



**ELECTION 2026**



## Burroughs joins race for council

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Ahead of this fall's municipal election, Coun. Gary Burroughs says Niagara-on-the-Lake's next council needs to start by asking why some residents no longer trust town hall.

The longtime councillor, former lord mayor and former Niagara regional chair is running for town council again in the upcoming election — with a promise to listen to the concerns of the town's residents, who he says are informed, engaged and too often feel shut out of decisions that affect them.

"I think that our town is different than most, in the sense that our residents are really, really educated, very well-informed and choose to participate," Burroughs said in an interview. "I want to make sure that they're listened to."

Burroughs announced his re-election campaign June 1 and said his reason for running is tied to what he sees as anger in the community.

"I think the anger that appears to be out in the community — we should find out why it is that the residents don't trust us at the moment," he said.

Burroughs has served as a town councillor since 2018. Before that, he served 10 years as lord mayor of

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# Rand plan faces the crowd

Ritz-Carlton proposal draws wall of opposition at packed NOTL meeting



With critics lining up to challenge the project, planner Paul Lowes outlines Solmar's latest proposal for the Rand Estate during a public meeting that drew more than 20 speakers and hours of debate over the historic property's future. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Paige Seburn | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

**B**enny Marotta's latest plan for the Rand Estate received a frosty reception Tuesday night, as not one public speaker backed his proposal to build a five-storey hotel on the historic site.

For almost three hours, residents, neighbours, lawyers, planners, engineers, business owners and heritage advocates packed council chambers to oppose the

plan, arguing it would fundamentally change Niagara-on-the-Lake's Old Town and revive a development fight many thought had already been settled by the Ontario Land Tribunal.

The proposal would allow a five-storey hotel with 111 rooms, a spa and commercial uses, five three-storey residential buildings with up to 270 units, underground parking, a stormwater

management pond and a sewage pumping station.

The applications, submitted by Two Sisters Resorts Corp. and Solmar (Niagara 2) Inc., cover 144, 176 and 200 John St. E. and 588 Charlotte St., collectively known as the Rand Estate.

Not counting town staff or the applicant's representatives, 22 public speakers addressed council.

Members of advocacy group Save Our Rand Estate were there, backed by lawyers and planning, transportation, forestry, civil engineering and drainage consultants retained by the group.

Heritage advocates, business owners, neighbours and nearby residents also took the

*Continued on Page 3*

## NOTLers sing their way to centre stage at Carnegie Hall

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

For many seasoned professionals, it's the crowning touch after a lifetime of achievement.

For accomplished amateurs, performing at New York's historic Carnegie Hall is a rare opportunity, one that most can only dream of.

For Niagara-on-the-Lake's Daryl Novak, it was simply "one of the absolute most exciting things that ever happened in my life."

He and fellow NOTL resident Laura Lynn Harry joined a handful of other Chorus Niagara singers, plus members of Toronto's Amadeus choir, last week to perform at the legendary concert hall as part of a

special U.S. Memorial Day program.

Harry was equally enthused about singing at the venue built in the late 1800s by American industrialist Andrew Carnegie.

After moving to town in 2024, she joined Chorus Niagara last September and, a month later, when artistic director/conductor Kathleen Allan asked if anyone was

interested in performing at Carnegie Hall, Harry didn't hesitate.

"Heck, yes. My hand was the first to shoot up in the air, I'm quite sure," she told The Lake Report. "I wouldn't dream of giving up the opportunity of stepping onstage and singing at Carnegie Hall. It's a lifelong

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NOTLers Daryl Novak and Laura Lynn Harry performed at Carnegie Hall last week. SUPPLIED



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# SORE brings expert team against Rand Estate proposal

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

When the Rand Estate hotel proposal came back to Niagara-on-the-Lake council Tuesday, Save Our Rand Estate arrived with more than objections.

The community group brought lawyers, planners, engineers, architects, heritage specialists and other experts to argue Benny Marotta's companies, Two Sisters Resorts Corp. and Solmar (Niagara 2) Inc., still have not addressed the issues raised by the Ontario Land Tribunal in 2024.

