



# The Lake Report

Vol. 2, Issue 2

January 17, 2019

Niagara-on-the-Lake

## VINTAGE TO EXPAND PILLAR

Construction of conference centre and subdivision not planned until after 2019



A rendering of the proposed Gardens Project across from the Pillar & Post from 2016. SOURCED PHOTO/TOWN OF NOTL

Richard Harley  
Editor

Vintage Hotels was given the green light to proceed with the development of a nearly a city block of land across from the Pillar & Post Monday night.

The company, owned by Lais Hotels Properties Limited, plans to build a one-and-a-half-storey, 9,350-square-foot conference centre and “gardens project” on the former C&C Yachts property between Anne and John streets.

Town council removed a holding agreement for the property, located at 524 Regent St.

The holding agreement was put in place in 2016, and protected the lot from development of the original plan, which was much larger.

Referred to in one of the designs as The Gardens at Pillar & Post, the project also includes a hospitality tent, an event terrace, fountains, a reflecting pool, a new administrative building, and moving and expanding the current parking lot that exists on the lot.

The proposal will be heard by council Monday night, and town staff has put forward a notice of intention to pass the changes.

According to an information package sent to councillors, LHPL still needs to wait for the new wastewater treatment plant to be up-and running. Meanwhile, the company also plans to build a number of single-family homes on an adjacent property.

The project, to called the Boatworks Subdivision, is also held up by the opening

of the treatment plant.

According to the information package, the plant is now supposed to be open by spring of 2019 — though no report confirming the same could be found on the Region’s website.

Completion of the wastewater treatment plant has seen significant delays, with the date of opening being continually pushed back in 2018.

In a letter to council, Vintage Hotels said it doesn’t intend to move forward with the project this year, but is requesting council approve the hospitality tent and an “event barn,” which would use same the sewage capacity as the future conference centre in the meantime.

The company said this would “ensure there is capacity to go forward.”

Bob Jackson, chief executive office of Lais Hotel Properties Limited, sent a letter to council confirming the company doesn’t intend to develop the conference or administration centre until 2019, and as such the sewage capacity could be “available to other endeavours.”

In another letter to council, Jackson confirmed the company doesn’t intend to develop the Boatworks Subdivision until after 2019, but requested council consider allowing the sewage capacity for the subdivision to be applied for the garden project proposal.

According to the sanitary sewage assessment, the Gardens project will put out around 45,600 litres daily once the conference and administration centre is built, however even with

## WASTE TREATMENT PLANT SEES SOME MOVEMENTS



The Niagara-on-the-Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant. RICHARD HARLEY

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva  
Staff

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s sewage treatment project is nearing completion.

The wastewater treatment plant on Lakeshore Road is in the final commissioning phase. The Region is currently preparing for a 14-day run test in water, which is planned to happen at the end of January, beginning of February.

Once the test is completed, the plant will run sewage for a month, and if everything

runs smoothly, the plant will be ready in mid-March.

“They’re in the testing phase right now so they’re running clear plain water through the system to make sure all the technical parts are working properly,” said Coun. Gary Burroughs.

Over the past few years, there have been a number of delays. According to Public Works Commissioner Ron Tripp, the delays were caused by the contractor.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Icewine festival on its way, protests planned



A Niagara College student pours icewine at the annual festival in 2016. RICHARD HARLEY

Christina Manocchio  
Staff

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Icewine Village to transform Queen Street into a winter wonderland, from Jan.

19 to 20 and 26 to 27. This year marks Icewine Village’s 24th year, and will feature 25 wineries from the Niagara region.

*Continued on Page 9*

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# Lais CEO: Gardens Project will wait until after 2019

*Continued from front page*

just event tents, the flow is expected to be 28,000 litres per day.

“The Gardens will be serviced to the Anne Street and King Street sanitary sewers, and the downstream sanitary sewers to the William Street Pumping Station have adequate capacity to convey the increased sanitary flows from the proposed development site,” said the assessment report, done by Upper Canada Planning & Engineering Ltd.

The property, 524 Regent St., is the adjacent to a parking lot for the Pillar & Post.

The parking lot, which is currently not part of the lands subject to the Holding Agreement, is intended to be relocated beside a future office building facing Regent Street.

The total asphalt coverage of the entire project would be about 986 square metres, according to the site layout by ACK Architects.

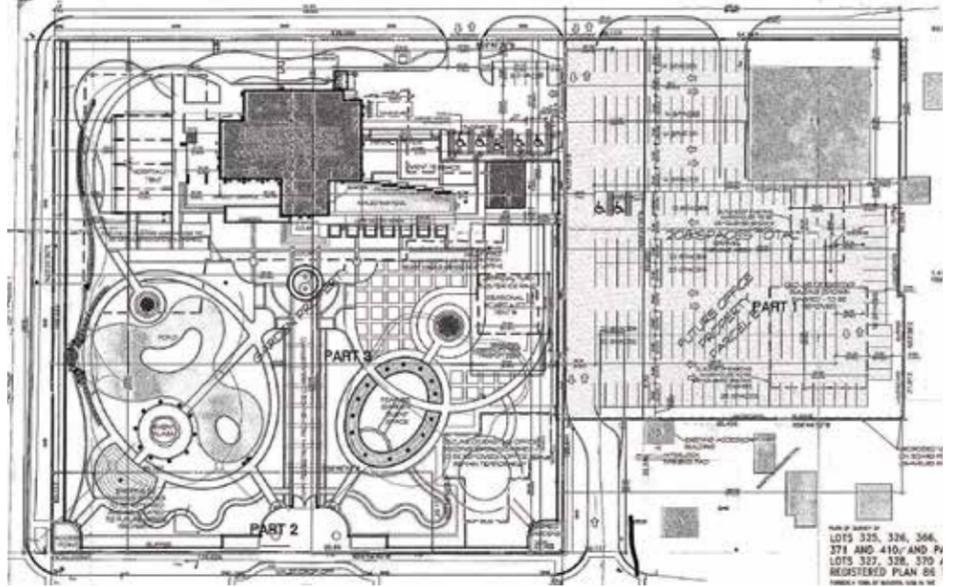
An Environmental Site Assessment was done by David Mignone and Francesco Gagliardi of Pinchin Ltd.

The soil was also examined by Maxxam Analytics. NOTL’s operations department will hold a public open house on Feb.

11, 2019 to receive comments or concerns about the proposal.

Normally, staff would prepare a brief recommendation report to the Committee of the Whole to accompany requests for removal of a holding symbol, said the town’s planning department in the information package summary.

“However due to the receipt of the initial request in early December and the shorter report cycle in December, staff have instead prepared an information report and are forwarding the by-law directly to Council for consideration at the Jan. 14 regular Council meeting,” the report said.



A design sketch of a proposed garden project and conference centre across from the Pillar & Post. SOURCED PHOTO/TOWN OF NOTL

## Wastewater treatment plant sees movements



The wastewater treatment plant in NOTL is set to open in March, says the Region. RICHARD HARLEY

*Continued from Front Page*

“The contractor had numerous issues. They had issues with paying sub-contractors as well as just resourcing,” he said.

Coun. Gary Zalepa Jr. said the project is expected to be completed within the budget.

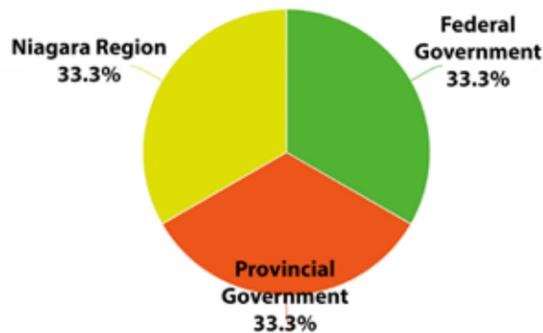
“Any costs and overruns caused by delays are covered under the contract, and

the taxpayer is protected by that.”

The cost for the project came in the amount of \$43.2 million. Funding was provided by Niagara Region, the federal government and the province, each of which contributed \$14.4 million.

Tripp said the Region will present updates on the project during a town council meeting on Feb. 4.

### TREATMENT PLANT FUNDING BROKEN DOWN



## Friday morning cold allows for icewine harvest



Icewine grapes freshly harvested. RICHARD HARLEY

Jill Troyer  
Special

Mother Nature gave wine-makers a window of weather cold enough to harvest some grapes for icewine very early this morning in Niagara.

Mattias Oppenlaender, chair of the Ontario Grape Growers said the temperature dropped low enough by about 4 a.m. and stayed there until 9 a.m., providing a few hours to harvest the more sensitive grapes, namely Cabernet Franc and Reising.

Environment Canada reported temperatures between -8 C and -10 C during those hours.

According to Oppenlaender, “It was a good start, there might be a chance

tonight and Sunday, and then we’re expecting a longer cold spell to start on Jan. 20.”

He added some of the temperatures at vineyards closer to Lake Ontario didn’t get cold enough, since the lake is a moderating force.

Peller Estates winemaker Katie Dickieson shared the good news with staff today, writing “Early this morning we officially started the 2018 Icwine harvest! We had a relatively short window to harvest but managed to pick and press some Cabernet Franc. We are hopeful for another opportunity ... as the forecast looks favourable.

The 2019 Niagara Icwine Festival kicks off today so the timing is pretty perfect!”



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# Changes to garbage pickup explored

Jill Troyer  
Special to TLR

Every other week garbage pickup could be a reality as early as 2021.

Niagara Region Public Works Committee recently approved the inclusion of that option, as well as status quo, for pricing in the bidding process for a new waste collection contract, due to start in 2021. Collection of recycling and green bin material would remain weekly.

“Every other week garbage collection increases diversion, especially of organics” said acting commissioner of Public Works Catherine Habermehl.

Niagara residents are great at recycling, she added, but roughly “half of the households in the Niagara Region are not using their green bin,” so there’s an opportunity to improve.

The staff report that went to the Public Works Committee noted other municipalities that switched to bi-weekly garbage collection experienced an increase in the amount of waste diverted to landfill.

According to the report, “It is a best practice in Ontario



The Region is proposing bi-weekly garbage pickup. RICHARD HARLEY

and the highest residential diversion rate primarily attributable to EOW (every other week) was in York Region (66 per cent in 2016).”

In addition to increasing the use of green bins, it is anticipated that every other week pickup of garbage would likely save more than \$1 million annually, based on experience in comparable municipalities.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Regional Councillor Gary Zalepa said he “sees this as an exploration, to get the price both on weekly and every other week collection, so we can make the best choice.” A recent survey on waste collection showed

NOTL residents evenly split on the question of every other week pickup, with half saying they could manage it, and half saying they need it weekly.

Another option being considered is the mandatory use of clear garbage bags, a measure that has been shown to increase diversion in other municipalities. An audit of garbage in Niagara region found that 14 per cent of the contents of a typical garbage bag was recyclable material, according to Habermehl.

The idea garnered several negative comments from residents in the online survey, including “The world doesn’t need to see my garbage,” and

“I’m not a fan of having my neighbours see what I purchase, eat or throw out.”

There was more support for the use of clear bags in the telephone survey, at 33 per cent, than the online survey, at just 17 per cent.

