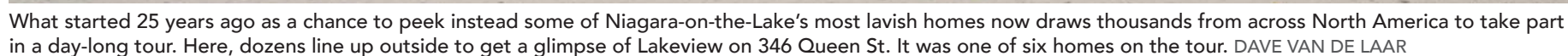


Crowds flock to see decorated NOTL homes during annual tour



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Wiens says average resident won't understand documents

Continued from Front Page

for other developments.

Vizzari also asked McCauley if she had received any calls from residents regarding the site plan.

"I haven't personally received any calls," McCauley said, but she did have a resident come in and meet to speak about it.

Aimee Alderman, the manager of planning, also has not received any calls.

Coun. Tim Balasiuk noted he is certain people will reach out eventually concerning the development.

"We all know how contentious this one development is, regardless of how many people have reached out," he said.

Balasiuk said he knows it isn't the usual mode of action, but posting these reports gives council an opportunity to be completely transparent, he said.

"I don't see any reason we shouldn't be able to provide that information."

Coun. Erwin Wiens, on the other hand, said that these documents are delegated for good reason.

The documents are technical and hard to understand



All of the drawings and documents surrounding the hotel development at the former Parliament Oak site are now available on the town's website. SOURCED/TOWN OF NOTL

for the average resident and putting them online could lead to the spread of misinformation, he said.

"People are so concerned, but they can't take an hour out of their day to come see staff and have staff explain it," Wiens said.

The Lake Report reached out to Wiens for additional comment.

Wiens said that he thinks the average resident would not be informed enough to decipher the documents.

"When you are dealing with architectural drawings, it takes an education to understand that. It's not that people are dumb. Equate it to putting brain surgery online and expecting people to understand," he said in an interview.

The documents were already public, now all that happens is you do not have to go to town hall to get them, Wiens said.

When it comes to misinformation, there is little the town can do to prevent it, Wiens said.

"The town has an obligation to put out the correct information, but we can't control it if people choose not to — if people misread it," he said.

Balasiuk said a note could be added to the bottom

of the webpage informing residents that they can reach out to staff with questions regarding details.

O'Connor said that people not understanding is not a good enough reason to not post the information.

She argued having the documents online will allow residents to properly absorb the information before drafting their questions to staff.

Vizzari noted the process is already "completely transparent," regardless if the documents are posted or not.

Putting documents online only for this development, Wiens said, is singling out a specific developer unfairly.

"This is meant to target someone unfairly for political purposes," he said.

In response, O'Connor again clarified that staff suggested putting the documents online after she approached planners to see them herself.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita said she did perhaps feel that council was targeting one development and suggested inviting residents to meet with staff one-on-one instead.

"It makes sure we don't have an incorrect narrative out in the community that may harm the development itself," she said.

Coun. Andrew Niven commented that he supports putting the documents online.

"I don't really see a downside to providing more information to our residents," he said.

Vizzari requested the website leave a disclaimer at the bottom of the web page informing residents that they can see other site plans by request.

"We can certainly look at the wording on the website to provide information on how to contact staff," McCauley said.

In a town statement, staff said all other planning application documents are available during the official plan amendment and zoning bylaw amendment stages, but as projects progress into the site plan approval stage, those documents will only be available for review at town hall.

The King Street documents are available to view at notl.com/search/site?s=325+king.

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Safety of pipe lining practices questioned after St. Davids home **filled with fumes**

Richard Wright
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Hayley and Tyler Tersigni woke up on Nov. 29 in their St. Davids home to an overpowering chemical stench that brought tears to their eyes, headaches and a strong sense of nausea that only lifted when they stepped outside.

"I remembered it from my dad when he used to do flooring and melted glued together and attached carpets," said Tyler.

It smelled, he said, like an epoxy, a resin or even a little like burning rubber.

"It was bad up here and then I went downstairs. It was so concentrated that I almost puked," he added.

"I couldn't breathe, opened all the windows — the washroom, specifically, down there was like the worst."

Exasperating the problem is that the young couple have a four-month-old newborn.

Whatever the smell was, it wasn't good for anyone, they assumed — especially not for little Leo.

Recalling that a construction crew had been doing some sewer work in front of their house at 76 Four Mile Creek Rd. a week earlier that resulted in a sewage scent in the home, Hayley thought this may be the cause.

She checked outside and sure enough, a crew had returned.

She first called the Niagara Region and was told it wasn't them doing the work.

She then called the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and said she was initially told by the person who answered that it wasn't the town either.

The woman from the town then called back and told the Tersignis that someone was coming out to take a look.

"And then after I spoke to the to her, we went out and just walked around for like an hour with the baby, because we were like, 'this can't be good.'"

Later, two town representatives showed up and after checking with the construction crew, informed the Tersignis what the stench was.

It was the chemical residue that results from steam being released into the sewer line, as crews repair the old piping by lining the inside of a pipe with an



Haley and Tyler Tersigni would like the town to send out notices about CIPP work being done in the community to warn residents of possible toxic fumes. RICHARD WRIGHT

epoxy-like film, essentially making a new pipe inside the old one.

The practice is called cured-in-place piping.

"He said, 'It is totally harmless. You can breathe it in,'" said Hayley.

That answer did not fly with the couple, especially since the individual barely entered the home to inspect anything.

"There was no detectors of any sort," said Tyler.

"So really it was, 'You just came to pay me lip service at the door,' and as soon as he closed it, I pulled my phone, I typed in 'CIPP toxic lining.'"

The results of his search shocked him.

What popped up were stories from news outlets, including USA Today and The Conversation, telling a grim story about the effects of cured-in-place piping.

The stories included schools that decided to evacuate and workers that have died from exposure to the chemicals, said Tyler.

The Tersignis question why the town did not inform them prior to the work that it could be dangerous and to just give them a heads up so they could leave while it was being done.

In a written response to The Lake Report from Darren MacKenzie, NOTL's director of operations, he said the town's stance is that it only informs residents when they will be without services as a result of work being done.

"While the town does not routinely notify residents about main sewer repairs, staff do provide advance

notice if individual sewer services will be directly affected," he said.

The Tersignis say they received no notice of anything.

MacKenzie further stated that fumes from the cured-in-place pipe process are not expected to enter residences "under normal conditions."

"Each plumbing system is equipped with P-traps, which use a water seal to prevent sewer odours and gases from entering the home," said MacKenzie. "However, if a P-trap has dried out due to infrequent use, such as in a basement drain or rarely used sink, this seal can be lost, allowing sewer odours or air to escape."

He advised residents experiencing odours to "pour water into unused drains periodically to maintain the P-trap seal and to ventilate their homes if they notice odours."

Tyler did give the P-trap reasoning some thought even before the response from MacKenzie but isn't convinced they work fully when exposed to high-pressure steam.

His home's piping is equipped with a P-trap.

"They work partially unless there is air pressure that comes through and it bubbles out, which is what we had," he said.

He further questions what will be the effects in other parts of NOTL that will need the same work done because of aging infrastructure, especially those in the older parts of town.

"Some of these homes don't even have P-traps, so

they are going to get instant smell," said Tyler.

"I imagine this (work) is going to get carried through all of Old Town, and a lot of old homes don't have ... these P-traps."

A 2017 study by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States was very critical of the cured-in-place pipe practice.

The study found that "during steam-cured CIPP installations, many different types of materials were created and released into the air."

These materials included particulates, droplets, partially cured resin, organic vapours, and water vapour.

"While historically referred to as 'steam' (and thus implying only water vapour), the emission instead is a 'multi-phase mixture' or emission cloud," it went on to report.

Those clouds contained volatile organic compounds that included suspected carcinogens and hazardous air pollutants including styrene-based compounds.

According to Health Canada, these compounds can have adverse effects on a person's lungs and liver, among other health issues.

To date, the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has repaired 14 sewers across the entire community, said MacKenzie, who added that "all repair work in St. Davids is complete."

"Similar work may be planned for other areas in the future based on ongoing condition assessments of the sewer system," he added.

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Candlelight Stroll supports refugee family

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s annual Candlelight Stroll brought out families young and old to spread holiday cheer for a worthy cause on Friday night.

This year, a crowd of hundreds met in Old Town to walk with candles lit in support of the Kazemi family.

Asadullah and Mahdia Kazemi are from Afghanistan and fled the Taliban more than a year ago.

After a 47-day journey to Canada, the family crossed the border into Quebec in February 2023. At the time, Mahdia was pregnant with their first child.

Now they have two children, one-year-old Ali and three-month-old Zahra.

Donations from this year’s stroll will go toward helping the Kazemis build their lives here.

Beatrice Campbell is stage manager at the Shaw Festival and a friend of the Kazemi family.

Campbell came into contact with the family after volunteering to drive Asadullah to appoint-



The Kazemi family was this year’s recipient of the Candlelight Stroll funds, which will help them with the debt they incurred while fleeing the Taliban in Afghanistan.

ments in NOTL.

Campbell nominated them as recipients for this year’s stroll.

“I wrote a letter from my heart about these people and how much it would mean to them,” she said.

It took Asadullah Kazemi around \$15,000 U.S. dollars to come to Canada and around \$5,000 is remaining of that debt.

Emelyn Williams, the stroll’s organizer, told Campbell she feels confi-

dent that the amount has been met, though total funds raised are yet to be calculated.

When Campbell told the Kazemis they would be the recipients, they responded with relief and huge gratitude, Campbell said.

“(Asadullah) can’t believe his good fortune to have landed here,” she said.

Mahdia told Campbell the stroll was the happiest day since she came to Canada, Campbell said.

“She has always wanted to go in one of those carriages and they simply couldn’t afford it. It was a very very happy night for them,” she said.

A cheque will be presented to the family on Monday, Dec. 16.

As is tradition, there was also a donation bin collecting non-perishable food items for the Newark Neighbours food bank.

Some people have been attending the stroll for decades.

Lindsay Bergsma and her family have walked the winding path through NOTL’s downtown for the last 20 years, she said.

“It’s a tradition,” Mary Jane Henderson said.

“It’s probably our 20th (stroll),” Neil Henderson said.

For some, like Jeffrey Corrin, it’s the act of coming together that makes the stroll memorable.

Corrin visits from Hamilton every year and says the sense of community is palpable each year as people make their way through the streets, singing carols and illuminating the path.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com

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Premier Doug Ford stops in NOTL for private meeting at developer's home

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Ontario's Premier Doug Ford made an unannounced stop in Niagara-on-the-Lake Monday night, for a private function at the home of prominent developer Rainer Hummel.

He was joined by Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Coun. Erwin Wiens, Shaw Festival executive director Tim Jennings and two cabinet ministers, Paul Calandra, minister of municipal affairs and housing, and Stan Cho, minister of tourism, culture and gaming.

The meeting was about the "future of Niagara and where the province sees us going in the next few years," said Hummel.

"The Premier came to my house to join myself and some friends for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. (Ford) doesn't drink and he's vegetarian. He left just before dinner and (Cho and Calandra) stayed to have dinner with us, along with a group of friends and community leaders."

In response to questions



Premier Doug Ford visited NOTL for a private meeting on Monday. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

surrounding the optics of the meeting, given Ford's controversial history with the Greenbelt in which he was found to be favouring certain developers, Hummel said the discussions had "nothing to do with land."

"For instance, Tim Jennings was there to get an update on the new theatre," Hummel said.

"It was very casual and low-key. It was simply a private function at a private home."

The Shaw Festival is tearing down the Royal George on Queen Street with plans to rebuild the theatre.

Zalepa said he was in attendance from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m., and was there to discuss "the future of the Shaw Festival and of course irrigation and how important the (agriculture) community is in regard to tourism," he said.

Wiens said councillors take any opportunity they can to talk to the minister.

He said the conversation was focused around the Shaw Festival and a major upcoming project regarding NOTL irrigation.

"We thanked them for all they've done and as we move forward it's so important. The Shaw Festival is huge, we have a huge irrigation project that we're working on that they've been super helpful for," he said.

- with files from Julia Sacco.

Residents shouldn't pay for Icewine Fest: O'Connor

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Councillors will meet with Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake to advocate for the use of the municipal accommodation tax funding for the upcoming Icewine Festival.

During Tuesday's council meeting, Madison Vine and Dorian Anderson from the Icewine Festival committee requested \$50,000 from the town to support a relaunch of the festival.