At the time, the tribunal said Solmar had to resolve "many fundamental matters" before a draft subdivision plan could be considered for approval, according to an April 17 town statement.

One of those issues was vehicle access through the 200 John St. E. panhandle.

Solmar challenged the decision, but the tribunal denied the request in January 2025 and dismissed the matter in April 2025.

The company is now proposing a five-storey, 111-room hotel with a spa

and commercial space, five three-storey residential buildings with up to 270 units, underground parking, a stormwater pond and a sewage pumping station on the historic Old Town estate.

Solmar says the plan has been significantly revised. SORE argues many of the same concerns remain, including heritage protection, traffic, emergency access, flooding and the proposed panhandle access.

The statutory public meeting was held to gather public input. No decision was made.

Much of SORE's case centred on its argument that the new plans do not meaningfully address the tribunal's concerns.

David Bronskill, a lawyer representing SORE, said the tribunal process gave the applicant clear direction after seven or eight weeks of hearings — "a lot of time."

"The tribunal clearly found an unequivocal outcome: 'Go back to the drawing board,'" he said. "This application ignores everything we have learned over the last decade."

The panhandle route



SORE member and NOTL heritage committee member Alexander Topps opposes the plan. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

remained a major point of contention.

Solmar planner Paul Lowes has said the company reviewed other options and concluded the panhandle is the preferred access. SORE argues it still creates traffic, heritage and emergency-access concerns.

Transportation planner Greig Bumstead questioned whether one access point would properly serve emergency responders.

"Sprinkler systems are great for fire, but in medical emergencies, if you have a single access, how is that going to work?" he asked. "It's not."

Civil engineer Tara Chisholm questioned who would own and maintain the proposed sewage pump-

ing station and warned provincial rules could leave the town responsible.

She also said it was stated at the May 25 open house that emergency overflow could spill into the pond and eventually into the downstream watercourse, which she described as prohibited under the Environmental Protection Act.

Drainage engineer Ron Scheckenberger said the stormwater plan does not fully address One Mile Creek or flooding risks on John Street.

"It's going to create more flooding in an area that's already flood prone," he said.

Several SORE experts argued the proposal still puts development ahead of the estate's heritage, trees

and landscape features.

Forester and biologist Jack Richard said the design relies on tree preservation work that has not yet been fully integrated into the proposal, while planner Dana Anderson argued the plan fits heritage around development, rather than development around heritage.

Alexander Topps, a landscape architect, SORE member and member of the town's municipal heritage committee, said the site's landscape features are more than decorative.

"It's not just a walkway up to the house — it's much more," he said.

SORE member Judy McLeod said the group is not opposed to development, but argued the estate has been "under attack since it was acquired by Solmar in 2016."

The possibility of a Ritz-Carlton hotel being attached to the project also drew scrutiny.

Lyle Hall, chair of the Niagara Foundation and a SORE member, asked what would happen if the luxury hotel brand never materializes.

"Is there a plan B?" Hall asked.

Blake Lyon, chief executive officer of Two Sisters Resort and Solmar, told council Marriott has provided verbal conditional approval, written confirmation about the facilities program and a confidential term sheet.

Marriott was not represented at the meeting and did not respond to The Lake Report's questions by press time. Marotta also did not respond to a request for comment.

Hall said a term sheet is "not an agreement" and "at best, it's an offer."

"It's not signed, it's not agreed to," he said.

Bronskill questioned whether a luxury hotel name is worth trading part of NOTL's history.

"You don't need the Ritz-Carlton to define Niagara-on-the-Lake as an outstanding place in this region, in this province, in this country and in the world," Bronskill said.

"Especially when it comes at the cost of one of its pieces of its soul: the Rand Estate."

Town staff will continue reviewing the proposal and public feedback before bringing a recommendation report back to council.

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## Public continues to fight for Rand Estate

Continued from Front Page

microphone, adding to the opposition.

The turnout was large enough to set up an overflow viewing room in the basement of town hall.

