowing glance.

And how about the dog walkers? Need I say more about how Gerry Whittaker helped to enforce the town bylaws?

I am certainly rambling this week, but please join me in saying goodbye to a kind, humble, effective and friendly Chautauqua neighbour. Gerry Whittaker was from another era. Unfailingly kind, humble, highly accomplished in many fields, and a great lover of our Niagara-on-the-Lake.

As our popular town wends its way with uncertainty into the future, let us remember our forefathers like Gerry Whittaker.

He spent a long time here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He would surely ask us to be kind to each and every one

My condolences to the Whittaker family.

#### Climate threat should be managed from the top

Dear editor:

As reported in the March 13 edition of The Lake Report, the town of Niagaraon-the-Lake has recently hired a climate change co-ordinator ("Meet Kassie Burns, the face of climate action in NOTL," March

Having just experienced several devastating and deadly wildfires that incinerated more than 16,000 homes near Los Angeles, it's clear to me that climate change is real and not a figment of one's imagination.

Hiring extra staff to an already burgeoning payroll in NOTL is poppycock at best. Climate change affects all the Niagara region. This position should be part of the Region of Niagara's infrastructure and not a municipal responsibility.

Invasive trees and shrubs are found throughout all areas of Niagara and plants climatically and genetically determine whether they are found in Niagara-on-the-Lake or Ridgeway.

Regarding the invasive species management plan, the horse is already out of the barn.

Phragmites, European buckthorn, garlic mustard and purple loosestrife as well as other invasive plants are already found growing almost everywhere in Niagara-on-the-Lake. From



my professional experience, there is no practical or inexpensive way of controlling these invasive plants.

I applaud the Niagara Parks Commission for conducting its yearly prescribed burn program as a pragmatic and historical way of controlling unwanted vegetation. It's also good to see that steps have been taken to control garlic mustard, European buckthorn and purple loosestrife.

While this initiative shows good environmental stewardship, the horse is nearing the third-fourth mile pole. This horse will continue to gallop and these plants will continue to populate the Niagara Peninsula without question for a long, long time. The horse will never finish the race!

As for addressing the tree management plan for Niagara-on-the-Lake, I would like to see contin-

ued use of native trees and their cultivars. I would also like to see the selective use of non-native trees to be included in this plan. Kudos to the Niagara Region for a wonderful tree-planting list for streetscapes.

It's unfortunate that most municipalities in Niagara have a very limited list of trees that are suitable for use for streetscape planting purposes. The tree management plan should be a tool that protects and maintains the plant before and after construction.

With the capable assistance of the urban forestry officer, who is already on staff and, incidentally, is well-qualified, supervision of the site by the town's bylaw enforcement department during this process is of utmost importance.

It cannot be a hit-andmiss affair before, during and possibly after site construction.

I wish the climate change co-ordinator all possible success in preparing the invasive tree management plan as well as a tree management plan that is realistic, environmentally acceptable, practical and affordable for the benefit of our community.

As mentioned in the closing paragraph of the March 13 edition of The Lake Report, mention is made that "it will take time to show visible results."

For your enlightenment and possible interest, the native honey locust tree (Gleditsia triacanthos), was originally given "Gleditsia" as the genus for this tree by Carl Linnaeus, the "Father of Botany" in 1753. It has four-inch to six-inch daggerlike thorns.

It wasn't until 1949 that a thornless honey locust tree was found, propagated and introduced into the market by a nursery in Dayton, Ohio. Some 196 years later, Gleditsia t. inermis "Moraine," the "Moraine" honey locust, came into existence. Incidentally, this nursery still exists today.

Hopefully, it won't take this long to come up with an invasive species management plan as well as a tree management plan for Niagara-on-the-Lake.

John Morley **NOTL** 

#### We need to broaden supply chain options

Dear editor:

For decades, Canada had the opportunity and procrastinated over the urgency to reconfigure and broaden our supply chain options. This is another one of those opportunities.