The festival "reimagined" proposed ideas for 2025, 2026 and 2027 involving an increased drive for visitor activity and engagement with younger visitors.

The festival early next year aims to attract 10,000 visitors, 4,000 more than 2024, Anderson said.

Coun. Gary Burroughs



Madison Vine and Dorian Anderson from the Icewine Festival committee requested \$50,000 from the town to support a relaunch of the festival. JULIA SACCO

asked the presenters what sets the festival apart from the many others that the town does not support financially.

"As much as the residents and the community enjoy it, the focus is to be an economic driver," Anderson said.

Council members acknowledged how successful the festival is for the town.

"This is a big improvement from presentations

we've seen in the past," Coun. Wendy Cheropita said.

Council is in a difficult position and if the committee had requested the funding two months ago, they likely would have said yes, she said.

Burroughs said that the presentation is unlike any other Icewine Festival presentation council has seen in the past, making it fit for funding from tourism.

"We have to finally take a stand and say, I'm in favour, but not out of parking," he said.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor agreed.

In 2024, council did not support the Icewine Festival because it came through a budget that was presented by Tourism NOTL, she said.

"This is exactly the type of activity and style of marketing that Tourism NOTL is set up for," O'Connor said.

"I don't think that taxpayers, whether it's from parking, whether it's from the levy or whether it's from our portion of the (municipal accommodation tax), should have to support private businesses when there is already a mechanism to do that."

Councillors voted unanimously in support of meeting with Tourism NOTL to discuss funding further.

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Native Centre helps families in need

Paige Seburn
The Lake Report

Mother-and-son duo Skylar and Landon Boyd embraced the season of togetherness at the Niagara Regional Native Centre on Saturday, enjoying an afternoon of gifts, photos with Santa Claus and time well spent with their community.

"This is my first time attending one of the Native Centre programs," said Skylar Boyd.

"It was actually my son who wanted to come. He saw it on Facebook and thought it sounded cool. He's had a great time so far."

The Native Centre's annual Children's Christmas Party was held this year on Dec. 7 and saw a couple hundred kids, and their family members, in the area attend for a day of festivities and time well-spent with one another.

"I love my job," said Destiny Bailey, manager at Abbey House, a program organized by the Niagara



Santa (Quinn) and his cheerful elves. Left to right, Victoria, Justine, and Paige are ready to spread holiday magic with free photos for the children attending the Christmas party. **Find more photos at niagaranow.com.** PAIGE SEBURN

Regional Native Centre.

Bailey is passionate about supporting families as they transition to independent living.

This holiday season, she said, Abbey House went above and beyond to ensure as many families as possible could have everything they needed to celebrate the holidays.

The centre aims to create lasting memories for children in the community, especially those from low-income families.

Ensuring they have a joyful holiday experience is key, said Halley Irwin, director of development and community engagement at the centre.

“Fallon Farinacci hosts

a large fundraiser every year, to raise money for Abbey House. She also does additional drives for it," said Irwin.

Irwin, who's been attending this party since she was a baby, said it was a great chance for their community to connect.

“We like to host community events throughout the year that give our local Indigenous community an opportunity to come together with their families, and provide fun activities for the kids,” she said.

"It helps us ensure all children in our community have a great Christmas memory."

Skylar Boyd said her son, Landon, is typically shy, so she found the party especially meaningful.

"He's a very antisocial kid, so to be here and meet other people who understand him — who are like him, in a sense — has been a really great opportunity," said Boyd. "I'll definitely be back."

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Town **pauses** short-term rental licences

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The town is pausing the issuance of short-term rental licences including cottage rentals, country inns and vacation apartments, starting Dec. 10.

During Tuesday’s council meeting, councillors voted to pause the issuance of licences in anticipation of a detailed short-term rental analysis outlining the possible limitations to be presented on July 1.

The short-term rental committee is working on a draft bylaw and pausing the issuance of new licenses, allowing them to finalize that draft, Coun. Maria Mavridis said during the meeting.

Niagara-on-the-Lake currently has around 400 licensed short-term rentals with 1,000 rooms, making up five per cent of the town’s housing supply.

The committee’s focus is unhosted rentals,



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa confirmed the short-term rental approval pause will not impact existing rentals. JULIA SACCO

which aren’t the primary residences of the owners, Mavridis said.

“The motion says to return short-term rentals back into the housing market, those that are primary residences won’t apply,” she said.

This pause will not affect applications that have already been submitted, only those sent in after Dec. 10.

Coun. Tim Balasiuk said the motion sounds more

like a policy change. “This is littered with Canadian housing issues. I just don’t think that STRs in Niagara-on-the-Lake are going to save the Canadian housing crisis,” he said.

Councillors have to recognize that NOTL is in a “bubble,” and many of the rentals are owned by people who live in town, he said.

“Trying to use this to turn existing STRs into long-term housing, I don’t under-

stand how that could be an option,” Balasiuk said.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa clarified that the key detail is that the motion will not impact existing short-term rentals.

“It’s to get a better understanding of what we have and where we’re going,” Mavridis said.

Treasurer Kyle Freeborn said that during any given year, NOTL will receive around roughly 100 applications.

“There’s usually a significant turnover of applications coming in,” he said.

Public works manager Darren Mackenzie said the number of complaints regarding short-term rentals has reduced since the short-term rental bylaw decision was made.

“Most of the complaints we receive now are around noise or potential cars and parking,” he said.

All council members voted in favour of the pause except Zalepa.

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Canada’s culinary culture on display at Navy Hall

Paige Seburn
The Lake Report

Indigenous cultures and Canadian culinary innovation took centre stage at the Navy Hall on Saturday evening, with diners enjoying a six-course meal that its creators hope will put Canadian cuisine on the global map.

The Culinary Tourism Alliance hosted the Great Taste of Canada dining experience on Dec. 7 from 4:30 to 8 p.m., which blended recipes that have survived millennia with modern culinary techniques.

The Great Taste of Canada initiative looks to explore the country’s culinary offerings, spotlight regional specialties, local food customs and one-of-a-kind dining experiences across Canada.

In a speech to diners on Saturday, Rebecca Mackenzie, president and CEO of the Culinary Tourism Alliance, said it hopes to use gastronomy to achieve many things: Storytelling, cultural preservation, fostering connections between communities and reconciliation.



The fifth course: Juniper and ramp-braised bison on an allspice and maple squash ring, topped with barbecue sunchoke sticks and garnished with mussels in puffball mushroom dashi, with a vegan succotash option. Find more photos at niagaranow.com.

“While you might think that Canada could be known for our food, unfortunately, to global travellers, we aren’t,” said Mackenzie in her speech. “We are not recognized for our foodways and our food culture.”

Mackenzie said Destination Canada has identified nine international markets they aim to attract with the Great Taste of Canada experiences, as part of a broader effort to promote the country’s tourism offerings.

These markets have expressed particular interest in three key aspects of Canadian tourism: The outdoors, Indigenous culture, and culinary experiences.

“So, we’ve combined all three,” she said.

To start, guests were given foraged rosehip and cranberry hot cider with fried Indian doughnuts and white bean hummus on seed crackers.

The second course included scones and

Haudenosaunee cornbread, served with whipped ramp and wild garlic butter and seasonal preserves.

The third course offered Tyendinaga pickerel and wild rice chowder or a vegetarian Three Sisters potage with Tuscarora white corn.

Crystallized Gede-Okosomin squash with maple and Mayan Mexican chocolate followed as the fourth course.

The fifth course featured juniper and ramp-braised bison on an allspice and maple squash ring, topped with barbecue sunchoke sticks and garnished with mussels in puffball mushroom dashi, with a vegan succotash option.

Chef Tawnya Brant explained how this dish highlights the preservation of age-old recipes, incorporating foraged ingredients such as stinging nettle, which has been used by Indigenous peoples for generations.

“It remedies its own sting when cooked,” she said.

For dessert, guests were given a pawpaw Chantilly cream-topped sassafras gelée with cedar shortbread crumble and wild rose

petals, with a gluten-free version available.

A surprise deconstructed chocolate chili raspberry tart by chef Aicha Smith-Belghaba finished the meal, featuring a ganache infused with Madagascar vanilla, Mexican chilies and maple syrup — all vegan and gluten-free.

Reflecting on the experience, Chef Smith-Belghaba acknowledged the challenges of her work, but emphasized its importance.

She said it’s her resilience, shaped by her upbringing, which has been key to persevering.

Through her cooking, she offers others the chance to experience Indigenous culture and savour traditional foods in a new light.

“Food to Haudenosaunee people — I’ll speak to that because I’m Haudenosaunee — is very much a spiritual thing.”

“It connects you to land — family. It also feeds your body, your mind and your spirit as well,” she said. “I hope everyone walks away with that type of feeling of happiness, being with others, laughter — all those things.”

“Food and feasting are a big part of our culture. I’m pleased that our two Indigenous chefs, Tawnya Brant and Aicha Smith-Belghaba, will be sharing that with you tonight,” said Claire Sault, chief of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, in her speech.

“I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention that my mother is Mohawk. I see our two chefs are Mohawk,” she said.

“It’s pivotal — if we are true to our evolving dynamics of truth and reconciliation — that we understand each other, and find some common ground,” she said to the crowd.

Sault sees the Great Taste of Canada as a vital opportunity to promote reconciliation and raise awareness of something due to more attention: Local cultural tourism products.

On their way to hosting culinary experiences across the country, the CTA is setting its sights on Cape Breton, Nova Scotia as the next destination for their Great Taste of Canada series.

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NOTICE OF APPLICATION AND ELECTRONIC PUBLIC HEARING

What: Notice of **Application and Hybrid Public Hearing for the Committee of Adjustment** (under Section 45 of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended).

When: **Thursday, December 19, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.**

Where: Hybrid meeting in-person at Town Hall, Council Chambers, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil or electronically via the directions below (Microsoft Teams).

Regarding: **Minor Variance Application A-23/24 – 1564 Concession 1 Road**

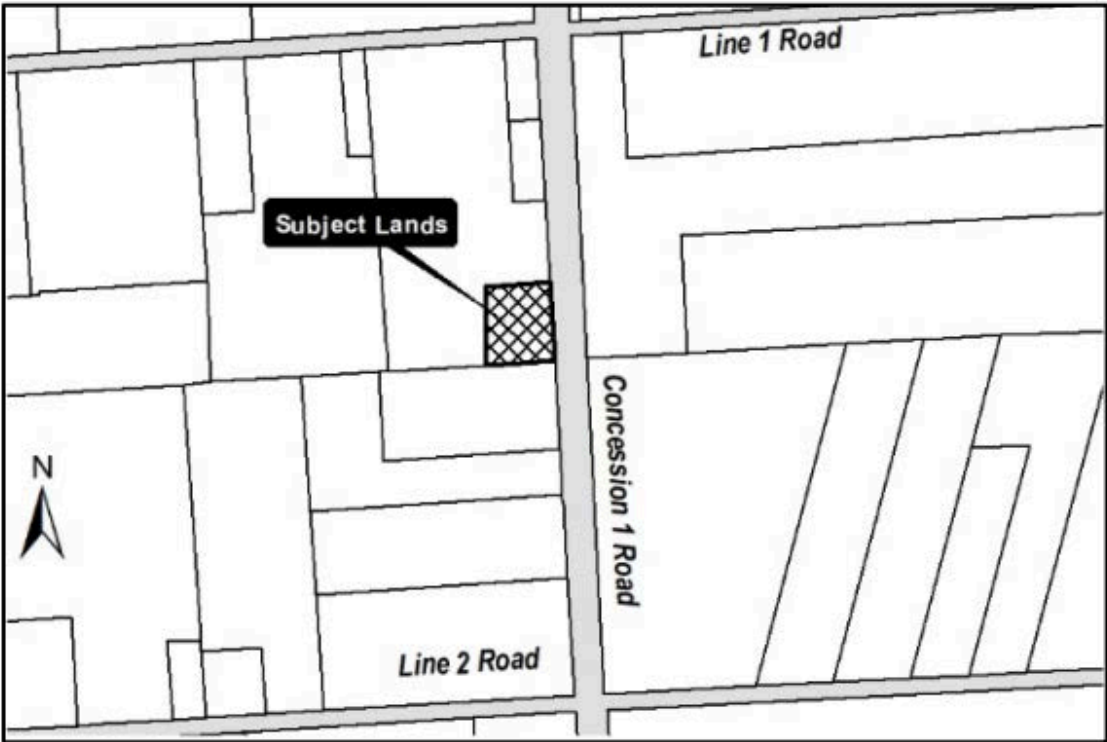
What is the proposal?