Zalepa said “clear garbage bags were clearly the biggest flashpoint ... in a fuller context maybe the answer would be different, if people understood the environmental benefits, so I’d like to explore that further. I like the idea of getting more recyclables out of the garbage”.

Habermehl said recycling provides real benefits, “we’re conserving our landfill space, there are huge environmental benefits, and recycling also creates jobs, for every thousand tons we recycle there are three jobs.”

Revenue generated by the recycling program and external funding from manufacturers of recyclable material pay for the majority of the costs for collection and processing.

The proposals will go to local area municipalities for review and comments, and Zalepa noted there will also be further public consultation once the bids are received.

# NOTL loses a star

Richard Harley  
Editor

Niagara-on-the-Lake lost a well-known community friend last Friday. Thomas, the shop cat of Pet-Valu in Virgil was euthanized after his health started to deteriorate, and vets could no longer do anything to help.

“He passed away, the morning of Friday, Jan. 11, 2019. I got to visit with him at the store a few days before he went to pet heaven,” said Erika Buchkowsky, a member of NOTL Cats Rescue.

“His health has not been good for a while and the difficult decision was made. Everyone has been in tears,” said Buchkowsky.

“He was so well known and liked. People that were not really cat people would say to me ‘I’m not really a cat person, but I sure like Thomas.’”

Customers who come into

the store have also been brought to tears, she said.

“Thomas really touched a lot of people and brought joy to their lives.”

Carol Thibault, store owner is thinking of holding a special memorial celebration of Thomas’ life, and Buchkowsky is making up a display board full of photos of Thomas dating back to September 2013 when he was first adopted by Thibault.

The store also wants to raise awareness of cats with FIV and why cats should be kept indoors; Thomas was a stray that got attacked by another cat with FIV early 2013. Buchkowsky said staff at Pet-Value figure he was about 10 years old.

Each year, the store held a birthday party for Thomas, raising money for local cat rescue groups like NOTL Cats Rescue.

Pet-Valu posted a message



Thomas was euthanized on Jan. 11. SUPPLIED PHOTO

on its Facebook page Friday:

*Thomas has been an important member of the Pet Valu Virgil family for more than five years now.*

*Many of you have noticed a decline in his overall health and appearance over the last year.*

*Even with the best medical support we were not able to bring him back to good health.*

*With heavy hearts and Thomas’ wellbeing in mind,*

*we made the difficult decision to have him humanely euthanized this morning.*

*We all appreciate the love and support you have shown Thomas over the years. He truly felt at home at the store and loved greeting his customers. Thomas had a special way of making us all feel like we were important to him.*

*Let’s celebrate a life well lived. He truly was one of a kind and will be dearly missed.*



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## Cartoon: A very expensive Christmas

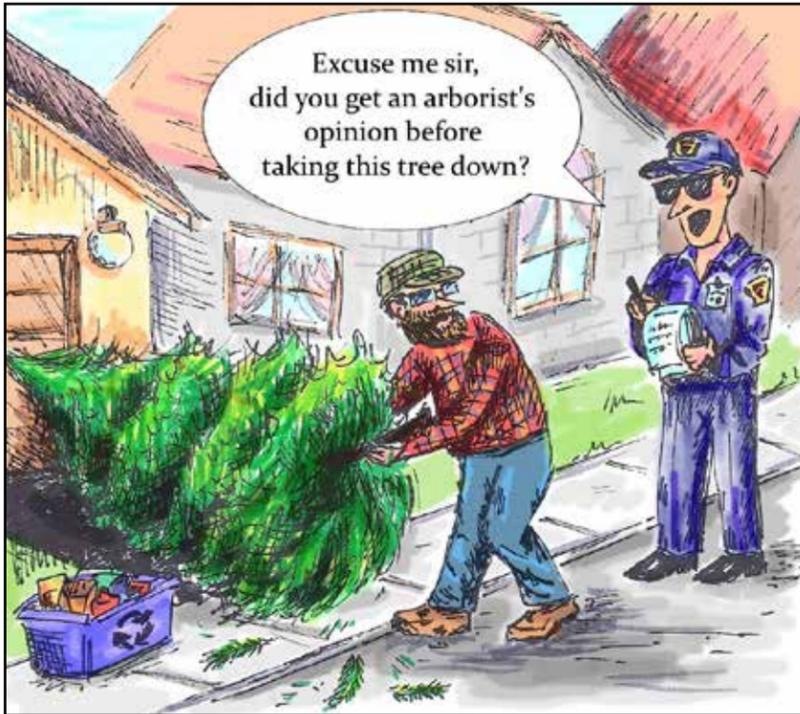


Illustration by Krysia Zygmunt, Special to The Lake Report



### More letters

## NOTL horses demand the right to work

### OPINION

It has come to our attention, the gainfully employed horses of NOTL, that there is a movement afoot to challenge our right to work. Why would this group of people deny us the dignity of a rewarding job where we have excellent working conditions, many included benefits and a happy rapport with our employers? We can only assume, since they have so much free time to campaign against our occupation, that they do not have satisfying employment themselves. Therefore they cannot appreciate how healthy and active it keeps our minds and bodies. Also they do not understand that most people appreciate, and reciprocate with love and kindness, the invaluable ways we contribute to the health and wellbeing of their society. We demand that misguided activists cease and desist in their efforts to take away our rights to the same privileges they enjoy.

*Ann Handels (on behalf of local working horses)*

## Then and now

This is what my back yard overlooked four years ago when I moved to NOTL and this is the view now. The bylaws and moratoriums came too late for me.

*Calista Baltazar*



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# To the lord mayor and council members

### OPINION

I have been following closely all of the events of council since your new terms began, and I am getting very concerned. What I am seeing is a council with short term problems (2019 budget shortfalls), presenting rash and unsustainable solutions.

My first question is:

If the previous council got carried away with unsustainable staff wage increases, leading to a budget shortfall, why are we looking to the our tourists to pay for it?

This is not sustainable. The solution is simple. The taxpayers of NOTL elected the council, therefore they should bear the cost. Passing this cost on to the visitors who keep our town viable, prosperous and beautiful, is only shooting us in the foot in the long run.

Tourism is not the reason our town is facing a shortfall — the prior council and staff are. Making rash, panicked decisions like a 180 per cent increase in bus parking, hotel taxes and food concessions in Simcoe Park will only lead to a long slow destructive path for your golden goose.

I wish life was as simple as add \$1 to each bus passenger, but it is not. Unfortunately, as beautiful as NOTL is, it is not a primary stop for most of these tour operators. NOTL is a side trip from Niagara Falls, or en route to Toronto. I spent a decade in the industry and I can assure you this is the case for the majority (not all) of these operators. As most business owners know, you cannot pass every single dollar of cost increases along to the consumer, you will eventually price yourself out of business.

Many of these tour operators will just begin to bypass the Old Town if it becomes to costly and inconvenient, or just head to wineries on the outskirts. Rate increases like this can often result in a decline in buses/visitors. Did we perform any real analysis to find out?

A hotel accommodation tax is not the answer either. Again, this is looking to your golden goose to solve our internal problems. This is nothing but a new revenue stream, at the cost of your business community and our guests. If the local hotels thought a five per cent increase on a room was feasible or responsible, they would have

raised their prices accordingly.

Finally we have the idea of concessions and food trucks in Simcoe Park. The appeal of NOTL arguably centers around Queen Street and its merchants. Almost all visitors to NOTL, walk this picturesque strip. These merchants sell food, clothing, arts, crafts and souvenirs, among other things. They are the lifeblood of this beautiful street.

Adding concessions/pop-ups/vendors or food trucks is a horrible idea. It would destroy what our guest have travelled to see and experience, by distracting from the character of the town.

It is this basic; for every dollar that would be spent in Simcoe Park, one dollar less will be spent on Queen Street.

The result is a loss to the year round merchants that support our town. These merchants contribute an enormous amount of combined taxes in the town, and get very little support from the Town itself.

This is where our golden goose starts to suffer. As private business owners, we run efficient, fiscally responsible entities. If business is lost due to poor or unfair decision mak-

ing at the municipal level, we will need to begin cost-cutting to protect our businesses to ensure they remain sustainable.

When local business need to cut costs, perhaps they will decide not to maintain buildings to the exacting standards we are used to, perhaps we hold off on painting for a couple of years.

Perhaps put off a renovation, perhaps hire a few less people, perhaps less Christmas décor and flower planters out front. When things like this begin to happen, the goose starts to suffer. Granted, things will not go downhill overnight, but you should be able to see why this is a slippery slope.

It should be the responsibility of the Town to support local businesses, as they are drivers of all towns, and all economies.

With that being said, I ask that as these issues come to votes, to think beyond this year, and think about what are the best long-term, sustainable solutions for our community.

If we fail to do this, 20 years from now, what will set us apart from others on the river, like Fort Erie?

*Scott Gauld*



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# A tree bylaw on private property? Disappointing!

OPINION

I was quite disappointed to read in The Lake Report that a tree bylaw was passed by council on Dec. 5, 2018.

How is it that a topic of such controversy in the past — with no immediate solution although discussed at several meetings by council in the past year — was miraculously untangled and a bylaw enacted at the very first meeting of the newly elected council, when so many questions remain unanswered?

Where is the master plan on urban design which included the management of trees? Where is the report on public consultation with respect to a tree bylaw? Were other options offered by residents? Where is the impact study on the environment? Where is the cost/benefit analysis of such a bylaw or other options? What is the impact on stakeholders including taxpayers? Who was representing property owners and the intrusion of such a bylaw on property rights at this meeting?

Discussions on Dec. 5 failed to address the issues and options from a governance perspective. Talking about species of trees that will make it to the list of acceptable choices is not governance. Carrying out public consultation to discuss the implications of the bylaw and measuring its impact after it has been enacted is working backwards.

When I supported a change of leadership in last the election, I was aiming for higher standards — specifically, more rigorous and evidence-based approaches to decision making.

What is the problem?

It has been said repeatedly that the need for a tree bylaw in NOTL was a response to developers clear cutting lands.

I understand the concern for urban greening. Admittedly I am a “tree hugger,” but I also think we need to

remain rational and apply smart goals in our approach to any decision.

If clear cutting land is the real issue, let’s deal with the real issue. Let’s ask the appropriate questions and find the appropriate solutions.

The Town of Oakville for example is working with the province to provide additional tools to protect trees through the development process.

Joint advocacy efforts by like-minded municipalities directed at the provincial government is worth considering; clearly the issue is not limited to NOTL. There may be other solutions.

In my eyes, an over-broad municipal bylaw that infringes on the rights of private property owners is not the best course of action to stop “clear-cutting.”

It’s like trying to catch a fly with a baseball glove. A fly swatter would do a much better job. And property owners have rights.

Tom DeWeese, an expert on private property rights, argues private property ownership is the single-most effective tool to eradicate poverty.

Yet for homeowners across the nation, property rights have been reduced to the obligation to pay taxes and a mortgage — while nearly every other decision about the use of the private property is made by some level of government.

“Without the right of use, property ownership becomes a barren right,” DeWeese adds.

A tree bylaw on private property in NOTL is of concern to me. It further erodes property owners’ rights and freedom to make wilful decisions about the landscape on their private property.