It's a doomed long-term business model where any business is dependent on a single supplier. Canada has been in this position for decades with the U.S. and for another time the chickens have come home to roost.

Our various media outlets should be screaming for change. Canadians are fed up with being taken as pawns. We deserve more from our elected officials.

Mr. Turner, as a former politician, will Canada ever see a leader with the intestinal fortitude to address our supply chain exposure, from dictators and bullies like U.S. President Donald Trump?

Or are we destined to be followers, not leaders, with our natural resources on the world stage?

If not, why not become the 51st state? The U.S. is calling the shots.

In conclusion, it's a pathetic state of affairs. A schoolyard tit-for-tat shortlived response is not sufficient and will come back to haunt us, in greater force, years ahead.

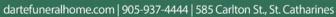
The time for big-picture, long-term planning is now. Other markets are screaming out for our resources.

On another note, the first round of price gouging was defended by the retailers' war cry: COVID, COVID, COVID. We have a new pretext for round two: Tariffs, tariffs, tariffs.

Samuel Young *NOTL* 









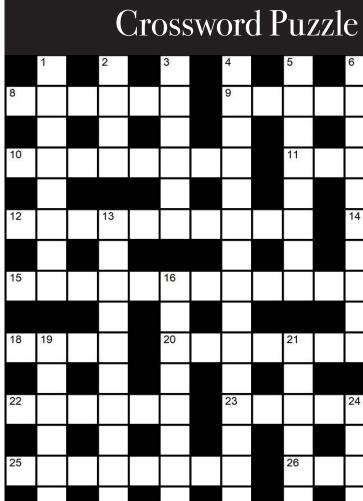
# Have some fun

#### **Across**

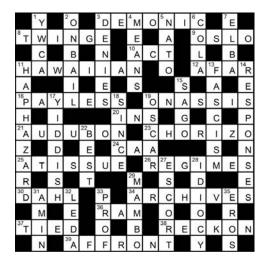
- 8. Part of a sentence (6)
- 9. Newbie (8)
- 10. Where Drake bowled (8)
- 11. Put the phone down (4,2)
- 12. "Late December, back in ---" (Four Seasons) (5-5)
- 14. Some want to eat this and still have it (4)
- 15. Mart cart? (8,7)
- 18. Send (4)
- 20. Upbeat (10)
- 22. He had a talking donkey (6)
- 23. Herb often found with with lamb (8)
- 25. Relating to a law court (8)
- 26. Burger topping (6)

#### **Down**

- 1. Puerile (8)
- 2. Inner surface of the hand (4)
- 3. Take off (6)
- 4. Getting warm (2,3,5,5)
- 5. Kind of ear implant (8)
- 6. Mealtime annoyances (5,5)
- 7. Walked out (6)
- 13. Old-style audio accessory (4,6)
- 16. "The Man in the ---" (Dumas novel) (4,4)
- 17. German IT manager settles elsewhere (8)
- 19. Kind of collision (4-2)
- 21. Regimental animal (6) 24. The high seas (4)



#### Last issue's answers



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#### THANK YOU, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

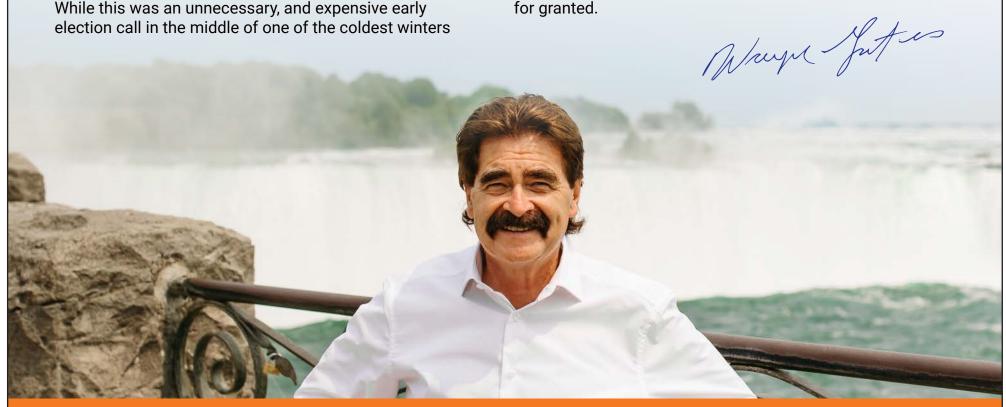
It has been the honour of my life to serve the people of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Fort Erie.