The subject lands are known municipally as 1564 Concession 1 Road, lying on the west side of Concession 1 Road, south of Line 1 Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Minor Variance Application A-23/24 is made to facilitate the construction of a new single detached dwelling and requests relief as follows:

1. Minimum rear yard setback from 15.24 metres, as required in the Zoning By-law, to 13.04 metre for the proposed dwelling.

The existing dwelling is required to be demolished following the construction of the new single-detached dwelling as shown on the site plan below.



Dialogue is encouraged:

Written or video comments on the application may be forwarded to Natalie Thomson, Secretary-Treasurer Committee of Adjustment **prior to Wednesday, December 18, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.** at 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, P.O. Box 100, Virgil, ON, L0S 1T0, or via email at natalie.thomson@notl.com.

If you wish to participate and make an oral presentation at the Hybrid Public Hearing of the Committee, you must register with the Secretary-Treasurer Committee of Adjustment at the contact information provided. Following registration, you will be provided with the option to attend in-person or instructions to connect to the Electronic Public Hearing on your computer, tablet or telephone.

At this time, written comments are encouraged. All submitted comments become part of a public record and will be circulated to the Committee of Adjustment, Town staff, the owner/agent for the application and the Ontario Land Tribunal if the decision is appealed.

For more information:

For more information regarding this matter, please contact Natalie Thomson, Secretary Treasurer Committee of Adjustment, at 905-468-3266 ext. 312 or via email at natalie.thomson@notl.com.

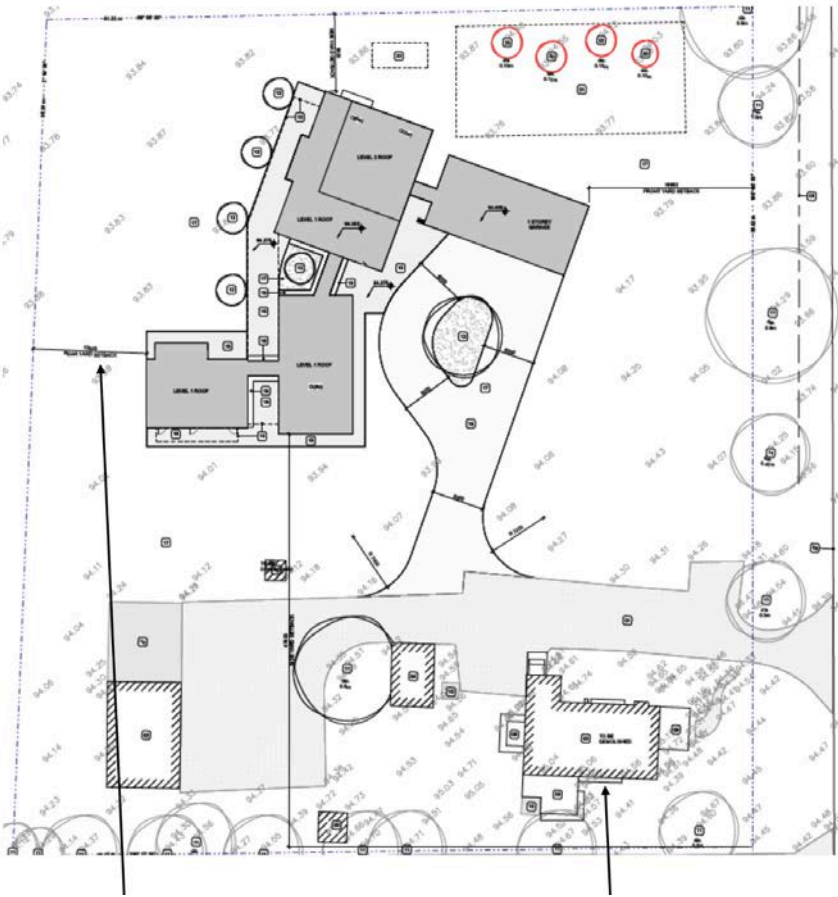
Additional information and material regarding the application(s) may be obtained via the Town’s web-site, <https://www.notl.com/business-development/planning-services/committee-adjustment>

If you wish to be notified of the decision of the Committee of Adjustment in respect of the proposed application, you must make a written request to the Secretary-Treasurer Committee of Adjustment, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, P.O. Box 100, Virgil, ON, L0S 1T0, or email at natalie.thomson@notl.com.

Please note neighbours and other interested parties not defined by the Planning Act are no longer eligible to file appeals for this application as per Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022.

Planning Act appeals may be filed by the applicant, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, a “specified person” (as defined by *Planning Act 1(1)*), and any “public body” (as defined by *Planning Act 1(1)*).

December 9, 2024



To permit a rear yard setback of 13.04 metres, whereas 15.24 metres is required Existing dwelling to be demolished



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NIAGARA MOTORS

A look inside Rotary's Holiday House Tour

Paige Seburn
The Lake Report

The 25th annual Holiday House Tour, hosted by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club, raised over \$200,000 to support local and international charitable initiatives.

The sold-out self-guided tour, held Dec. 6 and 7, featured six homes decorated for the holidays and allowed attendees the chance to explore festive sites across town.

This year's tour offered two options: The general tour, running from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. both days, and the Merry & Bright Christmas Tour at the McArthur Estate, which ran from 12:30 to 6:30 p.m.

The tour, now an annual tradition that draws people from far and wide, continues to be the club's major fundraiser, with proceeds benefiting community projects (45 per cent), international efforts (45 per cent), and youth programs (10 per cent).

In addition to the six homes — the Cedar House, BlueGate, Lakeview, Somerseset, Royal Manor Inn, and Riverview — attendees also visited annual sites including St. Vincent de Paul Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, McFarland House, River-Brink Art Museum and Willowbank.

Special offerings in town included complimentary tastings at local wineries and distilleries, as well as lunch specials at select venues.

GENERAL HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR

Royal Manor Inn (242 Ricardo St., NOTL)

The Royal Manor Inn, a 200-year-old restored tavern, blends heritage with modern luxury. Decorated by the Garden Club of Niagara, the home features festive florals and eclectic décor to complement the preserved hardwood floors, unique artwork, and custom Turkish furniture.

Cindy Grant, Rotarian and one of two house captains, said she was excited to see the turnout.

"There were around 2,300



Top: Willow Cakes & Pastries always decorates a kitchen for the Holiday House Tour. This time it was a snowy display at the Lakeview House. Bottom: The McArthur Estate is always lavishly decorated for the tour. More money is spent on Christmas decorating than most people earn in a year.

visitors yesterday, and we're expecting 2,600 today. It's a constant steady stream of people," she said.

She emphasized the importance of keeping the flow moving to ensure everyone gets the chance to enjoy the homes without waiting too long outside in the cold.

Heidi Brown volunteers at the tour to give back to the community while enjoying the chance to explore beautiful homes and support a great cause.

"When I first moved here, it was one of the first things I did with my friends," said Brown.

Carol Lipsett, the other house captain and past rotary president, highlighted the importance of volunteers.

"It takes 350 to 400 volunteers to run this event, and we couldn't do it without them," she said. "That's really the important part."

Parents organized a bake and warm drink sale to raise funds for their kids' graduation at St. David's Public School outside of the property, with baked goods



priced from \$1 to \$4, said Adriana Miele, one of the baking moms.

Riverview (293 Ricardo St.)

Riverview, decorated with silver and blue accents by Brenda McArthur, blends classic charm with modern design, featuring a marble foyer, a great room with a limestone fireplace, a walk-in wine cellar and a glass elevator.

The outdoor patio offers views of Lake Ontario, complete with an infinity pool.

House captain and Rotarian Patrick McNeill, marking his 25th year on the tour, said he admires the beauty of the home.

McNeill's wife and the home's co-captain, Creena, managed the home's indoor team.

"It's a beautiful view in the back. It's got a lot of wonderful artifacts, a wonderful big wine cellar, and a glass elevator too," he said.

Visitors from all over, including Buffalo and Peterborough, joined the local turnout.

McNeill was ecstatic about the amount being raised for local and international causes.

"It's amazing," he said. "The people who put their houses up are very generous. They allow us to make this money, and make a better word."

Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre (247 Ricardo St.)

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, decorated for the holidays, is a key stop on the Holiday House Tour.

The centre has hosted a festive market alongside the tour for over a decade, offering a diverse range of locally made, handcrafted items for the holiday season.

Rotary volunteers were also available at an education desk to answer questions about the tour.

Events chair Joanne Morandin said the Pumphouse adds a refreshing variety to the tour.

"It's different for people. Generally, when they go and tour the houses, they line up, and it's a short visit. But here, they can spend as much time as they want,

they can warm up, meet friends," she said. "So, I think people have a good time when they come here."

Proceeds supported the Pumphouse's year-round programs. Shoppers could enjoy festive treats and complimentary hot cocoa as well.

Director Rima Boles said it's a great opportunity to see the Pumphouse dressed up for the holidays and learn about their year-round work.

"We love having both visitors from in and outside the Niagara region learning about the Pumphouse and what we do," she said.

McFarland House (15927 Niagara Pkwy.)

McFarland House, one of the oldest properties in Niagara-on-the-Lake, was decorated by the Garden Club of Niagara with the theme "Holiday Stories." The club uses authentic natural materials to design unique decorations.

Built in 1800 by John McFarland and his sons, the house has significant historical ties, including serving as a hospital during the War of 1812 and being one of the few structures to survive the town's burning during the war.

Today, as a museum, McFarland House offers a glimpse into early 19th-century life in Upper Canada, said assistant manager Danielle Lamoureux.

"It's very special in that it is largely still intact from its time period. Many historic homes had to be heavily restored. This one really didn't because it didn't have a lot of change," she said.

She also highlighted the long-standing partnership with the Garden Club, which has decorated the house for decades.

"Every year they come up with a completely unique theme," said Lamoureux. "I heard someone comment that this was the house that really felt like Christmas."

The house also attracted visitors like Mark Weatherley from Stratford, who stumbled upon it while visiting the nearby Christmas market at Reif.

"I popped in, because I've been meaning to come

to this house for years," he said. "I'm thrilled. It's absolutely wonderful."

Weatherley was particularly amazed by the old yarn-spinning machine. "I believe you're from 1800," he said, to the young demonstrator of the machine.

If looking to pay a visit, McFarland House is hosting a Yuletide Afternoon Tea, featuring seasonal teas, treats, and holiday melodies, from Dec. 11-13 at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. (\$39.95 adults, \$29.95 children).

A MERRY & BRIGHT CHRISTMAS TOUR McArthur Estate (210 John St. E.)

Decorated by La Belle Flowers & Gifts and the McArthur Family & Friends, this 1829 Georgian-style brick home is surrounded by Victorian gardens and snow-covered sculptures.

Visitors enjoyed an immersive tour of the festively decorated exterior of McArthur Estate, guided to the front door by Rick Meloen — who was dressed for the part, and Laura Fakla.

Inside, visitors could enjoy a photo opportunity with Santa and the Grinch, a towering 12-foot Christmas tree, complimentary festive treats, Peller Estates sparkling wine, and live music performances by the Soenen Sisters, Eddie Pizzo, and the Mistle Tones.

The McArthur Estate, once the principal residence of renowned painter Trisha Romance and her family, features many elements captured in her artwork.

The third story, above the entrance, served as her studio where she painted, and visitors may recognize familiar details from her paintings throughout the home, said Meloen while guiding visitors.

Andrew and Bobbi Pick, two locals who attended the Holiday House Tour commended the tour's structure and stunning displays.

"It's so well organized," said Bobbi Pick.

Rotary president Jamie Knight said this house tour is their major fundraiser for the year.

"And this year's been another huge success."



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Parade buttons **still available** for donations

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake is gearing up for its annual Christmas Parade in Old Town on Saturday, Dec. 14. Starting at 11 a.m., floats and participants will make their way along Castlereagh, Wellington, Byron/Prideaux, Simcoe and Queen streets.

But the parade itself wouldn't be possible without a team of dedicated volunteers working on the town's parade committee.

Each year, buttons are sold along the route to help offset parade costs and this year's design was done by one of NOTL's most beloved artists, Trisha Romance.