### Benefits and drawbacks of trees in urban design

Yes, trees offer many benefits. They create an ecosystem to provide habitat and food for birds and other animals. Trees

absorb carbon dioxide and potentially harmful gasses, such as sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, from the air and release oxygen. No one argues that a canopy of trees may even provide physical and mental health benefits.

But some trees and overcrowding of trees can also physically and negatively alter the temperature, chemistry and biology of the landscape. Here are a few examples:

Over-crowding can stress trees making them more susceptible to certain insects and diseases. Over-crowding can also lead to the disappearance of indigenous plants and animal species. Deprived of low-intensity and naturally occurring light, some trees and plants can’t reproduce. Threatened owls and raptors can’t navigate through increasingly dense thickets which may lead to an overpopulation of rodents.

Canopies can block an important source of sunlight making it very difficult to grow vegetable gardens and many sun-seeking flowers.

The cost of maintaining healthy trees or managing debris and the cost associated with damage by falling branches or overgrown tree roots is also an important consideration for both Residents and the Municipality.

### Urban greening

Green planning is crucial for all urban communities. But it needs a broader knowledge-based discussion. Choosing the appropriate combination of plants and trees, understanding their impact on the environment, on diverse neighbourhoods and on maintenance costs, including the need for water, fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides must be discussed and weighed.

Candidates unanimously supported the importance of finalizing the Strategic Plan to guide future municipal action as part of their election campaign. All agreed we must clearly define our vision, mission and value statements before moving forward.

Yet NOTL hasn’t had a

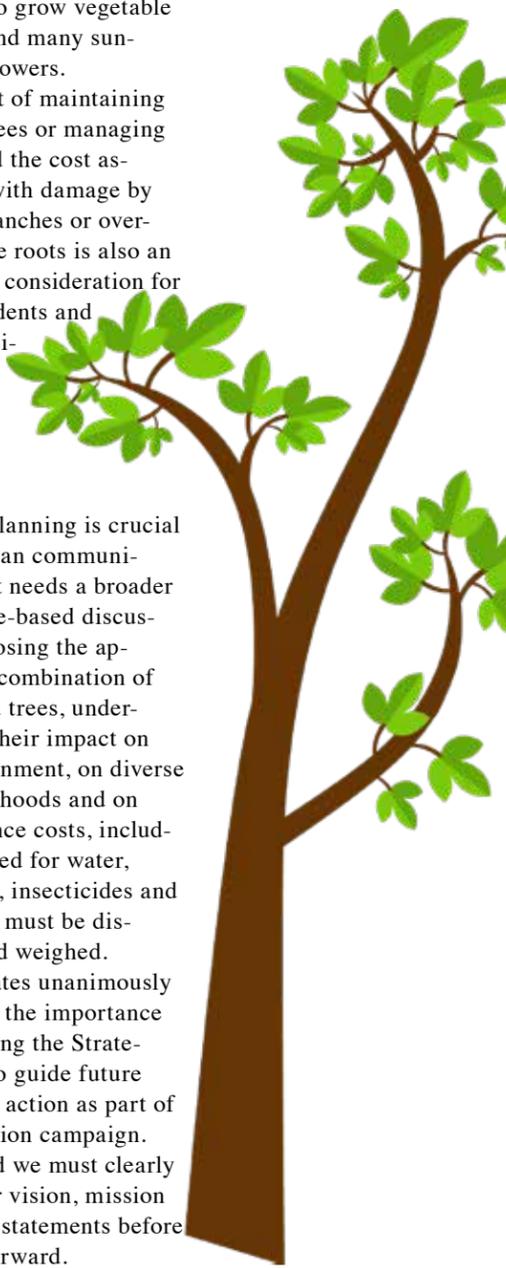
serious talk about trees and urban greening.

Nor have we discussed our preferred course of action to achieve our goals. Bylaws are one tool used to deal with municipal matters. But they tend to add red tape and are punitive by nature. They can foster vigilantism which may lead to erosion of community cohesion. Bylaws require legal input and enforcement resources — all of which come at a cost to taxpayers.

Greening our urban environment on private property can easily be addressed using other tools. Public education, awareness campaigns, incentives, tree planting events and community involvement. These tend to foster greater community goodwill and positive sustainable change.

Without a thorough analysis of options and open discussions on how many regulations and bylaws we want to achieve our goals, a tree bylaw on private property is premature.

Claire Cronier



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# Thomson: increased parking fee could negatively affect bus traffic to NOTL

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva  
Staff

Town council voted to scale back the increase to local bus parking fees from \$50 to \$25 Monday night.

The increase still doubles the current bus parking fee of \$25, bringing the total cost to \$50, instead of the proposed \$70, recommended in a staff report.

During a committee of the whole meeting Jan. 7, members of council heard the number of visitors coming to Niagara-on-the-Lake by bus dropped by about 6,000 people last year.

Janice Thomson, executive director of the local Chamber of Commerce said NOTL saw 273,436 bus passengers arrive at the motor coach parking lot in 2017. In 2018, the number dropped to 267,774.

She said the increased bus parking fee could potentially make the numbers of visitors decrease further.

In a presentation made to the committee-of-the-whole on Jan. 7, Thomson pointed to other municipalities that don't charge any fees for tour bus parking, and warned increasing the price for NOTL could



Janice Thomson addressed council Monday night. DARIYA BAIGUZHIYEVA

have negative consequences.

For example, the city of Toronto has 86 no-cost parking spaces for buses. Stratford, St. Jacobs and the Ontario Science Centre also do not charge for bus parking.

"If we have to take the CPI (Consumer Price Index) increase, that took us to \$26 from \$25. We can explain the CPI increase but not an

arbitrary increase."

Even an increase of one dollar per person can make an impact on people, Thomson told The Lake Report.

"The tour prices are already published this year. They can't change it now. They already signed people up for the tours," she explained.

In a letter to the council, president of Theatre Vaca-

tions Adam Hyde expressed his concern over the potential increase.

"Based on over 40 years of experience, we anticipate that such a dramatic increase will dissuade tour buses from visiting NOTL, which will consequently compromise potential tourist dollars spend in the town," Hyde wrote in the letter.

Thomson agreed with him.

"It's exactly what we're talking about. There could be a drop-off in business with such a fee increase."

Business owners, Thomson said, are not supportive of the increase, "because there is no business reason for it."

"It's just an arbitrary tax on tourism. The council is looking for more money and

they're looking to take it from a source like tourism," she said.

Hyde's letter shared the same sentiment.

"Many of our clients spend two or three hours in Niagara-on-the-Lake and as a result are supporting the local economy through their purchases and it would be unfortunate if this potential revenue was lost," it said.

Overall, the town invested \$79,767 to the chamber's events and activities. The biggest contribution came in the amount of \$40,000 that was spent on the Icewine Festival. In regards to other events, the Town paid \$6,000 and \$2,000 to support Peach Celebration and Candlelight Stroll respectively.

"The Chamber strongly believes that this investment, our partnership and our operating relationship is generating a very positive return on investment that the town is realizing annually as well as supporting our members is certainly very much appreciated, and we believe that together we're investing wisely, generating success for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake," said Thomson.

# Friends of Fort George honours longtime supporters

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva  
Staff

It's not just a keen business sense that's earned Doug Rempel one of the most well-known and respected names in real estate in Niagara-on-the-Lake — it's also a sense of community.

That same sense recently garnered Rempel a personalized thanks from the Friends of Fort George.

On Jan. 2, FOFG presented Rempel with a plaque honouring a decade of support for the non-profit organization, which works in partnership with Parks Canada to preserve, promote and protect the heritage of Niagara National Historic Sites.

"It has been and will con-

tinue to be our privilege to support the Friends of Fort George in their community-centric events which foster education and the preservation of our heritage," said Rempel in a media release.

Another real estate agency that has been acknowledged for its generous donations is NOTL Realty. On Jan. 14, FOFG' president Tony Chisholm presented a plaque to Thomas Elltoft and Christopher Bowron. Kim Elltoft, who is in charge of donations at the agency, was away at the meeting at the time of the presentation.

NOTL Realty's owner Thomas Elltoft said it was a really nice gesture from FOFG.

"That what makes us a special community. It's



Doug Rempel of Bosley Real Estate. RICHARD HARLEY

what drives our tourism and drives a lot of things that most communities could wish to have this history," he said. "That's the nice thing about the history — you share it."

Chisholm said it was very important for them to recognize their donors and sponsors.

"I think it's one thing to come up and ask for money and walk away with it in



Tony Chisholm, Christopher Bowren and Thomas Elltoft. DARIYA BAIGUZHIYEVA

your hand, but if you don't go back and thank them, I think you haven't done your job properly," he said. "And besides, how can you come next time and ask?"

"A plaque like this is a

reminder of their contributions and a pre-warning that I'm going to be coming back and asking for more," Chisholm joked.

(With files from Richard Harley.)

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## Business Park businesses want visible signage

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva  
Staff

Business owners in the Virgil Business Park want better signage.

Carol Hubert, who owns Peninsula Flooring with her husband Art, says there are people who have lived locally for years who have no idea there is even a flooring business in town, and believes part of that is a direct result of the lack of signage.

Currently there is only a sign advertising the Business Park itself, and doesn't list any of the businesses inside.

The sign is also overgrown by a large evergreen bush.

Hubert says customers sometimes call to ask where the Virgil Business Park is too, with the sign being so out of view from Niagara Stone Road.

"Businesses that rely on foot traffic need more recognition," said Hubert. "I think that should be a Virgil Business Park sign and then anybody who wants to have their business recognized — that's in the Virgil Business Park —



The Virgil Business Park sign. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

should be able to put a town-approved sign underneath it to say, 'We're down here,' — like a strip mall."

Jenna Miles, owner of Srvynyl, agrees.

"Having a sign at the end of Henegan Road, on Niagara Stone Road, would be greatly beneficial not only to the businesses but anyone looking for business located on Henegan. With the road located near residences, it is often easily missed when driving by," she said, adding she would be willing to pay to have her logo under the Virgil Business Park sign.

"Virgil is quickly growing into a unique community and updating the signage at the end of the road could provide a more progressive representation of the industrial business park," Miles said.

Claudia Disante of Disante Electrical Mechanical echoed a similar sentiment, that clients often need a few directions to find them.

"Usually, the way we get them to notice that this is the business park is we tell them, 'We're right before the lights, where the Gales gas station is, and then they picture that in their mind. We're also using

the roundabout as a point of reference, just to give them an idea otherwise they generally drive right by."

Disante said she would also agree to pay and have her business name on the sign.

"I think that definitely better signage would probably get more people to drive through here and find us a little bit easier."

Gould Automotive's owner, Hugh Gould, also said people sometimes call them for directions.

"They phone and they ask where we are. We tell them to look for a big peach sign. Sometimes they don't see it because it can be not visible."

Closets by Design owner Bob Fraser said having better signage is not "as essential" to them.

"Whether or not we have signage out on the street, I don't think it's as important to us personally."

However, if other businesses were to put up their logos on the sign, he said he would consider investing because of the importance of the "ground awareness."