When I was first elected in 2014, I made a promise: to be the hardest-working MPP in Ontario. Every single day since, I have given everything I have to this community—to stand up with you, to fight for what matters, and to make sure our voice is heard. That commitment won't stop now.

While this was an unnecessary, and expensive early election call in the middle of one of the coldest winters I can remember. But through it all, something incredible happened—our community showed up. Volunteers braved the cold to knock on doors, put up signs, and deliver fliers. Voters took the time to make their voices heard, no matter who they supported.

To each and every one of you—Thank you.

Serving you is my greatest privilege, and I will never take it for granted.





#### EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM



# Queenston ice jam,

This photograph shows the spring ice jam of 1955, which caused catastrophic damage along the Niagara River. The ice flow from Lake Erie came over the Falls and destroyed buildings along the river from Queenston to Old Town. The building shown here was the ticket office for the Canada Steamship Lines, where passengers could buy tickets to board the ships heading towards places like Toronto. It wasn't until 1964 that a "boom" was placed in the upper part of the river, near Lake Erie, to limit the flow of ice. The ice boom is owned and operated by the New York Power Authority and Ontario Power Generation. It is made of pontoons that are anchored to the bottom of Lake Erie near Fort Erie/Buffalo. It is installed in December and is meant to control the flow of ice sheets that, when pushed by the wind, can create ice accumulation up to 12 feet thick. It is usually removed in the spring, but it depends on the amount of ice remaining in Lake Erie.

#### When electrical signalling in the brain fails



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown Columnist

Biology is far more complex than quantum physics, the universe, and stars. And in biology, the brain is much the most complex system with the possible exception of single cells and the immune system, as close seconds.

But for all its 80-100 billion nerve cells and the trillions of connections between those nerve cells, the brain's code is based on sending and receiving of electrical signals called action potentials — brief several millisecond reversals of the normal transmembrane potential across the membranes of nerve cells and their branches - which are transmitted with speeds, which range from 70 metres per second (250 kilometres an hour) in the largest diameter nerve fibres to as slow as one metre per second (3.6 km/hour) in the smallest diameter nerve fibres.

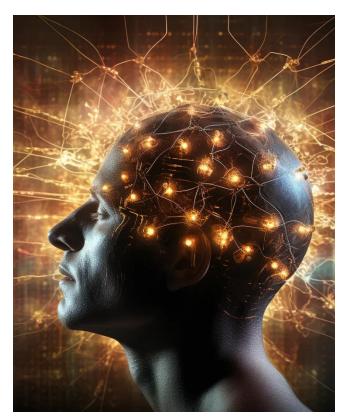
All but the latter smallsized nerve fibres in the central and peripheral

nervous systems are surrounded by a fatty sheath called myelin, which allows the action potential to skip along the nerve fibre with much greater efficiency and speed than is possible for smaller un-myelinated nerve fibres where conduction of the nerve impulse is continuous, with no skipping.

At points where nerve fibres contact their target cells lies a thin gap (the synaptic cleft) where the action potential reaching the terminal of the nerve fibre, triggers the release of a chemical (acetylcholine, serotonin, glutamate, dopamine or others) which crosses the gap and generates a sub-threshold potential or even an action potential in the target cell.

Understanding these processes, the generation of action potentials and how they conduct from one point to another in nerve fibres and trigger a response, excitatory or in some instances inhibitory in the target cell, was highlighted by the award of a Nobel Prize shared by Alan Hodgkin, Andrew Huxley, John Eccles and Bernard Katz.