The buttons are on sale now in stores across town and along the parade route on the day of the festivities.

Romance's beautiful artwork "Star of Wonder," is available on the pins for \$3 at Sweets and Swirls Community Centre, the Sandtrap, Avondale on Mary Street, Starbucks in Old Town, Hendricks Independent, Tim Horton's in Virgil, Balzacs, The



Cashiers like Kathy Saunders are happy to add a parade button (designed by Trisha Romance) to your bill at Phil Leboudec's Independent Grocer in Virgil. SUPPLIED

Junction in St. Davids and Legion Branch 124.

Buttons are also available at Phil's Independent in Virgil, where wonder Phil Leboudec has initiated a new button drive this year where shoppers will be asked if they wish to buy a button and have it added to their bill.

"We really appreciate Phil's efforts to help us meet our goal this year," said John Strecker, chair

of the parade's donation committee.

Earlier this year, Romance was granted the inaugural key to the town for contributing to the cultural and artistic heritage of NOTL.

"We approached her because of the honour she got by receiving the key to the town and thought it would be appropriate to use her 'Star of Wonder' illustration," said Strecker.

The Christmas Parade is a wonderful tradition that brings us all together to celebrate the spirit of the season," said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

"If you've never experienced it, I encourage you to join us this year — it's a heartwarming way to start the holidays and feel the strong sense of community that makes our town so special."

juliasacco@niagaranow.com

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Fresh Lake Pickerel
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FRIDAY - DRAGAN ON THE SAXES
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905 934 1300 | spiritinniagara.com

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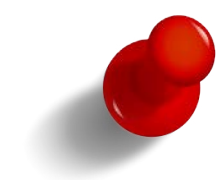
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<div>COMMUNITY FAVOURITES:</div> <div>Legion Fish Fry Every Thursday 4 to 7 p.m.</div> <div>Duplicate Bridge at the Community Centre Tuesdays and Fridays at 1 p.m.</div> <div>Legion Progressive Euchre First and third Sunday of the month 2 to 5 p.m.</div>			
<div>Community photo</div>  <p>Rima Boles, director of the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, and Joanne Morandin, events chair, say the holiday market has been a success. It's on until Dec 17.</p>			
<div>15</div> <div>Breakfast With The Grinch - 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. - Hilton Garden</div> <div>Holiday Market - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</div> <div>A Garrison Christmas - 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Fort George (Navy Hall)</div> <div>Meet & Greet with Santa and The Grinch! - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Angel Inn</div> <div>Saint Nicholas Croatian Party - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Croatian National Centre 1416 Line 3 Rd.</div> <div>Silver Bells & Silver Screens - 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</div>	<div>16</div> <div>O Hear the Angel Voices - 7p.m. to 8:45 p.m. - St. Mark's Anglican Church</div> <div>GLOW SERIES: A Musical Candlelight Experience - 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. - The Irish Harp Pub</div>	<div>17</div> <div>The Great NOTLPL Bakeoff - 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</div>	<div>LET US KNOW OF YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS</div>
<div>22</div> <div>A Christmas Homecoming - 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. - St. Mark's Anglican Church</div>	<div>23</div> <div>LET US KNOW OF YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS</div>	<div>24</div> <div>CHRISTMAS EVE</div>	<div>CHRISTMAS</div>

Know of a local event? Tell us. Send us an email at editor@niagaranow.com

Report CALENDAR

PIN ME UP!



Dec. 12 - Dec. 28

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

A celebration of Scottish sport and culture, the annual these "Games" include caber tossing.

Last issue:

Category: THAT'S JUST OFFAL

Clue: This organ meat is great for protein, vitamin A and iron, but animal rights activists have big problems with foie gras.

Answer: What is liver?

Answered first by: Claudia Grimwood

Also answered correctly (in order) by:
Bob Wheatley, Randie Topps, Jesse Agnew, Lynda Collet, Jim Dandy, Susan Dewar, Esther VanGorder, Howard Jones, Margaret Garaughty, Sylvia Wiens, Katie Reimer, Paulette Kennedy, Lynda Hosty, Margie Enns, Daniel Smith, Wade Durling, Sheila Meloche

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

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

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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 arts is year's c. 14.	12 Holiday Market - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara PumpHouse Arts Centre Niagara on the Lake Christmas Tractor Parade - 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Coast to Coast: Canada's Survivalist Women - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. - Laura Secord Homestead NOTL Community Palliative Care - Information Sessions - 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Cooking Class: Italian Feast - 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. - Inniskillin Wines	13 Holiday Market - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara PumpHouse Arts Centre Jane Austen Tea Party! 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. - Fort George (Navy Hall) SOLD OUT Holiday pop up Market - 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Limited Distilling Beef on a Bun & Games - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. - St. David's United Church Martin Murray - 6 to 9 - Legion Branch 124	14 Holiday Market - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Niagara PumpHouse Arts Centre NOTL Christmas Parade - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Old Town A Garrison Christmas - 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Fort George (Navy Hall) Christmas open House - 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Joseph's Estate Winery Beaded Holiday Tree Workshop - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - RiverBrink Art Museum Christmas Ham & Turkey Roll and Penny Raffle - 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. - Legion Branch 124
18 OUR S	19 You and I Paint - 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. - Inniskillin Winery The Mistletoe Bride Live Reading - 7:30 pm to 9 p.m. - Silversmith Brewing Co.	20 Fish Friday - 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. - St. Davids Lions Clubhouse John Claus - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. - Legion Branch 124	21 Holiday Wine Tasting & Paint Experience - 12 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. - Konzelmann Estate Winery
25 BOXING DAY	26	27 LET US KNOW OF YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS	28 LET US KNOW OF YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS

m. Special thanks to Rob Harris at GoToNiagara.com for our list of events.




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

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 **#8: Donate old towels to a humane society, where they are needed for animal care.**

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock
“I have a heart with room for every joy.”
- Philip James Bailey

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Editorials

Stop trying to hide public information

Richard Harley
Editor-in-Chief

Last week, Coun. Erwin Wiens all but confirmed something we’ve thought for a while: He seems to think you’re stupid.

It’s not just you, though. Wiens, the deputy lord mayor, thinks a lot of residents are stupid. In fact, the majority of you.

Far too dimwitted to be able to be able to have unfettered access to public documents like site plans.

Those documents are technical and very hard for you to understand. And if you see them, you’re probably just going to start spreading misinformation because you will, undoubtedly, misinterpret it.

Oh, and by the way, if Wiens agrees to let you see them, he’s being a big meanie to the poor old developers.

Woe are they in their mansions, hosting parties for the political elite that you don’t hear about (Wiens joined Premier Doug Ford for a private function at the home of his cousin and major developer Rainer Hummel on Monday night. Details of exactly why have not been answered by Ford’s office).

You might think this a big holiday joke. That no person who represents the public could really say those kinds of things. But it’s not. He said it literally last week to council.

“People who don’t under-

stand how to read something very technical will piece-meal it and not understand it,” he said as part of his defence for supporting keeping documents offline.

And in response to Coun. Sandra Connor asking that the site plans for Parliament Oak be made public, “Why put this motion forward? This is meant to target someone unfairly for political purposes, that’s all it is.”

Despite Wiens’ opposition, council decided to make those documents public.

We asked Wiens point blank if he thinks people are too dumb to see them, to which he said of course not.

He says it’s like putting instructions for brain surgery online and expecting people to understand them.

We imagine brains are a bit more complex than construction and land deals. But who are we to say? We’re just as dumb as you.

He also forgets to mention that nobody in town would be doing the “brain surgery.” That would still be left to the professionals.

So, we still don’t quite understand the problem.

Don’t think too hard about it. You might burst a vein in your very dumb, old brain.

Instead of free and easy access to site plans, Wiens would prefer that you march into the municipal offices so you can sit at a desk and see them in the warm embrace of a municipal town hall.

For the extra-brainless among us, staff can sit you

down and explain it to you like you’re five.

We’ve heard that if you promise not to file a freedom of information request, they’ll also give you a free lobotomy (OK, that one was a joke).

But in all seriousness, our editorial last week about the town’s marathon campaign against transparency was just scratching the surface (“Editorial: Concealing documents is not openness,” Dec. 5).

It truly seems some politicians are doing everything they can, finding any reason they can, to keep public information away from the public and limit what the media has access to.

Another perfect example of this is how the town tries to control its employees, and now its committee members, by saying they can’t speak to the media without town approval.

Perhaps Wiens really does fear misinformation will be spread around, or what people’s motivations are when looking at the documents. And maybe there would be misinformation. Maybe people would target developers they don’t like.

But nobody, not Wiens, Zalepa, Doug Ford nor Justin Trudeau has the right to conceal those documents for that reason.

It’s not up to politicians to police people’s thoughts or actions. It’s people’s right to view these documents, whether they are planning experts or not. Public documents are public documents and should

be easily and readily available. Plain and simple.

After a conversation with Wiens on Wednesday afternoon, he did concede that if the plan is to make all site plans accessible, he would support that.

That’s fair. And that’s exactly what this editorial is calling for. All public documents should be easy to access in 2024.

If the town wants to limit misinformation, all it needs to do is clarify rumours when they arrive — a much simpler and more transparent process than trying to deter people from accessing information. Because misinformation is going to happen anyway and thinking that withholding information will fix that is just foolish.

We, as a people, should start turning the tables by filing freedom of information requests at critical mass. We should do it daily. We should have a non-profit organization responsible for doing so, with directors and volunteers and archivists — the whole shebang.

Maybe then — once the town has to increase the budget again to hire more staff just to manage all the information they want to limit your access to — our elected leaders will understand this information belongs to the people.

It belongs to obtuse you, your dense neighbour and your witless newspaper editor.

editor@niagaranow.com

Creating a healthy relationship goes both ways

One thing that is probably true, though we did not find it in any scholarly books, is that building a healthy relationship is two-sided.

As the media, we can be heavily critical of our elected officials. It would be irresponsible not to be when they make poor or unfair decisions. After all, the newspaper is the voice for the people. It’s our job to do so.

But equally important is recognizing and encouraging when politicians are trying to do something right.

That said, we wanted to give a thumbs up to Coun. Maria Mavridis this week for sharing a breakdown of property taxes on her website, mariamavridis.com. This kind of act is above and beyond and helps residents understand where their tax dollars go.

Another kudos to the councillors who voted to post the Parliament Oak site plans online for all to see. We agree this development is of major public interest. However, all developments are of interest to at least

some of the public. Let’s see more sharing of information and less tucking it away in a back room.

Kudos to the councillors who voted to pause approval of short-term rental licences. These should-be-illegal operations are removing homes from our community and replacing them with for-profit businesses.

The litany of problems with that has been explored deeply and it’s good to see council taking a step back to address the problem — because we can’t speak out

of both sides of our mouths: Council either supports increasing the housing supply, or it doesn’t.

Our leaders simply can’t approve a slew of housing developments in the name of creating more homes, while simultaneously allowing homes to be converted into unsupervised mini-hotels to increase the income of those wealthy enough to purchase property. Not to mention how these rentals often degrade the quality of life of neighbours.

Let’s see more good.



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Sounding the alarm on Crysler-Burroughs home



Brian Marshall
Columnist

To begin this week's column, I'd like to sound a warning that a call to action may be required by our community.

The heritage-designated Crysler-Burroughs property at 187 Queen St. — a unique piece of Niagara-on-the-Lake's history — is currently being threatened by the developer who owns it.

This columnist has written about the property several times in the past couple of years and its importance

within our cultural heritage landscape (see: "Architext: A reflection of change," April 6, 2022, "Architext: Assault on heritage continues, but it's not too late," July 24 and "Architext: 187 Queen St. severance diminishes NOTL's cultural landscape," Aug. 14).

Both the municipal heritage committee and the committee of adjustment rejected town staff's recommendations to approve the owner's application to subdivide this historic lot and expressed fundamental opposition to the applicant's proposed vision of adding a front-facing garage attached to the facade of the house — which would both completely compromise the heritage asset and fundamentally degrade the Queen Street cultural heritage streetscape.