## St. Davids residents oppose York Road development

Dariya Biaguzhiyeva  
Staff

A number of St. Davids residents expressed concerns over a rezoning application at 1490 York Rd. during Monday's committee of the whole meeting in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The proposed development would consist of three new family houses and one retained home on the north side of York Road, with all four houses belonging to one family.

Frank Ierfino of R & A. Rusit & Associates Ltd. and Quartek Group planner Susan Smyth were at the meeting to represent the property owner Bernhard Peters. They told council the project conformed to local, regional and provincial policies.

The town planner Jesse Auspitz also said there were no objections from the Town, though it's possible fire hydrants or a turnaround on the street would be required for fire and



Not everyone was happy about a construction proposal on York Road. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

emergency services.

When meeting chair Gary Burroughs asked if anyone was in opposition to the project, four residents took turns speaking out.

Some of the main issues raised by the public included the removal of trees, fire safety, drainage and environmental issues.

"St. Davids is being exploited," said Paul Fenwick who has lived in the village for about 15 years.

He mentioned the Tree Inventory and Preservation Plan Report which states there are 27 trees and two tree polygons on

the property. In total, it makes up to 53 trees.

Out of 53 trees, only six would be preserved, he said. "Enough is enough."

"There is no benefit to St. Davids as a whole. It is not what the community is about," said resident, Jason Marchand.

"I would encourage to whoever is in charge of this project, to take their dog and walk along that thing and see. Spatially this doesn't make sense when you walk by it."

Another St. Davids resident Bruno Criveller said he is concerned the approval could set a precedent for other residents who may ask to do the same thing on their properties.

St. Davids resident Blair Harber was the last one to speak, saying there are "a lot of unknowns" about the development.

"I refer to this as a 'perpendicular development.' I don't really think it's a good way to build houses in a village such as St.

Davids."

After the meeting, Peters told The Lake Report the number of removed trees provided by the residents was "over-exaggerated."

"The trees that are getting cut down are just pine trees. I plan on putting spruces up because I want privacy also," he said. "So I'm going to be planting cedars to block the neighbours out myself."

He also said there was only one neighbour who "really might lose some of her privacy but if I put a seeder hedge over there, it'll be actually nicer than what she has now."

Ierfino said the project will be built over a five- or a ten-year period and that it will "give vegetation time to establish itself, grow and be at a height that will provide the privacy."

Smyth told the paper she would consider the comments and look at the tree reservation plan to reconfirm the number of trees that will be affected.

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# Bikes for Farmworkers

## builds bonds between friends and community members



Terry and Mark at their Virgil workshop. SUBMITTED/JILL TROYER

Jill Troyer  
Special to TLR

One winter day in 2015, local couple Terry and Lynn Weiner were walking their dog Riley in the Commons at Butler's Barracks in Niagara-on-the-Lake, when they bumped into another couple cross-country skiing through the open field.

It was the first time the pairs crossed paths, and at the time there was no telling just how close they would become.

Fast forward to 2019 — Terry, a retired manufacturing engineer who worked the aerospace industry in California, and Mark, having retired from a career in pulp and paper sales, are now close collaborators on a project called Bikes for Farmworkers, where the two restore bikes for local seasonal workers.

After meeting, the couples discovered they had something in common — they had both just moved to town. The Weiners had moved from Los Angeles, California, while skiers Mark and Monica Gaudet had recently relocated

from Unionville, Ont.

The series of events blossomed into a friendship, and by that summer, both Terry and Mark got involved doing volunteer work to help local migrant workers, inspired by a notice posted at the local library by the Niagara Migrant Workers Interest Group. The group had been looking for people to help repair bikes.

Mark, himself an avid cyclist, and Terry, who had been volunteering to drive workers from Tregunno farms to Grace United Church every Sunday, both offered to help.

The two repaired 10 or 15 bikes for their first NMWIG event, and so Bikes for Farmworkers began.

By the summer of 2016, Mark and Terry were busy fixing bikes.

"I had 75 bikes at one time in my garage," says Terry.

Both were working in their personal garages, with "supplies paid for out of our own pockets," they noted. For the amount of bikes they were working on, they realized they needed both space, and some funding to support tools and supplies. By 2017, they had both.

Mark and Terry got access to space in the old Virgil Public School building on Four Mile Creek Road, and a grant from the Niagara Community Foundation. The grant allowed them to set up four full workstations with the tools needed, and it's been expanding ever since.

Six volunteers now work with Terry and Mark to fix up the donated bicycles, which are sold for \$20. Repairs are typically free.

In 2017, the group sold more than 300 bikes, and repaired another 92.

In 2018, they sold 478 bikes, and repaired 321 more.

As of January 2019, they already have well over a hundred bikes and counting, ready for the arrival of the farmworkers at the end of February.

The space is meticulously organized, and full of bikes — bikes ready for sale, bikes waiting to be repaired, bikes being stored for owners who will collect them in the spring.

Tools line the walls and carefully labelled bins hold various parts at the ready.

The pair is humble about

their success.

"We're just retired guys with wrenches," says Mark. They work every Tuesday and Thursday, all year. When asked why they devote so much time and effort to this endeavour, they look puzzled at the question.

"Because they're our neighbours," says Terry. "We want to make sure the workers have a safe bike," adds Mark.

Then Terry points to a bulletin board, filled with pictures of farmworkers picking up their bikes, broad smiles on their faces.

"These guys just got a bike, they can ride around, get where they need to be, it's freedom," Mark says.

Mark and Terry think this year they could potentially handle as many as 800 bikes. They stressed the importance, and their appreciation of the generosity of the community in donating bicycles for them to fix up.

Bikes for Farmworkers accepts bicycles donations all year. Anyone wishing to donate a bike can call Terry at 905-321-8633, or Mark at 289-783-1684 to arrange for a pick-up or drop-off.



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# Protests planned for ice wine festival

Continued from Front Page

The event kicks off with the Sparkle and Ice Gala on Jan. 18, which will be hosted by social media influencers Sparkling Winos.

The village will feature food from Signature Kitchens, where each dish will have a paired wine to complement the flavours of the food. The event will also feature a cocktail competition on Jan. 19, where contestants use ice wine in their drink mixture.

This year the village will stay up the entire week, where other years the setup differed each weekend. Although the tents are staying up the entire week, they will not be utilized during the week.

Andrew Niven is chair of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Wineries and is the chair of the Icewine Village as well. He said that they are expecting around 10,000 visitors per weekend during the festival, and have seen people come from areas throughout Canada and the United States.

"This from literally the



Protesters have been trying to fight the local carriages for more than a year.  
RICHARD HARLEY/THE LAKE REPORT

inception is something we celebrate throughout the month of January, not just with their tourists, but with our local culture and with her local community," said Niven.

With a weekend fill with wine comes with plenty of empty bottles The Icewine Village donates their bottles to the local Air Cadets for their bottle drive.

"Every single bottle that is poured at icewine is collected and donated to the cadets for the bottle drive," explained

Niven.

At War for Animal Niagara (AWFAN) is planning to protest during the Ice Wine Festival. The organization goal of this campaign is for the horse carriage rides in Niagara to change over to electric carriages, explained Adam Stirr, co-founder of AWFAN.

"It really has nothing to do with the festival itself," said Stirr. "Just as I'm sure the carriages will be out trying to profit off the festival, we'll also be out increasing aware-

ness about what we're doing."

The protests have been going on for over a year now, and the organization chose this event to open up the conversation about the cause with the public.

"We're going to concentrate on the festival and providing an experience for our guests," said Niven.

On Jan. 25 the final event for the festival is the White on Ice winner, which starts with an outdoor reception on Queen Street and will end off in the Courthouse ballroom.



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# Additional funding for Royal Oak denied by town council

Christian Coulombe  
Staff

Royal Oak Community School will not be receiving additional funding from the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake — at least not while the money is proposed to come from the annual allowance for the Shaw Festival.

On Monday, town council rejected a motion which would have seen \$5,000 taken from the Shaw's annual allocation and put towards the not-for-profit school, which operates out of the old hospital building on Wellington Street.

Robin Ridesic of Royal Oak spoke in support of the motion before it was denied.

Despite the common perception of NOTL, Ridesic said there is an abundance of local youth in town, and not enough seats in local schools. She said there are 1,500 elementary-age children living locally, with only 1,200 seats available.

With support from the com-



Royal Oak students sing the national anthem at an Ice Dogs game.  
SUPPLIED/CHRISTINE MCISAAC

munity, Royal Oak is looking for help to develop, grow and expand its programs, to help accommodate the need for seats, Ridesic said.

The school currently has 35 students ranging through Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8.

A lot of people seem to think Royal Oak is a private school, she said, but it's actually a charitable organization, opened because there was a need for public education in Old Town.

"It's a placeholder school until

we get public-funded education back into our community," Ridesic said.

While Royal Oak is meant to be easily accessed, there is currently a tuition fee of around \$9,000. However Ridesic says 46 per cent of families receive bursaries to cover the cost.

Ridesic said students have previously transferred to Royal Oak from both St. Michaels and Crossroads schools in Virgil, and suspects it's due

to the smaller class sizes and the ability for teachers to have more individual time with their students.

"Kids need 1-on-1 time with their teachers," she said.

The plan, according to Ridesic, is to have a self-sustained running school — but they still need help. "It's critical and they're working hard to work to scale and be sustainable and funded but they aren't there yet."

The school would have used

the money to expand and add new programs for their students and the community, Ridesic said, not just kids who attend the school.

According to Ridesic, the school ran a PD Day camp on Easter Monday last year, which was open to all children in the community. Some Royal Oak students weren't able to attend because the spaces were filled with students from other schools.

Money from the town would help to fund those types of programs, Ridesic said.

"It's a real need in the community. We felt like it was a great opportunity to expand this program and advertise it and resource it with the teachers we need."

In 2018, the school received a grant of \$9,500 from the Town, which was able to offset the rent of \$15,000.

In 2019, the grant amount was lowered to \$5,000, while Ridesic said the rent increased almost \$2,000.

The motion was brought for-

ward by Coun. Clare Cameron, to take the \$5,000 out of Shaw's \$30,000 allocation for 2019.

"I use this opportunity to implore the rest of council to do something for a young fledgling organization in our community," she said.

Coun. Wendy Cherpapita backed her up.

"They believe they will be self-funded within a couple of years ... The two programs they talked about are open to the community. I think this is really important we provide relevant funding or they won't be able to do that," said Cherpapita.

But Coun. Gary Burroughs, along with the majority of council, didn't think it was fair to take funding from one organization and give it to another.

"I am very supportive of the school... I'm not supportive of taking money away from probably the biggest employer and certainly the biggest attraction that Niagara-on-the-Lake has. They are always scrambling for money," said Burroughs.