With such an elegant system for sending and receiving signals — a system which, with some variations, has been conserved through hundreds of millions of years of evolution, usually a sure sign that the



system works really well what could go wrong?

As it turns out, a lot can go wrong.

Information is coded in the nervous system not only by what cells are connected to other cells but by the frequency with which action potentials occur.

Unfortunately, diseases such as multiple sclerosis in the brain and acute and chronic demyelinating disorders affecting the peripheral nervous system, often attack the myelin sheath with the result that action potentials are blocked, or their firing rates significantly curtailed.

The result in the case

of motor nerve fibres is weakness, or, for sensory fibres, loss of sensation, whether touch, thermal or pain or, in some instances, spontaneous bursts of action potentials in the most affected regions of the cells or their nerve fibres, which can evoke tingling, burning or electric shock-like pain.

Fortunately, for the three disorders mentioned, conduction may be restored, at least partially, paving the way for more normal function.

Worse than the consequences of partial or complete loss of the myelin sheath is when the cellbody or its peripheral processes begin to die, whether related to age or more often some inflammatory, autoimmune, toxic, nutritional deficiency or other mechanisms — the list is long.

On the motor side, the loss of motoneurons in the brainstem or spinal cord may go unrecognized because of functional compensation. Motoneurons are connected to a family of muscle fibres which constitute what Sir Charles Sherrington (another Nobel laureate) called the motor unit.

Loss of up to a third of motoneurons may be masked by surviving motoneurons which establish connections with the orphaned muscle fibers following the death of their parent motor nerve cells.

This means that there may be little or no weakness or atrophy of affected muscles for many months in diseases, such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, because of surviving nerve cells that pick up the slack.

That's the good news. The bad news is that should those surviving motoneurons become affected together with their greatly expanded innervation field of muscle fibres, the loss of function will be much greater because they're carrying more than their natural load of muscle fibres.

Similar forms of functional compensations

probably take place in the brain, when in the case of Parkinson's disease, up to half or more of the dopaminergic neurons in the substantial nigra - an early target in Parkinson's - may be lost before symptoms and/or signs of Parkinson's become apparent clinically.

Ditto for some of the dementias, such as Alzheimer's disease, where the disease, and associated deposition of beta-amyloid and tau proteins, has usually been going on for several decades before the disease is recognized clinically.

These illustrations of the impact of losses of the myelin sheath and nerve cells make the point that interfering with signalling in the peripheral and central nervous systems has serious functional consequences, the effects of which may be masked by the capacity of surviving nerve fibres and nerve cells to carry the load — up to a point.

Beginning March 19, there will be a new series on signalling in the nervous system and what happens when those signals fail in diseases. Contact Debbie Krause at the Niagaraon-the-Lake Library if interested.

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



#### Rain gardens — a sustainable solution





Joanne Young Columnist

I recently read a statement that said, "Rainwater is a resource, not a waste product." I couldn't agree more.

For some reason, though, we seem to be treating rainwater as more like something that we need to get rid of. Why are we in such a hurry to send it to the closest storm drain when our gardens can benefit from its use?

So much of our properties are covered with asphalt and/or concrete that rainwater has nowhere to get absorbed into the soil, but will run down the driveway right into the sewers.

Most of us have swales across the back of our yards that also carry rainwater right to the nearest grate.

It doesn't make sense that we want to get rid of any excess rainwater, and then we spend a lot of money to buy it back in the summer months so that we can water our gardens.

#### What is a rain garden?

Rain gardens are an innovative, sustainable solution to manage stormwater runoff in urban environments, addressing environmental challenges such as water pollution, erosion and the depletion of local water resources.

These are designed to capture, absorb and filter rainwater, not only enhancing the aesthetic value of any property but also providing vital ecological benefits. By understanding what rain gardens are, how they function and their environmental advantages, we can appreciate why they are becoming increasingly popular in urban and suburban planning.