Despite Coun. Tim Balasuiik's plea, expressed during the municipal heritage committee meeting when



The Crysler-Burroughs property may be at risk, writes Brian Marshall. He says the developer has "refused to accept the opinions and rulings" of the municipal heritage and adjustment committees, both of which are against his plan for the heritage home.

the application was presented, "Please Rainer, not this one," the developer, Mr. Rainer Hummel, refused to accept the opinions and rulings of the committees, ignored the general will expressed by town residents and lodged an appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Now, it would be normal and typical — particularly

town hall have recently informed me that there is a move afoot by certain elected councillors not to do so. In other words, to capitulate to this developer without a fight.

Should this information be true, it would be the most egregious assault on the built heritage of Niagara-on-the-Lake in recent memory.

Moreover, any councillor who would vote in favour of such a total surrender could never again suggest or claim that they care about preserving the unique historical character of this town.

That said, it is vital that each and every one of you, dear readers, reach out to our councillors on this issue. Let them know that the history and heritage of our town are worth fighting for.

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

What led Niagara-on-the-Lake to rewrite history?



Garth Turner
Columnist

When the lord mayor took the podium, he pulled out his phone and haltingly read these words:

"We begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional and highly significant spiritual place of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee people, many of whom continue to live here today. This traditional gathering place is covered under the Upper Canada Treaty and is within the land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement."

It was Remembrance Day. Before the iconic town cenotaph, the veterans, the

soldiers, the band and the crowd of citizens — in honour of those who served and died in world wars, Korea, peacekeeping and now.

What the Dish with One Spoon agreement of 1701 had to do with this moment — and why the Anishinaabe folks were mentioned before the fallen — was unclear.

By the way, this is also how town council meetings in NOTL begin. First the tribal acknowledgment and after that the national anthem.

In August the busy-bee NOTL Museum held a Heritage Festival with displays of antique local maps, clothing, tools and fascinating weaponry (men turn into historians when they can see things that explode).

Entertaining the throng were four musicians and singers. When I passed by, their lyrics were of "murders of women and children" and the "complete genocide" of Indigenous people.

That was jarring. As it was meant to be, no doubt.

It also seemed weird at an event meant to celebrate



Members of the 809 Newark Royal Canadian Air Cadets guard the cenotaph on Nov. 11. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

the very long and deep history of a place that was the capital of Canada, where Parliament met under a tree and where we (redcoats, townsfolk and Indigenous allies) battled the evil Yanks (We lost. The house I now live in was torched).

Being a troublemaker, I asked the museum's managing director, Sarah Kaufman, why the death song was sung. There is a place for reconciliation and blame. This happy festival did not seem to be it.

Sarah responded: "The NOTL Museum is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion. As part of that, we have decided to address tough topics of black history and enslavement ... as well as

the uncomfortable Indigenous history of Canada. Every country has positive history as well as negative history. I believe we cannot understand the history of our country, and be proud of how far we have come as a society, without knowing the full history — good and bad."

Diversity, equity and inclusion, known as DEI, has turned into a testy political issue. It played a starring role in the U.S. election, which rocked America, and is now heavily influencing the polarized situation here.

For years governments have heavily promoted DEI initiatives, as have universities and corporations. It's to bolster representation by women and minority groups, the racialized and economically disadvantaged.

But using DEI to refocus history — or even rewrite it — is an interesting twist.

DEI is now under assault. Doug Ford just ended its plan four years after the death of George Floyd propelled it forward. Lowe's, Harley-Davidson,

John Deere, Walmart, Jack Daniel's and other U.S. employers follow.

Corporations shamed and embarrassed during COVID-19 for lacking a policy of social justice are scrambling to pivot as customers (and voters) change.

The new U.S. vice-president, JD Vance, introduced a "Dismantle DEI" bill into Congress. Over a dozen states are throwing out DEI statutes.


In Washington, a federal House Office of Diversity and Inclusion was disbanded. Now the debate's ripping apart schools. At the nearby University of Michigan, leaders are dumping DEI programs and hiring guidelines, amid chaos.

Is it time to rethink?

We should respect each other, of course, and the past. But let's be more proud than ashamed. Maybe sing the anthem first. And not surrender with a shrug what others died for.

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


garth@garth.ca



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Kids win mayor's Christmas card contest



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa awarded Vivienne Atwood, Michael Kamatovic and Dean Pagnotta, winners of the town's annual holiday card contest for children under 13. The three artists will have their designs featured on the town's official 2024 holiday greeting cards. JULIA SACCO

Canada Post strike no closer to an end but Santa's letters are on the way

Richard Wright
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Striking postal workers in Niagara-on-the-Lake and across the country are no closer to getting back to work after talks between the union and the crown corporation resumed Dec 9.

In a public statement made just minutes after those negotiations concluded, Canada Post blamed the Canadian Union of Postal Workers for widening the gap between the sides and warned that an end to the work stoppage is nowhere in sight.

"We are conducting a full review of the offers for the Urban and RSMC (Rural and Suburban Mail Carriers) bargaining units and will share more information as soon as possible," said a release from Canada Post media relations officer Lisa Liu.

"However, we don't want to provide false hope to impacted employees, small businesses, charities and northern communities that were hoping for a speedy resolution," she added.

Monday was the first day of talks since a federal mediator suspended negotiations two weeks ago. The strike began on Nov. 15.

LouAnne Binning is president of CUPW Local



Despite the ongoing Canada Post strike, letters from Santa will still arrive.

614, the local union that represents workers in St. Catharines and NOTL, and says the issues on the table are things that every worker wants.

"Our key issues are still, you know, benefits and wages, pension security and weekend work," she told The Lake Report.

"Canada Post for some reason believes that individuals just only want to work eight hours a week and only on a Saturday," she added.

"I'm not sure where they're getting this information from, but that's not

what we're hearing."

Adding weekend deliveries to the already five-day-a-week service is something Canada Post has stated wants to look into to help increase revenue.

Workers fear that would mean the mass hiring of part-time and precarious workers — people who do not qualify for benefits and pensions.

"We just want them to bargain fairly and not just come back with the same offers over and over again," she said.

Canada Post says its financial situation is dire and needs to pull in the purse strings.

The corporation says it recorded a 2024 third-quarter loss of \$315 million.

Other estimates are that it has lost over \$3 billion since 2018.

This week, the corporation reiterated its financial situation.

"Canada Post is at a critical juncture in its history," read the Dec. 9 statement.

"With financial pressures mounting and now accelerating with CUPW's ongoing strike, our long-standing role as a vital, publicly owned national infrastructure for Canadians and Canadian businesses is under significant threat," it added.

Binning said the idea that

Canada Post is toeing the line is deceiving because it implies that Canada Post is in the game to make money.

"It's not mandated to make a profit, even though it has in the past," she said.

"So for them to all of a sudden start talking about all this money that they lost, but in fact, they didn't lose any money."

She believes hundreds of millions of dollars that were invested in a new plant in Scarborough, for example, are being added to the deficit and called a loss.

Santa's reply letters are on their way


Young NOTL residents who sent Santa Claus letters this month via striking postal workers can expect return mail starting this weekend.

"We did get a notice from Santa," said Binning.

"He is sending his reply letters to us by way of Rudolph and starting this weekend, we are going to make sure that all the children (who sent letters) get replies."

Volunteer striking postal workers will serve as Santa's helpers to deliver the mail in person to each house that sent a letter with a return address.

Youngsters can drop their letters to Santa at the NOTL Queen Street Postal Office, Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.




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Another board game success from NOTL? Investors hope so

Staff
The Lake Report

Could there be another smash hit board game in the works in NOTL?

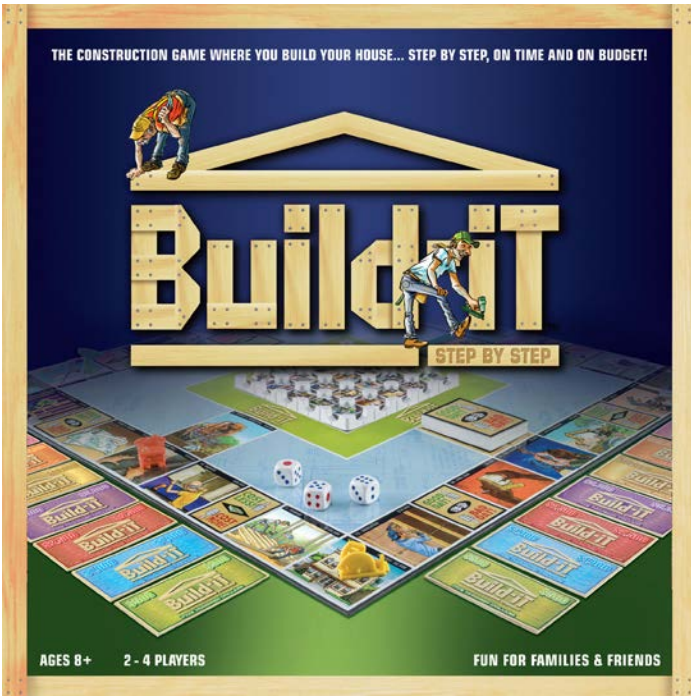
A group of local investors sure hopes so.

In the hometown of the iconic trivia game Trivial Pursuit, another game is about to hit the market, and its creators are hoping they can “build” another international success — this time in the realm of home construction.

The game is Built-iT Step By Step, and it takes players on a quest to construct their home first, without running out of cash.

While the two games are completely different, there’s some similarities in how they came to be.

Before Trivial Pursuit was launched in 1979, a group of investors sat around a table in Niagara-on-the-Lake and envisioned the game. While some believed in it and others didn’t, it would eventually become one of the most successful board games on the planet, selling more than 100 million copies worldwide.



Left: The cover of the board game. Right: Al Huberts, game creator and serial entrepreneur. SUPPLIED/FILE

Now, again in our wee town, another group of investors has come together over coffee at Tim Hortons to take on the challenge of getting their game to the masses.

The group of six locals named its company Rule 1 Concepts Ltd. and is led by serial entrepreneur Al Huberts, a successful fashion designer and creator of Nature’s Aid health and beauty products.

In this modern age of phones and tablets, it’s a different landscape for board games, admits creator Al Huberts — but in fact, board game sales are only on the rise, he says, with sales expected to surpass \$18.8 billion in 2024 and hit \$32 billion by 2032. About 50 per cent of those sales are in North America alone.

He says it just takes the right concept — and right

now, people are into home building.

That’s why he created Built-iT.

“One only needs to view HGTV, Yes, Discovery, Magnolia, etc., to appreciate the interest North Americans have in all things related to home construction,” says Huberts.

“Yet not a single game related to the house building process had been in-

vented until Built-iT Step By Step.”

Huberts’ parents immigrated to Canada from the Netherlands and formed a construction company — something that has stuck with Huberts even though he took a different career path.

While he saw success in the fashion business, creating, producing and selling mens fashion products to

North American retailers, his interest in construction has always remained close to home.

Huberts believes the interest in home building will only grow over time, as people seek to have their own dream homes. His game brings that love of home construction to your family table.

He says part of the reason board games are only growing in popularity is because they are also a great way to disconnect from personal devices and spend some quality time with the family.

The company will launch the game via Kickstarter.

Starting Dec. 15, anyone interested in securing an early copy or supporting the creators can register to be among the first notified when the Kickstarter campaign begins.

Supporters of the Kickstarter campaign will be able to purchase the game at a significantly reduced price.

Learn more about the game by watching a quick video here: <https://tinyurl.com/56hj5yfb>.

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NOTICE OF APPLICATION AND ELECTRONIC PUBLIC HEARING

What: Notice of **Application and Hybrid Public Hearing for the Committee of Adjustment** (under Section 45 of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended).

When: **Thursday, December 19, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.**

Where: Hybrid meeting in-person at Town Hall, Council Chambers, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil **or** electronically via the directions below (Microsoft Teams).