Coun. Gary Burroughs told The Lake Report it was not the most speakers he had seen speak at a public meeting, but that it “ranks up there.”

Before hearing from the public, council voted against a motion to double speaking times from five minutes to 10 minutes. Several councillors argued it would be unfair to those who had already prepared for the five-minute limit. Staff will now continue reviewing the application and public feedback before bringing a recommendation report back to council at a later date.

### Access road remains key fight

Much of the debate centred on whether the proposal respects a 2024 tribunal decision that sent the applicant's previous proposal back to the drawing board because of concerns raised about protecting the estate's heritage and using the 200 John St. E. panhandle.

Solmar planner Paul Lowes said the plan for the site has changed since the earlier application.

He said the hotel has been pushed back, the Rand main residence would be reused as a spa, Devonian House would become a restaurant and the Whistle Stop and Bath Pavilion would be restored.

Lowes said all access options had “impacts on heritage attributes.”

“The most preferred was the access that we're providing now,” he said.

But several speakers said the panhandle remains the issue.

David Nelligan, a lawyer representing Blair and Brenda McArthur, whose McArthur Estate property at 210 John St. E. borders the proposed development, said the tribunal “outright refused the panhandle.”

“Yet, the application has ignored its clear direction and returned to you with a road that is effectively the



Not counting town staff or the applicant's representatives, 22 public speakers addressed council Tuesday — none voiced any support for the Rand proposal. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

same and effectively in the same place,” Nelligan said.

Kathryn Podrebarac said the tribunal gave Solmar “an opportunity to return with a compliant proposal,” not a blank slate.

“The taxpayer dollars of the town spent for bailing at the tribunal were spent on the premise that a binding decision means something,” she said. “If this application is approved, these dollars were wasted.”

A transportation consultant retained by the McArthurs, David Argue, said the applicant should be studying how all vehicles will move through the estate — hotel guests, residents, emergency vehicles and deliveries — before deciding which access points should be used.

Resident Brian Lewis added that he believes the proposed access road is also too narrow for the amount of traffic expected to use it.

### Speakers ask what NOTL is becoming

Many said the proposal raises a bigger question about what kind of town NOTL wants to be.

Sonia Gionet, who owns and operates a bed and breakfast in Old Town, said visitors do not come here looking for large-scale urban-style development.

“It's not going to be beneficial for anybody that lives in town, only for the person that's building it,” added Brenda McArthur.

Architect Michael McClelland said the proposal would remove heritage landscape features, including the estate's pool garden, which he described as “very

carefully organized.”

“Not just the pool itself, it's the garden around it,” he said.

Anne McIlroy, principal of Brook McIlroy, said Solmar's plan is larger than the 2011 Romance Inn proposal. That proposal would have brought a 106-room hotel, spa and restaurant to the site and also drew concerns about scale.

Neighbour Sally Miller said part of the estate's historic boxwood hedge was removed and the remaining hedge has been tied up and left unable to thrive. She also said trees on the Solmar property are “suddenly falling down.”

“My trees are up,” she said. “The (boxwood hedge) is completely dead.”

“I don't know if it's diseased, but I think it's by design,” Miller said.

Gracia Janes urged council to protect the estate, calling it “a wonderful example of current provincial descriptions of cultural heritage landscapes.”

Vaughn Goettler also urged council to reject the proposal.

“Is this what we want in our beautiful town?” he asked.

### Promises and protections questioned

Speakers also questioned the weight given to the town's planning policies, the enforceability of heritage preservation protections and the certainty of the proposed Ritz-Carlton partnership.

Blake Lyon, chief executive officer of Two Sisters Resorts and Solmar, told council he first approached

Marriott more than a year ago about the possibility of a Ritz-Carlton on the site.

Lyon said Marriott has provided verbal conditional approval, written confirmation regarding the facilities program and a confidential term sheet.

Marriott was not present at the meeting and did not respond to The Lake Report's questions about its involvement with the proposed Rand Estate hotel by press time.

Peter Rand, who has no relation to the Rand family despite sharing a last name with the estate, raised a pointed concern to council: how would the town enforce preservation conditions in the event that they are not followed during development?