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<p><b>27</b></p> <p><b>Niagara Pumphouse: Family Friendly Drop in Art Studio - 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.</b> - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p> <p><b>Teen Literary Alliance - 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.</b> - NOTL Public Library</p> <p><b>Niagara College: Seasonal Soups &amp; Stews - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.</b> - Niagara College (CFWI)</p> <p><b>NOTL Icewine Festival - Noon to 5 p.m.</b> - Queen Street Heritage District</p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p><b>Famous &amp; Infamous with Sheila Hill: Rex Whistler - 2 p.m.</b> - Niagara Historical Society &amp; Museum</p> <p><b>Niagara Regional Native Centre: Community Drumming Night - 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.</b> - Niagara Regional Native Centre</p>	<p><b>29</b></p> <p><b>Chair Yoga - 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.</b> - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p><b>Power Off and Play - 11 a.m. to noon</b> - NOTL Public Library</p> <p><b>Seniors Fitness: Healthy Safe &amp; Strong - 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.</b> - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p><b>Dance Niagara - 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.</b> - NOTL Community Centre</p>	<p><b>Simply STEAM Story - 9 a.m. to noon</b> - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p><b>Council: Open House - 7 p.m.</b> - Davids and District Library</p> <p><b>Trivia Night: Exchange (Winter League Week) - 7 p.m.</b> - The Exchange</p> <p><b>Dance Niagara - 6:30 p.m.</b> - NOTL Community Centre</p>

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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>17</b> <b>Practical Genealogy</b> - 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Bridge Seniors Drop-in: Casual Bridge</b> - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Seniors Fitness: Healthy Safe &amp; Strong</b> - 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. / 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Minecraft Club</b> - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Niagara Regional Native Centre: Community Social</b> - 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre	<b>18</b> <b>P.A. Day</b> <b>The Vintage Skating Rink at Fort George: PA Day Fun at the Rink</b> - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Fort George National Historic Site <b>St. Davids and District Lions Club: Friday Fish Fry</b> - 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. - St. Davids and District Lions Club <b>Sparkle and Ice Gala</b> - 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. - The Royal Cambridge at the Prince of Wales Hotel <b>Comedy Night at The Exchange Brewery</b> - 9 p.m. - The Exchange Brewery	<b>19</b> <b>Women's March NOTL</b> - 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - Simcoe Park <b>Niagara-on-the-Lake Icewine Festival</b> - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. - <b>Queen Street Heritage District</b> <b>Child Holocaust Survivor: Jack Veffler</b> - 7:30 p.m. - Mori Room, NOTL Community Centre <b>St. John's Babysitting Course</b> - 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Icewine Cocktail Competition</b> - 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. - Queen Street Heritage District
<b>23</b> <b>Wine Time</b> - 11 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Orange Brewery (Week 2)</b> - 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Winery Festival</b> - 7 p.m. - Winery	<b>24</b> <b>Bridge Seniors Casual Drop-in: Bridge</b> - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Babies and Books</b> - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Seniors Fitness: Healthy Safe &amp; Strong</b> - 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. / 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Minecraft Club</b> - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Tinker Thinker Thursdays</b> - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Icebreakers Comedy Festival</b> - 7 p.m. - Oast House Brewery	<b>25</b> <b>Yoga with Jenny</b> - 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Wayne Gates Office</b> - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Knit a Bit</b> - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Icebreakers Comedy Festival</b> - 7 p.m. & 10 p.m. - Corks Winebar & Eatery <b>5th Annual White on Ice Dinner</b> - 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. - Courthouse Theatre	<b>26</b> <b>Icebreakers Comedy Festival</b> - 8 p.m. - Courthouse Theatre <b>NOTL Icewine Festival</b> - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Queen Street Heritage District
<b>30</b> <b>Wine Time</b> - 11 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Seniors Club</b> - 4 p.m. - St. George's Club <b>Orange Brewery (Week 3)</b> - 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre	<b>31</b> <b>Bridge Seniors Casual Drop In: Bridge</b> - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Seniors Fitness: Healthy Safe &amp; Strong</b> - 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. / 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Council: Open House</b> - 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Minecraft Club</b> - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Fish Fry at the Legion</b> - 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. - Royal Canadian Legion <b>Tinker Thinker Thursdays</b> - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	<b>1</b> <b>Yoga with Jenny</b> - 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Wayne Gates Office</b> - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Pumphouse Instructors' Exhibition</b> - 11 a.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre <b>Knit a Bit</b> - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	<b>2</b>

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Inspect - Design - Build

# Days of Wine and Chocolate returns in February

Brittany Carter  
Staff

Forget wine and cheese, this February the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake are offering up a decadent twist on food and drink pairings with the Days of Wine and Chocolate.

Happening every weekend in February, each of the 26 participating NOTL wineries will opening its doors from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. for a unique combination of VQA wine and carefully chosen chocolate infused dishes.

Andrew Niven, director of marketing for Konzelmann Estate Winery and chair of

the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake, said the month-long event is something they look forward to every year. "Everyone is ready to come out of holiday mode and approach something different."

He said the wineries can get into friendly competition with each other when cooking up their newest chocolate inspired dishes. "We put in our A-games. As the quality of our offerings have improved the numbers continue to grow."

The Wineries of NOTL have been hosting this event for the past eight years, and Niven said it gets better every year. "It's a great way

to get some traffic out to the wineries. We open our doors and showcase what we do best."

Touring passes for the month-long event can be purchased online for \$55. The pass is valid all month and grants access to each participating winery, allowing individuals to sample the wine and its paired chocolate dish.

Responsible drinking and safe driving, designated driver passes can be purchased for \$30, permitting the driver to indulge in the experience and taste food pairings without the wine.

Niven said organizers

are strict about responsible drinking and want to encourage groups to bring a designated driver.

"It wasn't fair to charge people who wouldn't be drinking," Niven said.

He suggests visiting no more than eight wineries a day. The event lasts all month and individuals can return each weekend to sample the rest.

Those looking to plan ahead can check the event website for a list of each winery's selected dish and wine pairing.

Groups of eight or more are advised to call ahead to each winery to allow for better service and experience.



Days of Wine and Chocolate offers unique pairings. SOURCED PHOTO

# Trudeau speaks at Brock University



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited Brock University on Tuesday to address students and Niagara residents. PHOTOS BY ALEX LUPUL, THE LAKE REPORT



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# Gearing up for the sixth annual Icebreakers Comedy Festival

Brittany Carter  
Staff

Niagara residents are being invited to “break the ice” with Jeff Paul and fellow comedians at this year’s Icebreakers Comedy Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Coinciding with the Niagara Icewine Festival, Icebreakers is a four-day event set to bring big-name comedians together for evenings of laughter from Jan. 23 to 26.

The festival, going into its sixth year, has grown in size and length, having begun as a two-day event.

Jeff Paul, comedian and organizer of the festival, says his friend Christophe Davidson started the venture. “[Davidson] started it a couple years back, he’s since moved on, but I’m still at the helm here. I used to run shows every month at Corks Winebar & Eatery, we decided to turn it into a little festival.”

Paul says he was contacted by organizers of the Icewine Festival to include it in the weekend after his friend Paul Harber, owner of Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery, made the suggestion.

“[Harber] has a friend who is a comedian — one hand washes the other and now we’ve got a festival.”

Excited for the prospect of growth, Paul says turnout improves every year. This year’s CBC Laugh Out Loud Gala (taking place on the



Comedian Jeff Paul will be hosting the Icebreakers Comedy Festival. SUBMITTED/CHRISTOPHER AZIZ

Saturday night) sold out three weeks in advance.

“Eventually we’d like to see it go into bigger venues. Right now, our big show is a 300-seater,” Paul said, adding he has an interest in partnering with the Shaw Festival in the future for “bigger shows, bigger names.”

Paul says the festival is something the town needs this time of year.

“It brings a little cheerfulness in the middle of winter — which is what the Icewine festival is all about. This is a tourist town, there’s not a lot of people coming out right now. I think it’s good for people coming to the town,

but I also think it’s great for the locals. We have a lot of locals and a lot of repeat customers that come back every year. It’s something nice for the town.”

He says he’s looking forward to the event, especially Thursday night where he’ll be recording his first comedy album.

The other events won’t be disappointing either, Paul says. “We’ve got something for everyone.”

Paul said there a variety of different comedians and comedy styles. On opening night, Scott Faulconbridge will warm up the crowds with some of his wholesome light humour.

“He’s a safe comic, he’s not going to say anything too offensive. It’ll be a more wholesome night of comedy. Whereas the next night at Oast House, where I’m recording my album called *Delightfully Dark*, it’ll be a little more risqué. We have two shows Friday; a Comedy Records show case and the late show called *The Melt-down*. That’s the dirty one. That’s where we’re intentionally trying to be offensive — It’s not for the easily offended.”

Paul encourages patrons to pick up tickets early as shows have sold out every year.

To purchase tickets, visit [icebreakerscomedy.com](http://icebreakerscomedy.com).

# Library recap 2018

Brittany Carter  
Staff

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library has seen a steady increase of visitors since renovations.

In 2017, the library underwent remodeling to better meet the needs of NOTL residents.

According to the library in a presentation during the Jan. 14 council meeting, Ontario public libraries counted 12 million visits more than the NHL, NBA, and NFL combined across North America.

With almost 300,000 visits in person and online, the NOTL library has increased usage since the renovation.

They added a maker-space, The Makery, equipped with a range of DIY machines, including a 3D printer, a carving machine and an embroidery machine.

Cathy Simpson, chief librarian and CEO of the NOTL Public Library, said the renovations have been well-received and usage has increased since completion.

“We’ve had a very positive response. We’ve seen use go up in terms of physical visits to the building as well as materials that are circulating. We’re using the space better. We didn’t increase the size, we’re just using it smarter. We have multi-spaces which people are really appreciating.”



Cathy Simpson, chief librarian and CEO of NOTL Public Library. BRITTANY CARTER

Simpson said they’ve included a quiet study room, which was in high demand. She also said the new layout and shelving have had positive feedback.

“It’s a very different style shelving. People really love it now, we’ve got the wide aisles,

## BY THE NUMBERS

Items borrowed and used in-house	82,699
Visits (in-person & online)	299,099
New users	674
Cardholders	4,145
Children in 201 programs	1,617
Adults in 124 programs	934

there’s no dead ends or tight corners. They appreciate the improved accessibility.”

### Time Capsule: The First Capital

According to the Canadian Encyclopedia, it’s been 227 years since John Graves Simcoe, the first lieutenant-governor of the new province of Upper Canada chose Niagara as the temporary capital of the province. It held parliament for four years from 1792-1796 before it was moved to Toronto. Simcoe changed the name from Niagara to Newark, but after he left for England in 1796, citizens petitioned and changed the name back to Niagara. The name Niagara was given by the political and cultural union of Iroquoian nations who lived here 500 years ago. It can have two meanings, either “thunder of the waters,” or simply “neck.” Almost a century later, the post office added “on-the-Lake to the name so there was no confusion with Niagara Falls.