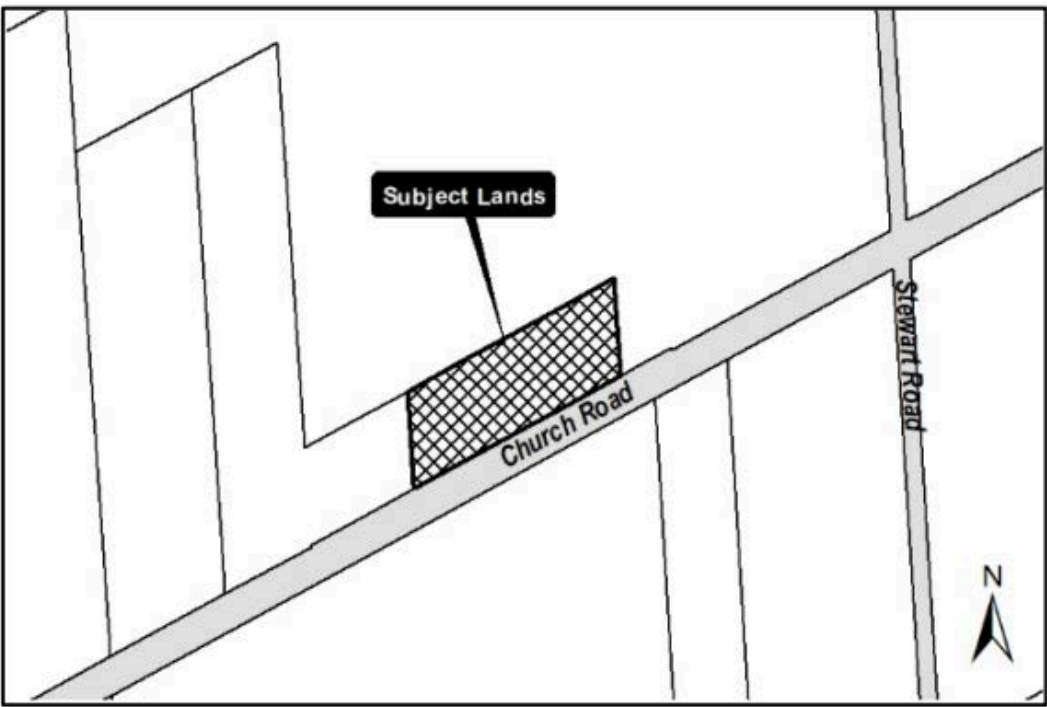
Regarding: **Minor Variance Application A-07/24 – 136 Church Road**

What is the proposal?

The subject lands are known municipally as 136 Church Road, lying on the north side of Church Road, west of Stewart Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Minor Variance Application A-07/24 is made to facilitate the renovation of the existing dwelling into an accessory structure and the construction of a new single-detached dwelling and requests relief as follows:

1. To permit an accessory structure (workshop) in front of the proposed single-detached dwelling, whereas an accessory structure is only permitted to the rear of the front line of the main building.



Dialogue is encouraged:

Written or video comments on the application may be forwarded to Natalie Thomson, Secretary-Treasurer Committee of Adjustment **prior to Wednesday, December 18, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.** at 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, P.O. Box 100, Virgil, ON, L0S 1T0, or via email at natalie.thomson@notl.com.

If you wish to participate and make an oral presentation at the Hybrid Public Hearing of the Committee, you must register with the Secretary-Treasurer Committee of Adjustment at the contact information provided. Following registration, you will be provided with the option to attend in-person or instructions to connect to the Electronic Public Hearing on your computer, tablet or telephone.

At this time, written comments are encouraged. All submitted comments become part of a public record and will be circulated to the Committee of Adjustment, Town staff, the owner/agent for the application and the Ontario Land Tribunal if the decision is appealed.

For more information:

For more information regarding this matter, please contact Natalie Thomson, Secretary Treasurer Committee of Adjustment, at 905-468-3266 ext. 312 or via email at natalie.thomson@notl.com.

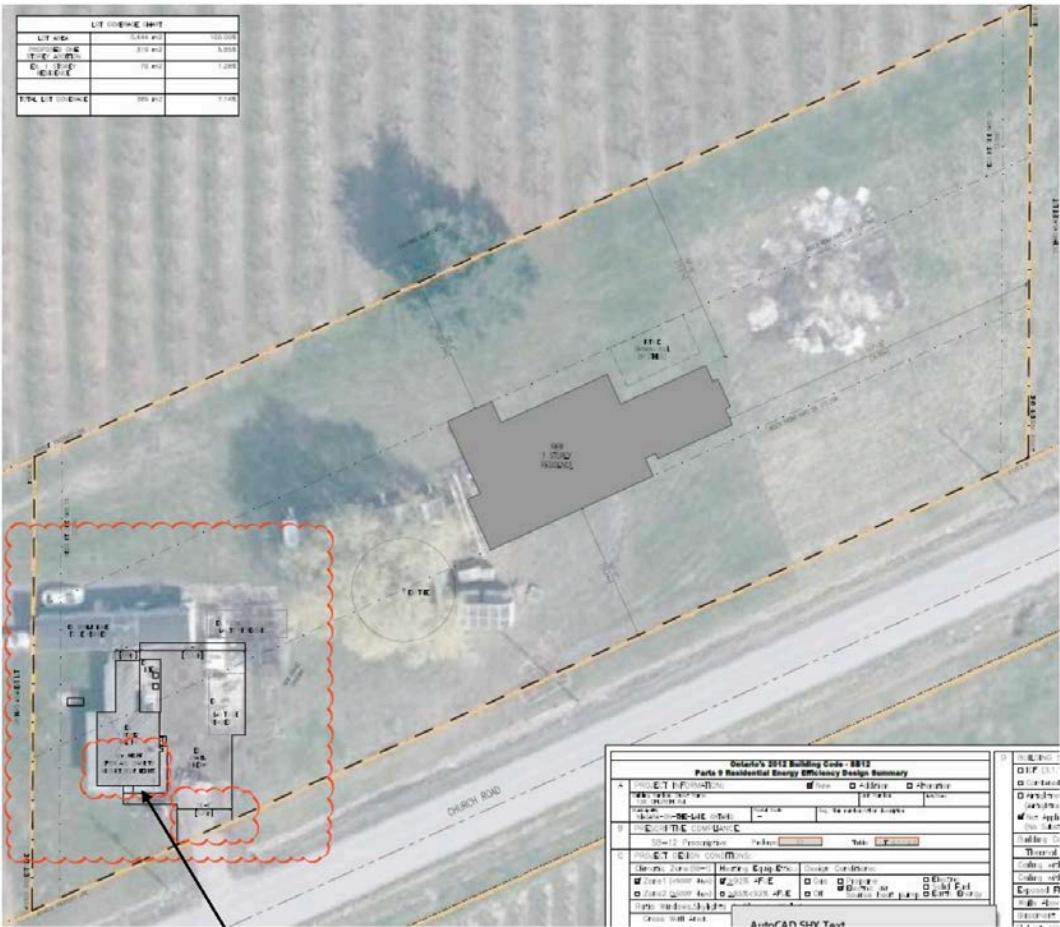
Additional information and material regarding the application(s) may be obtained via the Town’s web-site, <https://www.notl.com/business-development/planning-services/committee-adjustment>

If you wish to be notified of the decision of the Committee of Adjustment in respect of the proposed application, you must make a written request to the Secretary-Treasurer Committee of Adjustment, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, P.O. Box 100, Virgil, ON, L0S 1T0, or email at natalie.thomson@notl.com.

Please note neighbours and other interested parties not defined by the Planning Act are no longer eligible to file appeals for this application as per Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022.

Planning Act appeals may be filed by the applicant, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, a “specified person” (as defined by *Planning Act 1(1)*), and any “public body” (as defined by *Planning Act 1(1)*).

December 9, 2024



To permit an accessory structure beyond the front face of the main building, whereas accessory structures are to be behind the front face of the main dwelling



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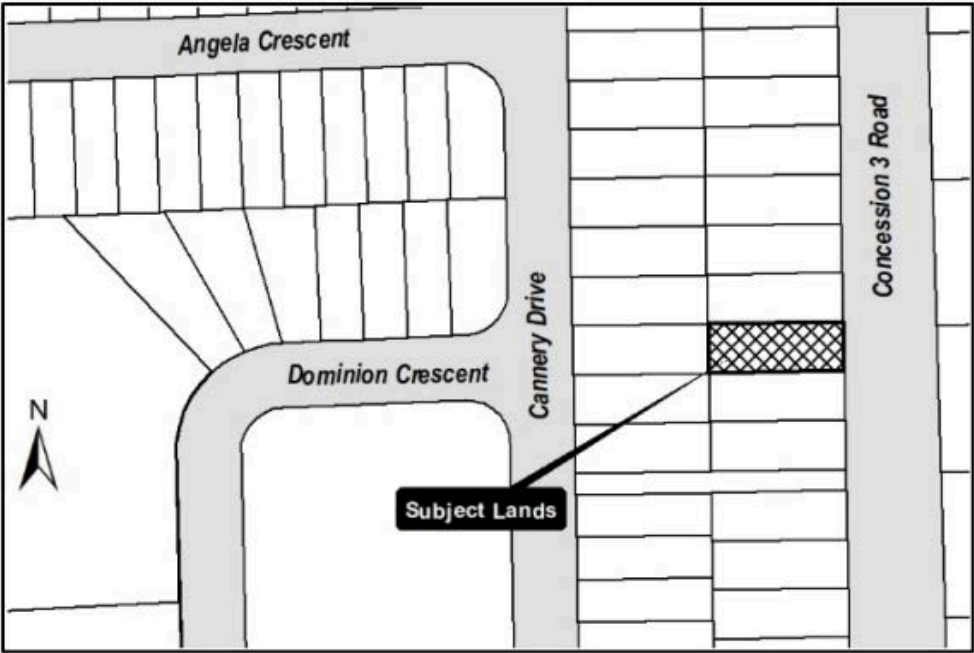
Regarding: **Minor Variance Application A-22/24 – 1350 Concession 3 Road**

What is the proposal?

The subject lands are known municipally as 350 Concession 3 Road, lying on the west side of Concession 3 Road, east of Cannery Drive in St. David’s, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Minor Variance Application A-22/24 is made to recognize an existing gazebo and storage shed and requests relief as follows:

- 1. Minimum rear yard setback from 1.5 metres, as required in the Zoning By-law, to 1.0 metre for the existing shed;
- 2. Minimum side yard setback from 1.5 metres, as required in the Zoning By-law, to 1.0 metre for the existing shed;
- 3. Minimum side yard setback from 1.5 metres, as required in the Zoning By-law, to 1.0 metre for the existing gazebo;
- 4. Maximum lot coverage from 45%, as required in the Zoning By-law, to 47% for the dwelling, shed and gazebo.



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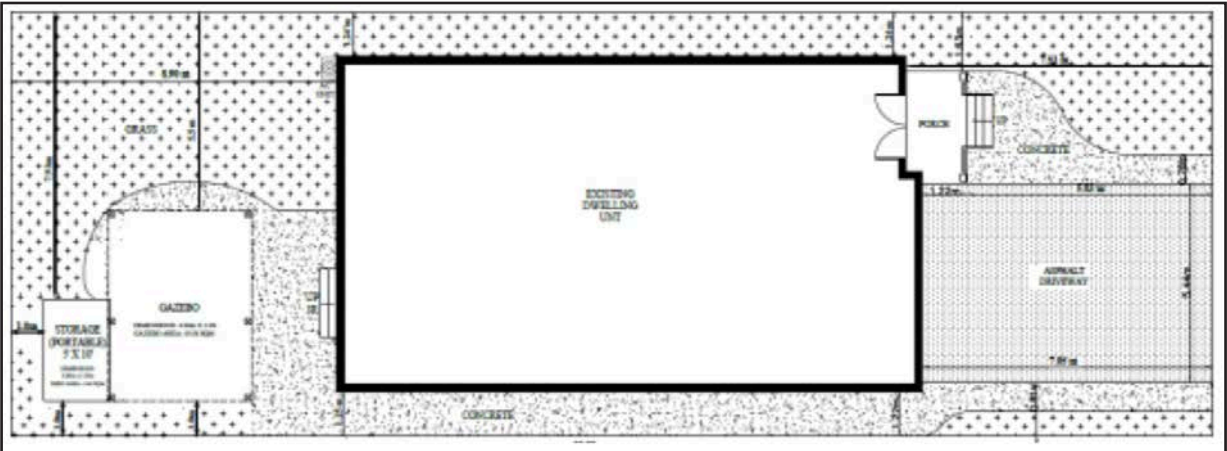
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Planning Act appeals may be filed by the applicant, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, a “specified person” (as defined by *Planning Act 1(1)*), and any “public body” (as defined by *Planning Act 1(1)*).