“I have observed that stop work orders have been inadequate impact,” Rand added.

He said the town should turn down the application “until it can find adequate means of enforcing its conditions and its bylaws.”

For Steve McGuinness, the proposal does not offer enough public value to justify setting aside the town's official plan, he said.

“In fact, it may have less merit than previous proposals.”

McGuinness said the plan increased the numbers, whether that be of hotel rooms, maximum building heights or commercial-zone density.

“Around every corner, the envelope is stretched,” he said. “If you pack an envelope too tightly, it is bound to burst at the seams.”

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# Royal George Theatre **demolition begins**

Zahraa Hmood  
The Lake Report

The Royal George Theatre's 111-year-old history is coming to an end, with demolition of the Queen Street building underway after a legal challenge that stalled the work for two months was dismissed.

Crews began tearing down the theatre last Thursday afternoon, starting at the back of the building. Shaw Festival executive director Tim Jennings said in a written statement that demolition should be complete by the end of June, making way for construction of a larger Royal George Theatre.

The historic facade will be saved for last, to "minimize impact on Queen Street," Jennings said.

The work resumed after the Shaw Festival said the legal dispute between it, the Town of NOTL and Centurion Building Corporation — which launched a judicial review in February over the town's approval of the demolition — is now over.

On May 20, the Court of Appeal dismissed Centurion's request to appeal



Demolition began last Thursday. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Divisional Court's March ruling, which had upheld the town's demolition approval. The courts ordered Centurion to pay \$60,000 in legal costs to the Shaw and the town.

But lawyer Eric Gillespie, representing Centurion, told The Lake Report the company's leaders are "considering their options" for future legal challenges as construction moves ahead.

"This is a very lengthy process," he said. "There will be further permitting required: for example, building permits. As a result, there will be other opportunities in the future to challenge the project."

Centurion, led by president Nicholas Colaneri, alleged in its February judi-

cial review that the town did not follow proper planning and heritage rules before approving demolition of the old theatre. The filing triggered a court-ordered pause on the teardown, which had been expected to begin at the end of March.

In late March, Divisional Court ruled the town's process was thorough and justified, dismissing Centurion's challenge. Centurion then sought leave to appeal, but the Court of Appeal dismissed the request.

"While these proceedings have required extensive time and attention, and certainly caused us some delays, our focus has remained resolute," Jennings said on Thursday. "We now have clarity to move forward

with renewed momentum." The court's decision did not include reasons. Gillespie said motions for leave to appeal do not come with an explanation.

In response to questions from The Lake Report, Jennings said Tuesday the courts ordered Centurion to pay the Shaw \$32,500 and the Town of NOTL \$27,500. He said the award does not cover all of the Shaw's legal costs.

"As a charity, we rightly expect that to be paid in full," he said via email. "From the Shaw's perspective, any discussion around pursuing additional damages, beyond the awarded legal fees, is still under consideration."

Jennings confirmed the legal challenge delayed demolition by two months. He said Centurion's earlier attempt in December and January to take the Royal George approval to the Ontario Land Tribunal also contributed to delays.

Despite the setbacks, Jennings said the Shaw still plans to open the new 38,000-square-foot theatre in fall 2028.

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# NOTL to seek proposals for hospital

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

After years of debate, studies and stalled plans circling the same question — what should become of the old hospital? — Niagara-on-the-Lake is officially opening the door to answers.

Council voted Wednesday to start a two-stage search for qualified proponents for 176 Wellington St., the former hospital site that has sat in town hands since 2017.

The process will begin with a request for qualifications, meant to shortlist proponents with the experience and financial capacity to handle a sensitive redevelopment in one of NOTL's most prominent areas.

Staff will then report back with the results and a proposed request for proposals for council's approval. If approved, only the short-listed proponents would be invited into the next stage: a closed request for proposals process.



Plans for a town parking facility on the old hospital site have been axed. FILE

The vote also marks a shift away from an earlier staff-studied idea centred on structured parking at the site.