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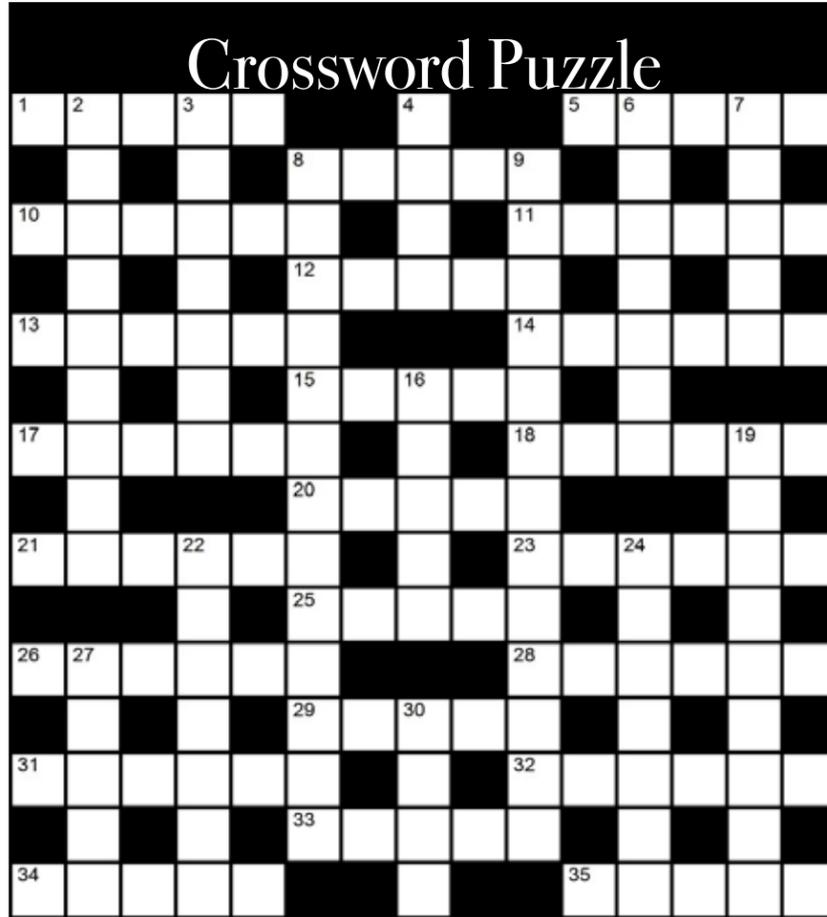
# GAMES



*Have some fun*

The Lake Report is looking for puzzle makers who would like to help develop this page. We are seeking both standard and cryptic crossword writers. [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)

- Across**  
 1 Frequently (5)  
 5 Divest (5)  
 8 Sag (5)  
 10 Spanish fleet (6)  
 11 Israeli currency (6)  
 12 Bring together (5)  
 13 Dwelling (6)  
 14 Kine (Arch.) (6)  
 15 Moor (5)  
 17 Contaminate (6)  
 18 Resist (6)  
 20 Minor actor in crowd scenes (5)  
 21 Sliding compartment of furniture (6)  
 23 Capital of the Bahamas (6)  
 25 World's largest democracy (5)  
 26 Regular customer (6)  
 28 Departs (6)  
 29 Rotten (5)  
 31 Capital of the Philippines (6)  
 32 Scandinavian kingdom (6)  
 33 In what place (5)  
 34 Tale (5)  
 35 Small salamanders (5)
- Down**  
 2 Alien (9)  
 3 Scrutinise (7)  
 4 Central Chinese desert (4)  
 6 Crown (7)  
 7 Standard of perfection (5)  
 8 Wife of your son (8-2-3)  
 9 What shrinks do (13)  
 16 Behaved (5)  
 19 Declaration (9)  
 22 Soldier (7)  
 24 Type of twin (7)  
 27 Behind (5)  
 30 Junkie (4)



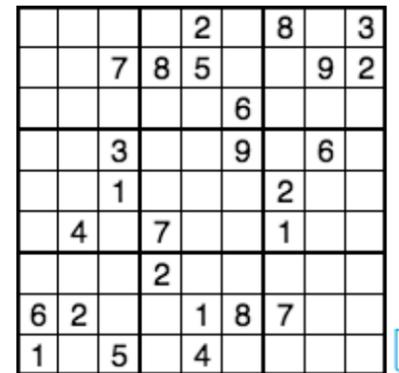
Want the answers early? Scan the puzzles using HP Reveal. (Must be following Niagara Now's channel.)



## Last issue's answers



## Sudoku



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# FEATURES

## Wallbanger Winnipeg Native Perry Johnson Just Misses Hat Trick in Blue Team Victory

Ross Robinson  
(#9, Blue Team)  
Special

The Niagara Region is a pleasant place to live, surrounded by water, near two big cities and generally devoid of traffic congestion. One can easily spend an entire day without having to stop at a red light. Walking and cycling routes are unlimited, and the wineries and craft breweries keep us hydrated.

Recreational activities are plentiful, and perhaps most importantly, interesting citizens keep us intellectually fulfilled as we chat and solve the world's least pressing problems. This winter has been a mild one, with nary a freezing cold morning to make us shiver as we go outdoors.

I spoke yesterday with Perry Johnson, a Winnipegger who has a story to tell. He is a unique export from Winnipeg, much like Winnie-the-Pooh, He grew up on the Prairies, playing several sports outdoors on the coldest of cold days. Sometimes the thermometer dipped below -40 F, but even a westerly wind could not keep his group of friends away from the rink. Brett Hull was a neighbour and pal, and Dad Bobby obviously taught the boys how to find open ice and one time the puck.

Only darkness and the streetlights coming on forced the teams off the natural ice, as they headed home for dinner. No Zamboni to scrape and flood the ice surfaces, just snow shovels pushed by young



Wallbanger Perry Johnson shows off the two puck he used to score two goals last Sunday morning for Moore's Leafs Blue Team. He almost had a hat trick, but fanned on a breakaway late in the game. SUPPLIED PHOTO

and developing quadriceps muscles.

Johnson is a hard working forward on Blue Team, known as Moore's Maple Leafs. Lately, his alarm clock has malfunctioned on Sunday mornings, causing him to miss two consecutive games. Happily, last Sunday he arrived just in time for the 7 a.m. game. He is a tall chap, especially on skates. All arms and legs, he can dominate his side of the rink. Who enjoys oldtimers hockey more? His goals are often unorthodox, and always celebrated with enthusiasm and humility. He never wants to show up the goalie.

This rangy winger had two goals in the most recent Wallbanger game, and just missed a hat trick on a breakaway chance late in

the third period. He described the play: "I picked up the puck in the neutral zone, after Tim Dool passed it off to me. One of their defencemen, Marcel Lounsbury I think, had fallen down, so I had some space. I drove wide and picked up my own rebound. We had a good net drive, so it was wide open. Don't know how I fanned."

Even though several Wallbangers are north of 60 on the age scale, each and every player is willing to pay the price to win puck battles. They try to play heavy, so every game is fast and tough. Of course, fast and tough are relative terms.

Another interesting thing happened before this game. Enthusiastic rookie J. R. Lewis, who plays both ball

hockey and ice hockey, and both goaltender and forward, had forgotten his shin pads. Usually, there are a few mismatched pairs in the Meridian Arena Lost and Found which will serve the purpose. No luck this time. Determined to play, J. R. found four old copies of the Niagara Advance and five current copies of The Lake Report on a table near the Snack Bar. Remembering what his grandfather told him about life in northern Ontario during The Depression, using Eaton catalogues as shin pads, J. R. improvised. Using lots of clear tape, he created two pads that offered sufficient protection.

Luckily, he was able to steer clear of any really hard (again, a relative term) shots throughout the game.

Some 23 players showed up last Sunday, causing a fair amount of confusion on the benches. The usual players who consider themselves to be clever strategists devised line combinations. By the halfway mark of the game, there had been 31 different forward lines. Two centres, three pairs of wingers. Two lines, and a floater? How about using three defencemen, and three forward lines. Josh can play up or back.

Man, was I confused. Even with help, several times I was a second or two late changing on the fly.

Wallbangers hockey. As the games go on, emotions go up and down like a toilet seat at a mixed party.

Again, no serious injuries, no penalties, and no referees.



## Exploring Photos: with Jim Smith

### QUEEN'S ROYAL PARK RINK

From the mid 1950's to the early 1960's, Queens Royal Park was our outdoor skating rink. The Niagara Firemen flooded the rink late at night and used a tractor to clear off snow. In the evening we skated under the lights with the rink packed with kids.

SUPPLIED/JIM SMITH



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with Brian Marshall

## Keeping the rain out: II



Slate and clay tile. (Supplied)

While tinsplate and wood shingles 'ruled the roost' during most of the 19th Century, both Slate tile and Clay tile had been traditional roofing materials in the UK for centuries.

Until the latter part of the 19th Century, premium slate tile was principally produced from Welsh quarries and shipped to North America. These tiles produced (and still do) gorgeous roofs in shades of Blue/Grey/Green that were, except for the occasional replacement of a broken tile, virtually maintenance free with a functional life expectancy measured in centuries.

Despite being fairly common in Europe, both S-shaped pantile and flat Clay tile were almost non-existent in Canada until the late 19th Century introduction of certain architectural styles. Although clay tiles have many pros, I suspect the fact that clay tile is subject to spalling during our freeze/thaw cycles and the expense of replacing winter damaged tiles were amongst the principal reasons for the historical scarcity of clay tile roofs.

And cost was (and is) another factor in the rarity of these roofs. The price of materials and labour were high, but moreover, the whole structure must be correctly engineered to support the massive weight (+4 X asphalt shingles) of these tiles. Still, aside from aesthetics, a maintained slate roof will last +400 years during which asphalt shingles will have been replaced +/- 27 times.

Brian Marshall



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# Grape Escapes expanding for great success

Richard Harley  
SPONSORED

When Richard Mell first moved to Canada from England, he brought with him a suitcase and degree in criminal psychology.

It was the height of crime investigation shows, he recalls, and the industry was flooded with *CSI* fans.

“So then I called my dad, who has been here since 2000, and said I’d be coming for an extended vacation.”

Eight years later, he’s not really putting his degree to use — but he’s having more fun, he thinks. Instead, Mell took a leading role in an industry he never really imagined himself in — operating local wine tours.

The young entrepreneur now co-owns Grape Escapes Wine Tours with his father and step-mother. In just a few years, he’s helped bring the business from his father’s kitchen to a spacious, newly-renovated facility on Niagara Stone Road.

He reminisces a bit about the beginning days, when four or five tour guides used to meet for coffee before starting the day.

Now, four locations later, a summer day sees around 35 guides out touring, typically two to a group for safety.



Richard Mell and Junior. PHOTOS BY RICHARD HARLEY

“Needless to say we don’t invite staff anymore for coffee,” he jests.

And with the tours becoming increasingly popular, Mell now plans to expand Grape Escapes in a unique way — one that he hopes will offer something beyond a tourist experience to the community, something for the soul and body.

Starting in late January, Mell will launch Wellness Escapes in the newly renovated top floor of Grape Escapes, offering spin and fitness classes, yoga classes and meditation sessions.

Mell talks about it with enthusiasm, as final preparation work goes on in the background.

“When we moved in we had all this storage space, and were thinking of some way to tie more into the community,” Mell said.

“We wanted something locals as well could enjoy ... To engage the local community, focusing on all aspects of wellness.”

Classes will run at different times of day, offering locals a place they can come to relax.

He also plans for a small-lounge area, “similar to Pillar

& Post,” which will serve have herbal teas, seasonal fruit and other items more in the holistic vein.

The yoga classes will be run by Natalie Rogers, who also runs tours time to time, and RaeAnn Reimer will take the lead on the spin and fitness classes.

The meditation sessions will be Gareth Wright, who also acts as office manager for Grape Escapes.