A rain garden is a shallow, planted depression designed to capture and absorb rainwater from impervious surfaces like driveways, rooftops and streets. Instead of allowing rainwater to flow into storm drains or create runoff that contributes to pollution, a rain garden collects this water and filters it back into the ground.



Ligularias is a native plant that will thrive when planted in the lower areas of the rain gardens. JOANNE YOUNG

These gardens typically consist of native plants, mulch and soil specifically chosen for their ability to absorb water efficiently. The soil is often amended to improve its drainage properties and encourage infiltration.

Rain gardens can be installed in residential yards, along streets or in larger public spaces like parks or parking lots.

The design of a rain garden is essential for its effectiveness. A well-designed rain garden includes proper grading to direct water into the depression, a suitable mix of plants that can tolerate both wet and dry conditions and strategically placed soil that allows the water to seep into the ground at a natural rate.

Some plants that will thrive when planted in the lower areas of the rain gardens (can tolerate wet and normal conditions) are: Perennial hibiscus, Siberian iris, ligularia, red lobelia and giant blue lobelia.

In addition to their functional purpose, rain gardens add aesthetic value to a landscape, offering a variety of colors, textures and biodiversity.

#### Benefits of planting a rain garden

Natural filtration of rain gardens, for instance, is created by lowering the grade of a yard to sequester rainwater and grow plants that are suited to wet locations. When a rain garden in the spring dries out in the heat of summer, the selected plants thrive in heat and dryness.

Yet, during a midsummer deluge, the same plants tolerate wet soils, soaking it up and storing much of it for use during dry spells.

A rain garden is a shallow, saucer-shaped garden featuring mostly native perennial plants and grasses. It is designed to absorb stormwater run-off from surfaces such as rooftops, driveways and sidewalks.

Rain gardens slow down the rush of water from these hard surfaces, allowing it to naturally soak into the ground.

For every inch of rain that falls on a surface area of 1,000 square feet, approximately 600 gallons of rainwater are generated.

Homeowners can help reduce the amount of runoff water flowing from their property by planting a rain garden.

The garden should be positioned near a runoff source like a downspout, driveway or sump pump to capture rainwater runoff and stop the water from reaching the sewer system.

#### Here are some more benefits of rain gardens:

- A rain garden will act as a filter, protecting our local waterways from pollutants like pesticides.
- Slowly infiltrating water helps replenish groundwater supplies, meaning less additional watering required.
- Can help solve flooding and drainage problems in your yard.
- Reduces the amount of lawn you need to water, mow and maintain.
- Adds beauty and "curb appeal" to your property.

Creates habitat for birds and butterflies.

- Reduces or eliminates the need to water with municipal water.
- Reduces garden maintenance.
- More sustainability and urban enhancement.

Joanne Young is a Niagara-on-the-Lake garden expert and coach. See her website at joanneyoung.ca.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society is pleased to be 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 preregister for the classes, visit notlhortsociety.com/ classes.

#### **Obituaries**

#### Virginia (Ginny) Douglas



DOUGLAS, Virginia (Ginny) —

It is with devastating sadness that we share the tragic news of Ginny's sudden passing with Ken at her side in the Emergency Dept of the Niagara Falls General Hospital on March 16, 2025.

Ginny is survived by her beloved husband Ken of 57 years, her greatly loved children Elizabeth (Beth) and David, her adored grandchildren Malcolm, Jackson, and Claire. Also mourning her are her sister Dianne and nieces Tara and Heather and their families as well as brother-in-law Andrew "Bucko" and his family.

Ginny was born and grew up in north Toronto. She attended Saint Clements school where she made many lifelong friends. She and Ken met in 1962 at Taylor Statten Camps on Canoe Lake. Over that magical summer they established a bond of love that would last a lifetime.

They were both born Douglas's, but to different branches of the clan. They seemed fated to be together as it turned out that their respective families' names and phone numbers were side by side in the (very thick) Toronto phone book.

Ginny attended Teacher's College following which she worked with OISE/UT at Huron Street School helping develop new "open concept" teaching programs.