Staff say analysis found the idea faced significant financial and operational challenges.

Council approved \$200,000 for that work in March but staff say none of it has been spent yet. The extra \$100,000 approved Wednesday brings the total available budget to \$300,000 for design, legal, fairness monitoring and financial advisory services.

"This report represents the culmination of several

years of due diligence, technical analysis, community engagement and council direction," chief administrative officer Nick Ruller said.

Ruller said the goal is a "transparent, accountable and competitive process" that balances community benefit, heritage sensitivity, financial sustainability and long-term public value.

But before the report passed, council briefly split over whether tourism should have a place in the framework.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor argued the site should focus on priorities identified during public consultation:

community health and well-being, community needs and compatibility with surrounding neighbourhoods.

Most councillors disagreed, saying the goal was not to turn the property into a tourist attraction but to recognize its location at a major entrance to Old Town, where it could serve residents and visitors alike and potentially give the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake a more accessible, street-level home than their current space in the courthouse basement.

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# Burroughs says trust in council is key

Continued from Front Page

NOTL and was Niagara regional chair from 2010 to 2014.

He is also a chartered accountant and owned and operated the Oban Inn for more than 30 years.

Burroughs said choosing to run again “wasn’t a tough decision.”

“I’m doing it because I love the town and I want to try and make a difference,” he said. “And continue to try and do that.”

“I’m not finished what I started trying to do years ago, so it’s a continuation.”

One of the biggest issues facing the town right now, he said, is change coming from upper levels of government, especially the province, and what that could mean for the town’s voice at Niagara Region.

“There’s quite a few areas of our town that are done by the region, many of our roads, our sewers, our water,” he said.

“It’s important that we ensure that the region, in its new format, appreciates our concerns as they deal with our properties.”

He said he is not run-



Gary Burroughs is seeking re-election. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

ning for lord mayor, a role that also includes a seat on Niagara Regional Council, because he believes he can best use his experience in governance as a councillor.

The Lake Report asked Burroughs about a variety of current issues, such as residents’ concerns surrounding applications for the Rand Estate site.

“It’s unfortunate it’s coming back,” he said.

Burroughs said the matter has come before the town in different forms four times and has cost taxpayers more than \$2 million in legal expenses.

“I’m not surprised, but I am disappointed.”

He said the tension between residents, tourists and development is not new in NOTL.

Back when he first ran, “the issue was tourists versus residents,” said Burroughs: “It still is.”

On the old hospital site, Burroughs said he was not in favour of moving ahead with the town’s parking-focused plan for the property, but that council, on the whole, was.

He spoke more positively about the James A. Burton & Family Foundation’s proposal for a community hub.

“I think that Burton did an amazing job,” he said. “If we, the town, listened

and worked with them, there might be subtle changes that would make it even better.”

On the incoming rebuild of the Royal George Theatre, Burroughs said the new venue will be “very big,” but because council has already approved it, the town should now focus on working with the project and making it the “best that it can and should be.”

He also weighed in on the town’s relationship with the press, saying reporters should be able to speak with staff if it is co-ordinated through chief administrative officer Nick Ruller.

“I think it appears that staff and council are considering the press as enemies,” he said. “They’re not.”

“It’s simply trying to get issues resolved in this very, very sensitive town.”

Burroughs said NOTL’s council reduction to six councillors from eight for the next term did not alter his plans to run, though he did not support it.

“The challenge will be there,” he said. “I don’t think we should have done that.”

Still, he said, “it doesn’t change my goals at all.”

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# Making NOTL look pretty



Town staff are busy hanging flower baskets on light fixtures in Old Town. A stroll downtown shows summer is about to bloom, with floral features abound.  
DAVE VAN DE LAAR

# Village market turns 20 in new square

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's annual farmers' market opened its 20th season at the newly built Clayfield Commons on Saturday, but its organizer says it's waiting for more Niagara farmers to sign on, hoping to accommodate up to 40 vendors in its new, larger space.