December 9, 2024



To permit total lot coverage of 47%, whereas 45% is permitted
To permit a side yard setback of 1.0 metres, whereas 1.5 metres is required
To permit a rear yard setback of 1.0 metres, whereas 1.5 metres is required

EXPLORING HISTORY
WITH **NOTL MUSEUM**



Post office interior,
circa 1920

Here's a photograph of the interior of the post office that was located in the Rowley Block at 27 Queen St. in the Old Town area of Niagara-on-the-Lake. You can see all of the mailboxes on the wall in the background and the light shining through the building's large windows above. The men in the photograph are identified, from left to right, as Charlie Taggart, James McFarland and Joseph Healey. Healey was the postmaster from 1904 to 1930. The woman and child are not identified but one could assume they were close relations of Healey due to where they're standing and for the fact that they had access to the backroom of the post office. The post office was likely a small operation back then. Hopefully, Canada Post will resolve the strike soon and our current post office can resume its hard work.

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Neob makes a difference, one bulb at a time

SPONSORED
The Lake Report

What started as a few acres of lavender in Niagara-on-the-Lake has blossomed into a thriving business with five stores — and a mission that goes far beyond selling products. For 15 years, neob Lavender has grown alongside its community, crafting everything from soothing oils to fragrant soaps using locally grown lavender. But this family-run business is proving that its roots — both literal and figurative — run deeper, especially during the holiday season.

Business owners Melissa and Robert Achal have always felt a deep connection to their community, a bond formed in the early days of neob when NOTL warmly welcomed their small venture. “We’ve always felt like giving back was the natural next step,” Melissa says. “We’re just a small business trying to do our part in the most meaningful way possible.” Their philanthropic journey took an innovative turn when they discovered



Robert and Melissa Achal are selling garlic they discovered on their farm to raise money for United Way Niagara.

an excess of garlic from their farm. “We thought it was a different, unique way to give back,” Robert explains. That idea blossomed into a new initiative: Selling the garlic and donating 100 per cent of the funds to United Way Niagara’s Backpacks for Kids program, which provides school supplies to children from families in need. As parents of two young children, the Achals were moved by the stories of

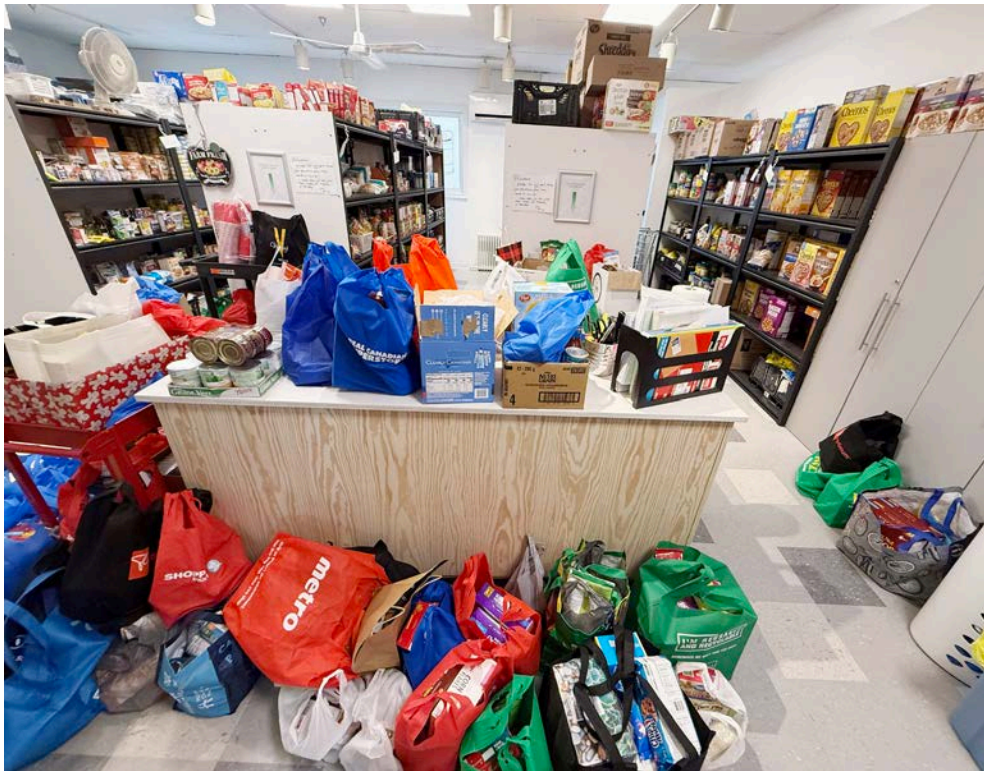
youth in their community lacking access to basic school supplies. “If we can give them the tools, then they can boost their confidence and share a similar experience with their peers,” Melissa says. Melissa shares that sentiment. She grew up in a family of four with a single mom, so she knows firsthand the impact even a small gesture can make. The benefits of their giving don’t stop with the community. The initiative also enriches their team.

“Not only is this important to us, but it allows our employees to feel good too,” Melissa adds. “Knowing that the company they work for is contributing to the community makes a difference — and who knows? Maybe someone they know benefits from programs that United Way funds.” Neob Lavender hopes its story inspires other small businesses to find unique ways to give back. “Even a small contribu-

tion can make a big difference,” Melissa says. “You never know what small niche you might find that allows you to give back. For us, it was the garlic sale. For someone else, it could be something completely different.” The neob team believes that every business, no matter the size, has the potential to make a meaningful impact. “Although the effects of poverty may not always be visible, they exist in every community across Niagara,” Melissa notes.

“Small businesses can help fill that gap in so many creative ways.” As they reflect on the holiday season, Melissa and Robert are filled with gratitude for the support they’ve received over the years. “We like to think we make products that make people feel good,” Melissa says. “And philanthropy makes us, and our employees feel good, too — it’s a win-win.” For other Niagara businesses looking for inspiration, Melissa has one piece of advice: “Find an area where you can do a little something that makes a big difference. It’s about supporting the community that supports you.” From their fields of lavender to their heartfelt community initiatives, neob Lavender is embracing the spirit of giving in creative and meaningful ways. If you wish to support your community this holiday, a gift to United Way Niagara is an effective way to support local agencies that make up the social safety net in our community. Visit unitedwayniagara.org to learn more.





Food donations from the Candlelight Stroll pile up at Newark Neighbours. DON REYNOLDS

Newark Neighbours food bank gets a boost from Candlelight Stroll

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

The rows of canned goods and dry foods that line the shelves of the food bank at Newark Neighbours were bolstered by a big delivery on the weekend, with food donated as part of the Candlelight Stroll.

Volunteers carried in bag after bag packed with non-perishable food, which will help to fill the storeroom that serves almost 200 households in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Food bank manager Cindy Grant says the number of users, as well as the number of visits to the food bank, have swelled this year.

There are currently 195 registered users, compared to 87 in 2022. There have been 1,578 visits in just the first nine months of this year, compared to 918

visits to the food bank for the full year in 2022.

The food bank is open Tuesdays and Thursdays and while it typically gets about 20 visits on each of those days, on one day last week there were 47 clients served in one day. On average, the food bank gets 154 visits each month.

In addition to donations of food and money, the food bank also relies on support from the community for gently used goods to sell in the thrift shop. All of the money from sales, after expenses, goes directly to the food bank.

Angela Lindfield, who is in charge of store operations, says the thrift shop needs donations of clothing in good condition, small household appliances, dishes, bedding and home decor items.

Unfortunately, a lot of the things that are donated can't be sold in the store,

such as electronics, books, CDs, used toys, strollers and furniture. Those things have to be redirected to other charities, which takes a lot of time and effort from the more than 100 volunteers who keep everything running.

A complete list of what the store needs can be found on the website, newarkneighbours.ca/thrift-shop. Lindfield says if anyone is unsure about something they're thinking of donating, staff are happy to advise.

This Christmas, the food bank will distribute 140 Christmas hampers. Parents who are registered can shop for gifts for their children that have been donated by the community.

Newark Neighbours will be closed for the holidays from Dec. 22 to Jan. 1. Donations for the thrift shop will pause as well, to resume in the new year.



Parents who are registered with Newark Neighbours can shop for gifts for their children. The gifts, some of which are pictured above, have been donated by the community.

Thank you



The Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake sincerely thanks everyone who made the 25th Annual Holiday House Tour a success – the McArthur Family & Team, our homeowners, sponsors, decorators, volunteers, performers, community partners, & attendees! We couldn't do it without you. Thank you!

All profits benefit local & international charitable organizations.

HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR

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Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake
www.niagaraonthe-lakerotary.ca

PHOTO CREDIT: COSMO CONDINA

Give the whole community the gift of **great news** this holiday season. Donate today.



Have some fun



- Across
1. Summer sky sights (8)

5. Desisted (6)

9. Made suitable (7)

10. Put in writing (3,4)

11. Grasp (10)

12. PIN points? (1,1,2)

14. Up till now (2,4)

16. Faith-based fight (4,3)

19. --- Oak ("Far from the Madding Crowd") (7)

20. Grieve (6)

23. Portal (4)

24. So careless about some hot dishes (10)

26. Declines (7)

28. Hibernia (7)

29. Spotting (6)

30. Becomes rigid (8)
- Down
1. Dearth (8)

2. Sleep stopper (5)

3. The written classics (10)

4. Side-to-side measurements (6)

6. Corrode (3)

7. Cat breed (9)

8. Coffee accompaniment (6)

10. Elder (6)

13. Without assistance (2,8)

15. Large flying insect (9)

17. Flower attractions (6)

18. Every story has them (3,5)

21. Puts on a pedestal (6)

22. Holiday memento (1-5)

25. Depart (5)

27. Transgression (3)

Crossword Puzzle

1		2		3		4			5	6		7		8
9							10							
11											12			
							13							
14		15				16								
						17								18
21									22					
23					24							25		
26				27				28						
29							30							

Last issue's answers

1	A	V	F	D	Y	G	A	P
9	T	B	I	L	I	S	I	
	T	I	L	V	S	C	O	
11	E	X	I	L	E			
	M	S	P		V	N	E	
13	P	I	T	S	T	O	P	
	T	H	A		R	O	E	
	W	E	I	R	D	O		
21	S	K			V	H	S	
24	O	P	I	U	M	E		
	Y	T	A		A	Y		
27	B	A	C	K	D	R	O	
	E	H	R	M		T	O	
31	A	M	E	R	I	C	A	
	N	N	D	N		R	E	

						8		1
	9	8	6			3		
				5		2	9	
	6				5			
	3		8	2	1		5	
			9				8	
	5	4		6				
		6			3	4	2	
7		3						

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The tiny and the gargantuan in the universe



Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Recently, two objects, one incredibly small and the other gargantuan in, scale caught my attention.

The first, a giant star named in the lingo of astronomers, WOH G64, was highlighted by one of my favourite science writers, Dennis Overbye from the New York Times.

This giant, the first star outside the Milky Way to have its picture taken is 2,000 times larger than our sun, and was found in a small galaxy orbiting our Milky Way and a long, long way away — 160,000 light years to be precise.

Based on its red appearance surrounded by a spinning corona of gas and energy, this giant is probably running out of energy to sustain fusion and thus its source of expansile force.

With the result that sometime in the next million years this star will collapse directly into a dark hole or come to its end in a spectacular supernova explosion scattering its

elements throughout the neighborhood with the core imploding into a black hole or neutron star.

To see that giant star required ganging data together collected from four separate eight-meter telescopes to create a much larger virtual telescope with the requisite resolution to see this dying giant.

The picture is yet another reminder of the cycle of birth, interims and endings of stars, and the possible birth of new stars by gravitational shaping and compression of nearby hydrogen clouds together with the leftover elements from the death of earlier stars.

That's perspective on a grand scale.

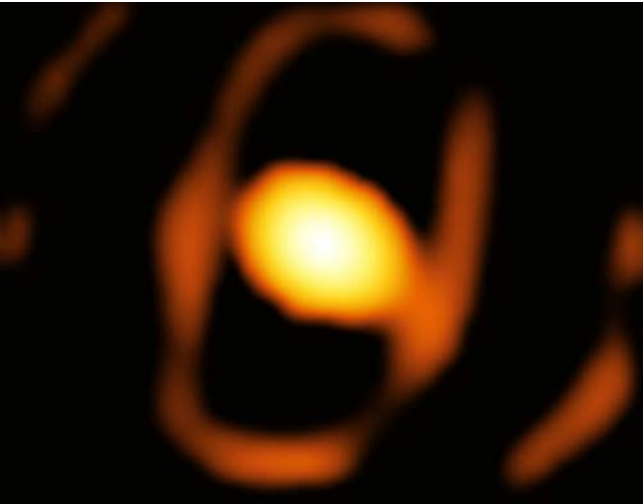
What about the other end to the scale — the scale of the very tiny?