Ginny and Ken were married in 1968 and moved to Ottawa where she supported him through Law School by continuing her career consulting and teaching at various Ottawa schools. In 1971 they moved to Port Dalhousie in the Niagara Peninsula where Ginny was made Principal of and taught at Maple Grove School, a small "experimental learning" center in Vineland. Along the way she led the fight that was instrumental in preventing the Lincoln County School Board from closing the program down, a battle won that she was particularly proud of.

In 1974 she took a leave to start a family as a "stay at home" Mom. She subsequently "dabbled" in the complete restoration of a derelict 220-year-old NOTL Georgian heritage home acquired in 1979, one of the few to survive the "burning" of Niagara, as well as becoming a registered CKC breeder of Wheaten Terriers. With her great eye for detail she and Ken operated a heritage lighting business. Ginny subsequently earned a diploma in Floral design from Niagara College and set up a successful home based florist business specializing in wedding flowers. Thereafter, for 10 years, Ginny was an active "hands on" owner of Thirteenth St Winery, all the while being an exemplary Mom, Nana, and supportive spouse.

It would be remiss not to mention her deep love of all creatures large and small including her daily morning time spent with her ducks, to her many "fur" children over the years, from wise old Sam and Meowsie to sweet Annie who was her constant companion.

Ginny had an infectious personality and presence. She was a caring, kind, empathetic person who gave her all and was loved by all who knew her. She was and always will be the center of Ken's universe and in our hearts

In keeping with Ginny's wishes, cremation has taken place. Arrangements entrusted to the Patterson Funeral Home, 6062 Main St. Niagara Falls. Online condolences at pattersonfuneralhome.com

#### Dennis Holroyd



HOLROYD, Dennis —

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Dennis Holroyd on March 14, 2025, at the St. Catharines General Hospital at the age of 91. Beloved husband of Shirley for 68 years. Devoted father of Keith (Teresa). Adored grandfather of Micheal (Janel), Christine (Shawn), Kirby (Sheldon) and Robert. Loved great grandfather to Adalie, Briella, Calina, Taiya and Mila. Predeceased by his siblings Cedric, Cyril and Doris. Fondly remembered by many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends. A very special thank you to all those who helped care for Dennis, especially

Holly of the Niagara General Hospital and Lea of the St. Catharines General Hospital.

Arrangements entrusted with Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake, in keeping with Dennis' wishes cremation has taken place.

As an expression of sympathy, those who wish may make a memorial donation to the Canadian Cancer Society. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www. morganfuneral.com.

#### Nancy Ployart

PLOYART, Nancy Ann (Biggs) — July 29, 1938 – March 10, 2025

Passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family and friends on Monday March 10, 2025, at the age of 86. Beloved wife of 32 years to John Ployart (deceased 2012). Proud mother to Bradley (Tricia) Waters, Perrianne (Mark) Evert, and stepmother to Shelley (Brad) Rouse, Christine (Steve) Matheson, and Bruce Ployart. Grandmother to Allison (Mike), Chloe (Mauricio), David (Carinne), and Griffin; great-grandmother to Isla. Nancy was a great community builder, and will be remembered by all who knew her, for her ready wit and infectious laugh. After graduating from the Winnipeg General Hospital School of Nursing to become a Registered Nurse, Nancy went on to enjoy a long and successful career notably including Operating Room leadership roles. She enjoyed travel and was passionate for the arts. She spent much of her retirement volunteering for the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake as docent and patron. Nancy focused significant energy to support the Ontario Chapter of the Ostomy Society of Canada until her final days. She lived a rich, fulfilling life and was loved by many. Nancy will be sadly missed by her family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours.

In keeping with Nancy's wishes, cremation has taken place. Nancy will be interred at Highland Memorial Gardens.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations directed to the Ontario Chapter of the Ostomy Society of Canada are appreciated. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com.

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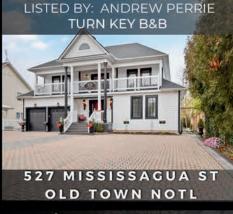












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