Mell says he will also have special guest teachers once in a while.

The first few classes will be completely free, so people



Richard Mell in front of the Grape Escapes office.

can come find out what it’s all about before signing up — and anyone who comes on their first month of membership.

It’s not so much that Mell is stepping away from Grape Escapes, but that he feels he’s met a lot of his goals and wants to branch out, securing the top spot on TripAdvisor for wine tours.

“We’ve reached where we want to be and continue to be with Grape Escapes, but now we want to diversify ... apply that success for more offerings for community,”

Mell officially became a Canadian citizen in May 2018, and hasn’t stopped there. He’s also gotten himself a real estate licence and

is now a broker with Bosley Real Estate in town.

He said that’s been a big focus for him, and talks passionately about his future, growing himself as a realtor the same way he grew Grape Escapes to be in the top ranks.

It’s taken four locations, two countries, a family endeavour and eight years to build the business, and to further himself, but perhaps that’s where it all ties in for Mell. Meeting him and his dog Junior, you realize he’s easy to talk to, loves what he does and works hard.

Complimentary Wellness Retreat classes will start in January. Anyone looking to attend, or to buy or list a house, can call Mell at 289-219-0304.

# Simpson’s Pharmacy hosts four-legged friends

Jer Houghton  
Staff

Simpson’s Pharmacy in Virgil kicked off their first Seniors’ Day event of the year on Jan. 16 by greeting their customers with four-legged volunteers, promoting the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program.

“It gives the opportunity for our community to come in — not just to take of their pharmacy needs — but to learn about the different things that are available in the community,” said Paula MacDonald-Boland, home health and mobility coordinator at Simpson’s Pharmacy.

“So we like to make sure that we include various or-

ganizations from the community by bringing them in here so that they have the opportunity to get awareness out to the community with the different services that are available.”

January’s Seniors’ Day event was hosted by therapy dog coordinator Dana McNair of St. John Ambulance from the Niagara Falls branch. McNair was on-hand with therapy dog Quinn and handler Janice Patterson to meet with customers and talk about the program.

McNair said though the program mainly runs in hospitals, long-term care settings, schools and sometimes libraries, the therapy dogs can offer companion-

ship to those that are sick or lonely, that may not have family close by to offer constant support.

“We want customers to know that if there is anyone in the community that feels they would benefit from the love a therapy dog, you can contact our office and we can set up a meeting for the person and the therapy dog,” said McNair.

The Seniors’ Day event occurs on the third Wednesday every month, an ongoing effort to promote organizations and services within the community and throughout the region since the pharmacy was founded.

“About 42 years ago, Ward Simpson started Simpson’s and he’s been

very community minded and oriented,” said MacDonald-Boland.

“Off and on throughout the years, quite regularly he’s had different groups either come in, or we go out into the community and assist in promoting different services as much as we can — so it’s been ongoing ever since.”

Over the years, Simpson’s Pharmacy continues to work with the Alzheimer Society, Arthritis Society, Parkinson Canada, United Way and Red Roof Retreat, to name a few.

MacDonald-Boland said they are constantly working on events.

“As things pop up throughout the year, differ-



Dana McNair, Paula MacDonald-Boland, and Janice Patterson and dog Quinn. JER HOUGHTON

ent events happening in the news or new organizations coming up, we kind of add them as we go,” she said.

To contact St. John Ambulance about their Therapy Dog Program, please call 905-356-7340.

Pauline Reimer Gibson is an Audiologist with over 20 years of experience who loves helping people of all ages in the community. Julia Dick is the Front Office Coordinator and a longtime resident of Virgil. Call Julia today to book a free hearing test!




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## Council passes motion to support modernized alcohol sales

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva  
Staff

On Jan. 15, Niagara-on-the-Lake council was presented with a resolution to support modernized alcohol sales which could benefit local wineries and grape growers.

In recent years, the provincial government has taken steps to modernize alcohol sale and consumption. Its goal is to expand the sale of beer and wine to corner stores, grocery stores and big-box stores based on market demand.

The government has also asked for public input through an online survey which will close on Feb. 1, 2019.

In his letter to the council Matthias Oppenlaender, Chair of Grape Growers of Ontario (GGO), asked the council to pass a resolution and show support of 100 per cent Ontario-grown grapes and wine by sending a letter to the provincial government and area MPPs.

“The GGO believes that this decision represents a significant opportunity for our municipalities and Ontario wine regions to grow a more robust grape and wine industry,” said Oppenlaender’s letter. “However, we need to ensure that the retail model supports the local 100 per cent Ontario-grown industry so that we can continue to provide



Glasses rest on a table of ice at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Icewine Festival 2017. RICHARD HARLEY

economic benefit to our local communities.”

Coun. Erwin Wiens said Niagara-on-the-Lake has 45 wineries and the overall economic impact of Grape and Wine Industry of Ontario was \$4.4 billion.

According to GGO, this economic impact includes \$2.97 billion in business revenue, \$870 million in wages, 18,000 jobs and \$522 million in tax revenue. The industry also generates \$847 million of tourism-related economic impact.

“All I’m asking is that, as we move forward, we support the agriculture,” said Wiens. “All we want to do is we want the Government of Ontario to recognize the fact how important the industry is and that their decision is going to impact us, and I’d like our town to

support that.”

Coun. Cheropita pointed out how the Niagara region’s wineries alone generate \$2.2 billion which is 50 per cent of the total provincial revenue.

“It’s that significant,” she said.

The resolution moved by Coun. Wiens stated, “this decision represents the significant opportunity to strengthen Niagara’s economy by growing Ontario’s wine and craft beer industries through increased customer access.”

The town will now submit the resolution to the provincial government and area MPPs as part of public consultation and it will be circulated to Niagara municipalities for consideration and support.

To take part in the survey, visit Ontario.ca.

## Mating season causes frequent coyote sightings across town

Brittany Carter  
Staff

It’s mating season and local coyotes are out in abundance.

Recently, more and more coyotes have been spotted around Niagara-on-the-Lake. While it’s not uncommon for residents to fear coyotes in their neighbourhood, Ken Reid, NOTL canine control officer, said it’s normal for them to be out during the day.

“It’s absolutely normal. They’re not nocturnal, that’s a myth,” Reid said. “They’re out whenever they feel like it. Most of the time during the day they’re just wandering, or hunting. There’s nothing unusual about them being around in the daytime.”

He added that, due to the continuation of construction in the region, coyotes are more likely to wander into urban spaces.

“They’ve been dispersed. In a lot of areas in Niagara-on-the-Lake, with the developments, they’ve been dispersed out of their long-term homes. So now they’re moving around trying to find new ones.”

In a coyote information package published by the Ministry of Natural Resources, coyotes are said to be opportunistic feeders.

“Coyotes are territorial animals, with their territory ranging from a few square



Coyote on the move. PIROSKA BACSO/SPECIAL TO THE LAKE REPORT

kilometres where food is abundant to more than 100 square kilometres where food is very scarce.”

In winter, their diet consists mainly of rabbits, hares and deer. In a small number of cases, they lose their fear of people and prey on livestock and small animals.

The information package said coyotes are normally afraid of humans and won’t bother them unless conditioned.

“Coyotes displaying no fear of humans or exhibiting aggressive behaviours have likely been habituated to people through direct or indirect feeding.”

If residents come across coyotes, Reid said they need to make themselves appear bigger and stay where they are. Even though coyotes are

more likely to be afraid of humans, precautions should still be made to stay safe.

“Basically, just stand as tall as you can. Don’t turn your back on them. Make a quick move toward them. They’ll usually run off. Make yourself as big as you can, make as much noise as you can. Don’t turn your back and don’t walk away.”

Coyote mating season ranges from January to March in Southern Ontario. Reid said they are often seen more frequently during this time because they are looking for a mate.

Coyote Watch Canada (CWC), a community based non-profit wildlife organization, ask residents to report coyote sightings through their online form at [www.coyotewatchcanada.com](http://www.coyotewatchcanada.com)

## OBITUARIES & MEMORIALS

### DAWSON, Helen Iles

DAWSON, Helen Iles – Passed away peacefully in her sleep, on Thursday, December 27, 2018, at the Royal Henley Retirement Residence, St. Catharines, at the age of 97. Predeceased by her husband Harry Dawson (2001). She will be sadly missed by her children Delpha (James) Wake, Huntsville, Robert, St. Catharines, Gina (Paul) Smith, Mulmur, Donald (Judy), Niagara-on-the-Lake, Janine (Michael) Cherniuk, Jackson Township, Ohio and nine grandchildren; Greg (late Elaine), Craig, Bradley (Melissa), Raymond (Jess), Haley (Tyler), Lauren, Kaitlyn, Mark and Mackenzie and great grandchildren; Mathew, Alicia, Kyle, Campbell, Tate, Maia, Kinley, Zander and Sterling and sister Delpha Williams.

Fondly remembered by many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends. Predeceased by her brother Watson (Ester) Younie and brother-in-law George Williams.

A service to celebrate the life of Helen Dawson will be held at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, 323 Simcoe St. Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Saturday, January 19, 2019 at 11 a.m., followed by burial in the church cemetery and a reception in the Kirk Hall next door to the church. Donations to the St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, would be greatly appreciated. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)

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## St. Davids in the 20th Century



Denise Ascenzo  
Featured

On the top of the Niagara Escarpment, on the site of the Battle of Queenston Heights from the War of 1812 stands a tall column, the final resting place of two men who were buried four times.

On Oct. 13, 1812, while leading the charge up the escarpment to fight the American Army, Major General Sir Isaac Brock was shot and killed. His Aid-de Camp, John MacDonnell was also shot and killed.

Although the battle was a success for the British Army, Canadian Militia and Native Allies, two great men were lost that day.

The first funeral for Brock and MacDonnell was a solemn affair with both bodies leaving Government House (now the parking lot behind the Courthouse) proceeding through the town of NOTL, then into Fort George where they were buried in the north-east corner of the fort. A small stone was erected honouring the two men and this area of the fort took on the nick name "Brock's Bastion".

It was after the war of 1812 that Upper Canadians decided to honour Brock and MacDonnell with a more prominent grave marker. From 1823 to October of 1824, on the site of the Battle of Queenston Heights, a 135 foot (41.1m) Tuscan column, designed by Francis Hall, was constructed. There was a viewing platform at the top with a single set of stairs leading up and down.

On Oct. 13, 1824 (anniversary of their deaths), Brock and MacDonnell were removed from Fort George and interred in the base of this new monument.

The Tuscan column could be seen for miles. Many



Brock's Monument in Queenston. SUPPLIED PHOTO

visitors came to pay their respects and to also get the most spectacular view of the Niagara River flowing north into Lake Ontario. The park like setting was a natural draw for picnickers as well.

But the peace of the area was soon to be disrupted.

It was during the time of the Upper Canada Rebellion (1837) that Benjamin Lett became an ardent supporter of William Lyon Mackenzie. Although Lett had not been in the rebellion, he carried on the work of Mackenzie, with continued acts of treason against the British Crown.

Lett was known to have murdered one captain of a ship, as well as to have burned, bombed and stolen other ships. However the one act he is most famous

for is the bombing of Brock's monument.