Recently, a friend brought to my attention an article in Space.com written by Victoria Atkinson who highlighted an extraordinary image of a single photon of light.

That picture closes a loop for me because, in 1905, Albert Einstein — based on his analysis of the photoelectric effect — concluded that light was composed of photons.

That was a revolutionary claim at the time and eventually led to a Nobel Prize for Einstein in 1921.

In a far more reluctant



An image of WOH G64, taken by the GRAVITY instrument on the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope Interferometer. SOURCED

fashion, Max Planck adopted the quantal nature of blackbody radiation for his mathematical analysis of blackbody radiation to bring his equations in line with the experimental data.

Einstein's and Planck's adoption of the quantal nature of light and heat energy were to form the basis of quantum physics.

Prior to that time, visible light, and the rest of the electromagnetic spectrum — so brilliantly studied by Faraday and Maxwell in the 1800s — were considered as waveforms but not quantal in nature.

But what is a quanta? A particle? If so, how large and what are the properties of a quantum?

Here is where a recent

image of a photon of light comes in: It is the first image of a photon of light.

Getting that image required fancy mathematics, well beyond my knowledge.

The mathematical model for the photon depended on employing many complicated equations, which Ben Yuen and Angela Demetriadou, in a report for the University of Birmingham, published in November, simplified by introducing "imaginary numbers" (multiples of the impossible square root of -1).

This mathematical gimmick allowed Yuen and Demetriadou to simplify the equations and once done, the imaginary numbers, having served their purpose, were dispensed with.

The resulting simplified equations were then used to reveal an image of a photon emitted from the surface of a nanoparticle.

Photons or quanta are one aspect of light and other forms of radiation, all of which have waveform-like properties as well, which complicates the issue of the properties of light.

Nonetheless, this was a big step forward toward understanding the properties of photons of light, knowledge of which could be applied, as the authors suggest, for "optoelectronic devices, photochemistry, biosensors, and quantum communication."

Here was yet another bridge to "reality" in quantum physics, which Einstein would appreciate. He was uncomfortable with Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, which stated that at the subatomic level, reality could only be stated in probabilistic terms — nerve a certainty.

The 2023 Nobel Prizes in physics and chemistry, which readers can access on the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library website, hinted that Heisenberg might be wrong because one prize involved tracking electrons in real-time and the other corralled electrons to produce different colours.

Heisenberg was right in

his day — there were no methods for "seeing" atoms, never mind, electrons. But these days the first fussy pictures of atoms have been seen and electrons tracked.

So, "certainty," was only a hypothesis — useful in its time, but not a law for the ages.

A few weeks ago, I wrote about Albert Einstein's famous mistakes as well as his triumphs (Nov. 21, "Dr. Brown: Einstein: What he got right and wrong"). With this image of a photon — maybe he's smiling now.

There you have it, two objects that range from a photon in size to a star emitting countless photons of light detected by a sophisticated array of telescopes, to see a star 2,000 times larger than our sun and nearing the end of its life, perhaps a million years later than the image we see.

Correction: In the article that appeared in the Dec. 5 edition of The Lake Report, entitled "Biology, physics, artificial intelligence and complexity," the time when the earliest primates took hold should read 50,000,000 years, not 50,000 years.

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

Candlelit stroll at home and miracle of the decade in Paris



Ross's Ramblings
Ross Robinson
Columnist

No, I will not ramble about the recent 2024 Paris Olympic Games, which were so awesomely organized and executed.

The games reminded us what creativity and nerve can do. Memories were created, and who will ever forget the beach volleyball matches so dramatically contested in the evening in front of the illuminated Eiffel Tower? Ah, volleyball, mon sport favori.

"Allons enfant de la patrie," and the rest of La Marseillaise. Such a proud

country, but sometimes they have a habit of botching things up.

Ah, the gallic chutzpah of having long-distance Olympic swimmers dive into the Seine River, an E. coli-polluted waterway. Mais oui, merde, but such a dramatic sight.

A miracle! I refer to the very miraculous and recent reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral. It has not been restored. Rather, it has been reborn.

I am not a betting man, but my numerous trips to France, and my year living in Strasbourg in 1979, made me confident that the rebuilding of Notre Dame would take decades. I would have bet it would never be "completed."

Rambling back to our wonderful and unique hometown for a minute. So much to do. The Candlelight Stroll was so well done this year, with hundreds upon hundreds of pre-Christmas locals and visitors festively



Ross Robinson says any smart gambler would have bet against the successful five-year rebuild of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Nevertheless, they succeeded.

garbed and gathered around the fairly historic cenotaph in front of our very historic Court House.

Each December the event gets better and this year the organizers remembered the old saying, "Always overspend on sound." Jeff and his team constructed a very helpful two-foot-high stage for the speakers and had ample amplification.

Shelley McGoldrick and

her enthusiastic sidekicks at Tourism NOTL had the ambience-creating candles ready and well-displayed.

All in all, a wonderful small-town pre-Christmas evening. Be proud and happy to live here.

Now, remember back to the horrible images on the global satellite feed from the 4th arrondissement of Paris in April 2019, as the wooden spire, 315 feet tall,

burned and collapsed into a huge pile of rubble.

Notre Dame Cathedral was constructed between 1163 to 1345. Just think, without huge overhead cranes and elevators.

Within a week of the 2019 fire, French President Emmanuel Macron boldly puffed out his chest and declared that the cathedral would be reopened within five years. Incroyable!

Last weekend, to the credit of everyone involved, 2,500 people attended the opening mass, all kept safe by thousands of security professionals.

Dignitaries from around the world attended, including, for some reason, an orange-haired opportunistic bully from America.

Over 340,000 donors. Craftspeople from around the world, including the lead blacksmith from Canada, were tasked with shaping hundreds of axe heads, with which to hew the large wooden cathedral doors.

Well over one billion dollars in donations from around the globe and a shared unshakable will to get the job done.

And let's not forget the border-transcending thing that delayed, postponed and cancelled so many worthwhile projects.

Remember Dr. Theresa Tam and Dr. Anthony Fauci? Somehow the Notre Dame Cathedral mega project has been completed despite the COVID-19 pandemic — and the building is more beautiful than ever.

Centuries of grime cleaned off, limestone walls now gleaming and dazzling patterns of colour across the nave.

Archbishop Laurent Ulrich consecrated a new bronze altar, and Macron, obeying France's strict division of state and church, did not take communion.

For Catholics, the city's spiritual heart is beating. For the world, a famous landmark is with us again.

Aux armes, citoyens.

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NOTICE TO CREDITORS AND OTHERS IN THE ESTATE
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All claims against the estate of Joan Ann Draper,
late of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, who died on
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undersigned not later than January 8, 2025. Thereaf-
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Photos with Santa at OLiV



Yana, Kevin, and their
two children Alex and
Juliana joined Santa for a
memorable holiday photo
at OLiV Tasting Room on
Sunday. PAIGE SEBURN

O Christmas Tree



**GROWING
TOGETHER**

Joanne Young
Columnist

One of the many carols
that we sing leading up to
Christmas is the familiar
“Oh Christmas Tree” (also
known as “O Tannen-
baum”), written by Ernst
Anschütz, a German com-
poser in 1824.

A Tannenbaum is a fir
tree. The original lyrics do
not actually refer to Christ-
mas or describe a decorated
Christmas tree.

Instead, they refer to the
fir’s evergreen quality as a
symbol of constancy and
faithfulness.

Over time, the words were
changed to reflect their
connection to our decorated
Christmas trees.

There is nothing more
welcoming than entering
a home and being greeted
with the scent of a fresh-cut
Christmas tree. This won-
derful fragrance has a way
of bringing back memories
of Christmas past.

Your tree is your canvas,
so it is important to select a
good one — gorgeous orna-
ments can only do so much
for a scraggly tree.

Of course, the perfect tree
is in the eye of the beholder.
There is something to be
said for falling in love with
that lonely “Charlie Brown”
tree that keeps calling your
name.

Here are some tips for se-



Joanne Young says one crucial part to selecting a Christmas
tree is to measure your space to make sure it fits.

lecting the perfect fresh-cut
Christmas tree:

Determine where the
Christmas tree will be go-
ing. This seems like a basic
first step, but by knowing
exactly where the tree will
be going allows you to
determine what size of tree
will fit in that space.

Do not be afraid of using
a measuring tape. Even
though we think we can vi-
sualize the space and guess
on measurements, it never
hurts to take actual height
and width measurements to
know what size of tree will
work for your room.

When out shopping for
your tree, take your measur-
ing tape again to double-
check. Make sure you take
into consideration that you
need space for a tree top-
per as well as a tree stand.
Choosing your perfect
tree while in a larger, open

space can be deceiving.

Get a well-shaped tree.
If you’re getting a real tree,
make sure you see it out of
its netting.

Many tree lots keep
their trees wrapped up to
conserve space, but it is im-
possible to know what the
branching of the tree will
look like until it is opened
up.

Look for full, evenly
spaced branches and a
symmetric shape that tapers
toward the top.

Remember that you do
not want a tree where the
branches are so dense that it
makes hanging ornaments
difficult.

Buy a tree that isn’t drop-
ping a lot of needles. It is
normal for an evergreen tree
to drop some of its oldest
inside needles.

Run a branch or two
through your hands to see

if there are a lot of needles
(especially towards the tips)
that are dropping. This is a
sign that the tree is already
starting to dry out.

You should be able to feel
if the needles feel dry as
opposed to fresh. A fresh
tree will have a pleasant fra-
grance, not a musty smell.

A freshly cut tree will last
indoors for about two to
three weeks before drying
and starting to drop a lot of
needles.

You may want to buy
your tree early to make sure
you get what you want, but
if you are buying it early
it would be best to keep
the tree outside in the cold
temperatures until you are
ready to set it up inside
two to three weeks before
Christmas.

The most common variet-
ies of evergreen trees that
are sold as Christmas trees
are balsam fir, noble fir, Fra-
ser fir, Douglas fir and Scots
pine (sometimes mistakenly
called Scotch pine). Balsam
and noble Fir hang on to
their needles the longest.

Wait to make a fresh cut
on the base of the tree until
you are ready to move it
inside for setup. A fresh cut
will allow the tree to draw
up water.

Once you have made
a fresh cut, set it up in a
suitable-sized tree stand that
has a deep, water reservoir.

On the first day, you can
expect the tree to draw up
about one gallon of water
and one or more quarts of
water every day after that.

Always make sure that
there is water sitting in the
stand at all times.

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

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**126 COLBECK DR
WELLAND**

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**3820 NUGENT ROAD
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**11817 SIDE ROAD 18
WAINFLEET**

\$554,900
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**6456 BURDETTE DR
NIAGARA FALLS**

\$685,000
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- Angelika previously owned a highly successful marketing/media business in Toronto for over 20 years. Built relationships with Fortune 500, big banks, CTV, Global, Olympics, Film Festival. Over 10 years of real estate business.
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REALTOR® / OWNER / TEAM LEAD

Hot New Listings

STUNNING, NEARLY NEW, FREEHOLD TWO-STOREY TOWNHOME TUCKED AWAY IN A PEACEFUL CUL-DE-SAC IN THE HEART OF OLD TOWN



43 WINDSOR CIRCLE,
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

STUNNINGLY RENOVATED FAMILY HOME WITH 2 SEPARATE LIVING AREAS OR PERFECT FOR AN AIRBNB



15 ANDRES STREET,
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

PREMIUM CUSTOM BUILT HOME IN DESIRABLE AREA WITH OVER 4600 SF OF FINISHED LIVING SPACE



611 SIMCOE STREET,
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE



496 MISSISSAUGA ST, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE TEAM
Bringing GTA Buyers to Niagara-On-The-Lake
#1 BROKERAGE IN THE GTA FOR
10 YEARS*



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*TRREB Jan. 1, 2013 to Dec. 31, 2022, combined units sold. **Based on closed transactions in the Burlington / Niagara Right At Home Realty Office, 2022, 2023, 2024
***We will gift 8 hours of cleaning services and 8 hours of moving/packing services. EXCLUDES tenanted areas