On April 17, 1840 a bomb was detonated in the stairwell of Brock's monument, severely damaging the monument. It was determined that Lett was behind this bombing.

The people of Upper Canada were furious that this monument to Brock and MacDonnell had been destroyed. Discussions were held on whether to repair the monument or to build a new one. A new monument was approved.

Brock and MacDonnell's remains were moved once again, this time to the Hamilton Family Burial Ground which is located at Dee Road and Niagara Parkway (in Queenston). The damaged tower was torn down and a new, grander monument was built.

In 1852, the design submitted by William Thomas was accepted. Thomas is also known for several other very prominent buildings throughout Ontario. His designs include St. Paul's Church in London Ontario, St. Michael's Cathedral and Bishops Palace in Toronto, the St. Lawrence Hall in Toronto, the Don Jail in Toronto, the Courthouse in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Grace United Church in NOTL. Thomas's crowning achievement was his design for Brock's Monument.

From 1853 to 1859 work was done on this new monument using limestone quarried from the local Queenston Quarry.

The new monument stands at 185 feet (56 m) in height, fifty feet taller than the first monument. At

the top is a 16 foot (4.8m) statue of Brock looking out over the Niagara River. There is a circular staircase made of 235 stone blocks which lead up to an outdoor observation deck. At the base of the structure, sealed by granite slabs is the crypt. On its completion, Brock's monument was the second tallest freestanding structure in the world and is the third oldest war memorial in Canada.

One final journey for Brock and MacDonnell, when on October 13, 1859, their remains, in new caskets, were interred in the crypt at the base of the new monument. It is said that over 8,000 people attended the ceremony.

Not to be left in peace, in 1929, lightning struck the statue of Brock, send-

ing pieces crashing to the ground.

In 2003 an engineering inspection revealed some major structural problems.

The monument was closed to the public while repairs were made and reopened in May of 2009.

*To learn more about the topic of this story you can visit the Niagara Historical Society & Museum website at, [www.niagarahistoricalmuseum.com](http://www.niagarahistoricalmuseum.com), or visit the museum for yourself.*

*The Niagara Historical Museum is located at 43 Castlereagh St. in Old Town, in Memorial Hall. Visit, or give them a call at 905-468-3912.*

*Ascenzo is a regular Niagara Now contributor. Her full profile can be found at [niagaranow.com](http://niagaranow.com).*





# COMMUNITY

All NOTL residents are welcome to submit photos and stories for consideration in this section. Send submissions to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com).

## Time for ice wine.



## Niagara District Airport looks to generate sky high revenue

Christian Coulombe  
Staff

The Niagara District Airport and nine other surrounding airports are getting ready to take on the excess capacity of Pearson airport.

Pearson is expected to reach capacity by 2032 and the Niagara District Airport is asking for an increase of funding to \$23,915 help with its proposed projects.

“What is it we can do?” asked Robin Garrett, citizen representative.

She said there is a demand for private parking for planes, so they’d like to construct more hangars to help generate revenue.

“So if we can get more hangar space we can get more tenants,” she said.

Garrett also says there is a shortage of pilots worldwide and the airport currently has a flight school on premises so they would like to take advantage of that.

“We have an aviation program we announced with the Niagara Catholic board that we’re starting in 2019,” said Dan Pilon, interim chief executive office. “Also, the shortage of pilots leads us to thinking outside the norms of how can we get young folks into the industry.”

The airport has two aprons, three runways and four taxiways and it has 14 businesses that run out of the airport, according to Pilon.

There are some major opportunities the airport can do to generate more traffic and revenue for NOTL, said Garrett.

She said tourism is one of the worlds largest and fastest growing industries, growing at an average rate of four per cent per year.

Access and connectivity is a critical success factor and that partnerships and investments can help increase the regions power as a tourist hotspot.

The plan is to shift from a



The view from a flight to Toronto from the Niagara District Airport. RICHARD HARLEY

small municipally run airport to a larger regional airport that offers scheduled passenger and VIP services for its customers. Currently, the airport only offers private and seasonal flights.

Niagara Region is the only tourist destination without a local airport to access it and by expanding the airports services, it would allow businesses and tourists to connect directly to the region.

To do this, the airport would like to maximize the size of their runway. However, the largest plane that could fit is a Q400 which is about 70 seats, said Garrett.

Last year, there was an increase in jet and passenger

traffic which led to a 13 per cent increase in ancillary revenues, which come from aircraft parking, landing and terminal fees, said Pilon.

According to Pilon, the goal is to grow 15 per cent over the length of this strategy.

To do this, they’d like to add scheduled services, construct new hangars, offer VIP airside service and engage partners for promotion and strive for organizational excellence.

There has been a 32 per cent increase of jet traffic in 2018 as well as 30 per cent increase in passenger traffic for FlyGTA.

The airport is also requesting funding from Niagara Falls and St. Catharines.

## RESIDENT PHOTOS



Picture from the New Year’s Levee at Navy Hall. EUNICE TANG



### Betty & Jane: Plunger Patrol Inspecting NOTL’s bathrooms: Balzac’s

If you enjoy a “Cuppa Joe” you won’t want to miss a trip to Balzac’s Coffee Roasters to savour your favourite brew. You may also want to try a “delectable nibbly” to nosh as you drink in the atmosphere of this historic NOTL establishment. The look of bright vintage French Cafe comes to mind with comfortable seating and room to visit with friends. As in some historic buildings the washrooms are downstairs. They provide a cozy experience with lots of hot water, a powerful flush, and a private stall.

3/5 Golden Plungers



## Colouring contest winner: Henry, age 11



Illustration by Krysia Zygmunt

The Christmas colouring contest winner is seven-year-old Henry. Congratulations Henry from The Lake Report!

### RIDDLE ME THIS:

What can be opened, but never closed again?

Last Week’s answer: A stamp, first answered by Holly Anderson.

Email answers to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com) for a chance to win a prize.



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## FEATURED LOCAL STORY

# Ben Bartel: Clearing the ice

## Local retiree drives Olympia for Wayne Gretzky Estates Winery & Distillery

Brittany Carter  
Staff

The story of how Ben Bartel acquired the position is built on layers, he says, as he peels those layers away one by one.

It's rooted in the land to the back of Bartel's property on York Road. That land, which now belongs to the Gretzky winery, passed hands in sale from his father to Hillebrand Estates Winery and then finally to Gretzky. Bartel grew up on that land.

He says, as a kid, he would jump at the opportunity to lace up his skates when the slopes in the field collected pools of water – it would flash-freeze to make his own personal ice rink.

"I put on my skates and I would skate in that field. I was skating right where that rink is now, in the dark, alone. Now I have 100 people there. There's music and drinks and food."

Before securing his seat atop the tractor pulling an Olympia ice resurfacer, Bartel caught word of plans to build the winery. Among his many hobbies, Bartel is a licenced pilot. Armed with his ultralight plane and a passion for aerial photography, he offered to take photos of the property. He continued to take them throughout construction.

In a casual partnership, he asked only for sponsorship for his Terry Fox run as compensation. He provided the winery with a photographic timeline of their construction.

A working relationship between Bartel and the winery was formed.

Looming retirement encouraged his next move. He was actively on the lookout for something to keep him busy during the winter months; in warmer weather there were no shortage of hobbies to keep him busy. Whether bicycling down the parkway, flying over the town or kayaking through the river, he says he was always up to something physical. The colder months left him restless.

When Fort George opened a public ice rink, he spent most of that winter taking advantage. Sixteen times, he counted; he had it written on the calendar.

Watching the men working maintenance in the booth, he says it occurred to him that was something he'd like to



Ben Bartel beside the Olympia ice resurfacer at Wayne Gretzky Distillery. BRITTANY CARTER/THE LAKE REPORT

try. He had experience driving heavy machinery, having spent time on the neighbour's tractor when he was young. His career working at GM didn't hurt.

"I spent over 30 years at GM as a tool and die maker; I'm machinery oriented. In the maintenance department officially, so that stuff comes naturally."

The cold doesn't phase him either, he says. A true Canadian.

The Fort George employees informed him he needed to work for the Niagara Parks in order to secure a position with them.

"That sounded too much like full-time work. I moved on," he said.

When the rink at the Gretzky Winery opened, he says an opportunity presented itself. Already having a working relationship with the company, he inquired about the rink. During a meeting one day, he says he asked about the hiring process for rink maintenance. They told him they would look into it

and get back to him.

Bartel was persistent. He says he let them know he wanted the position.

"I would be interested in helping out – and I will follow up on that."

Follow up he did. He says he contacted them again and they called him back with an offer.

"No interview, no application, no resume. Someone just called me and said, 'Do you want to come sign up?' I said yea, sure. So, there I am."

Now, every Saturday and Sunday he heads over to take care of the ice.

It's a job he's passionate about and has a lot of fun with, and he says, it's better than working at GM.

"It's a much better atmosphere because everyone there is trained to be hospitable – not at GM. This is a good gig. It's a fair bit of physical work so I actually get exercise while I'm working. The first year I lost weight over the winter, normally I gain weight."

Bonnie Bartel, wife, says he's appreciative of the position and of the people he works with.

"He's never bored, he just loves the job. That's hard work, shoveling snow, driving the [Olympia] (similar to a Zamboni); he is suited for it, he really is. It's perfect for him. He doesn't take it for granted," she said.

With so many people visiting the winery and taking advantage of the rink every weekend, Bartel says he feels like a bit of a celebrity when he pulls the tractor out of the shed. Skaters are asked to vacate the rink while he circles the ice, leaving a pristine surface in his wake.

"It's tense because you have 100 people watching you. I always call it showtime – 'It's showtime!'"

"I'm kind of used to that though because I used to record wedding videos – for 20 years, just a self-made business on the side. You're always working in a crowd and they're always watching you, you're practically

the center of attention. I was cool with it, just do your job, forget about everybody else."

Pleased with the time he spends at the rink, he couldn't think of a more fitting position for himself.

"The neat thing about this is that I'm in my own backyard again, it gives me something to do for the winter, and I meet lots of nice people. It's a skill, a talent, an art – to take care of the ice. So, I'm occupied, and I'm at home."

He says he'll keep it up for as long as he can.

"I think I might keep it up 'til I'm 65, if I can manage it. Unless something better comes along for the winter – like working in a resort in the south."

Growing up in NOTL in the middle of farmland, Bartel witnessed the advancement of the town. He says, while it's not all bad, it can be too busy at times.

"I grew up on that property. We started off living in the boondocks, and then civilization moved in on us.

I think it's a little crowded now, for my liking. But who would have thought a facility like that, a world class facility, who would have thought that it would end up in my backyard?"

"We're victims of our own success here now because it's getting a little too crowded. People want to move in and convert farmland into subdivisions."

"The greatness of this place comes from the agriculture and the history – not from overcrowding."

Aside from the town building itself up too much, Bartel says the growth has provided him with new opportunities; now he can spend his weekends doing what he loves.

"I always tell people it's not a dream come true, but it's beyond my wildest dreams; I never dreamt that."

I'm really tickled by the job. It's a blast, it's a gas – I'm blown away."

Bartel jokes, "It occurred to me that I'm a professional skater. I waited late in my life to go pro."

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