The Market at the Village's new location sits at Clayfield Commons on Niagara Stone Road, beside the future Clayfield Hotel, relocating from its former spot on Garrison Village Drive. All 15 vendors Saturday came from within the Niagara region, more than half from Niagara-on-the-Lake itself, and organizer Sandra Neufeld says that local-only policy is non-negotiable as the market pushes for more vendors. The 20th season also marks the market's attempt to rebuild a regular Saturday audience after years of construction at Clayfield Commons disrupted its visibility and foot traffic.

"As we've gone through some transitional periods, it's been harder for people to realize that it's happening or make it part of their Saturday morning routine," said Neufeld.

The Clayfield Commons development fully subsidizes the cost of running



The town's summer farmers' market has a new home: the annual market will run every Saturday at Clayfield Commons until Oct. 3. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

the non-profit market and adjusted its construction plans to accommodate market needs. The Foodland grocery store opened on the same site in January, and has been supportive of the market.

"The manager of Foodland is very conscious about supporting local products," said Neufeld.

New vendors this season include Rooted, serving açai bowls, Koru and Crust Pie Co., offering New Zealand-style meat pies, Con Gusto Artisan Bakery, and Fenwick Prosharp, a knife-sharpening service run by Fenwick-based teacher Tom Glasbergen.

Glasbergen launched Fenwick Prosharp last year after years of sharpening knives for chefs and restaurants. He said demand on opening day surpassed anything he expected.

"I did not think it would be so busy today," said Glasbergen. "A lot of people have gone home and got their stuff and come back."

Returning vendor Valerie Belisle of Belisle Pottery, whose studio occupies the former Virgil Public School on Four Mile Creek Road, said the market gives small Niagara arts businesses a revenue channel that social media cannot deliver.

"Social media, for us as small businesses in the arts, is not everything," said Belisle. "It's a good way to get yourself known, but it doesn't necessarily generate revenue."

Belisle returned this season after breaking her hand in December, bringing her first new ceramic collection since the injury. She plans to attend the first Saturday of each month.

"There's no reason for this market not to be full

every single weekend," said Belisle.

Longtime vendors including Sweets and Swirls and Kim McQuhae of Gryphon Ridge Highlands, a 10-year fixture, returned alongside the new additions.

Flowers and rhubarb from Rose and Ken Bartel of Bartel Organics, original market vendors who retired after 18 seasons in 2024, still reach the market through a neighbouring vendor who carries their goods on their behalf.

Live music from Caitlin Miller ran from 10 a.m. to noon. Neufeld said the market plans to feature live music regularly and will flag rotating vendor offerings each week through its newsletter and social media.

The market runs Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. through Oct. 3 at 25 Clayfield Commons.

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# Shaw's 'Funny Girl' glitters in spots, fades in others

**FUNNY GIRL**  
\*\*\*  
(out of five)

*Festival Theatre, 2 hours 40 minutes, one intermission. Ends Oct. 3. Music by Jule Styne, lyrics by Bob Merrill. Book and story by Isobel Lennart. Directed by Eda Holmes.*

Penny-Lynn Cookson  
Special to The Lake Report

Fanny Brice looked into her dressing room mirror and said, "Hello, gorgeous." Whether meant to bolster her own insecurity or said to the man she loved, those two words became one of show business's most memorable and quoted lines.

Although not a great beauty in a time when it mattered, the New Yorker Fanny Brice, born in 1891, had the ambition, guts and tenacity to succeed that took her from vaudeville to burlesque music shows, to headlining the Ziegfeld Follies by 1910.

Fania Borach changed her name not wanting, as she said, to be connected to bo-rax. As Fanny Brice, she was a singer and actress but most

importantly, a great mimic and brilliant clown who became a renowned and beloved comedienne. Her face illustrated by Al Hirschfeld graced a U.S. stamp honouring her trail-blazing contributions to comedy.

Always careful not to offend, her parody, Jewish-accented humour, plus her mobile face and expressive body was described by her third husband, Billy Rose, as "a bagel among a loaf of white bread" changed meaningfully in the play to "onion rolls." Later in her career, her popular self-created role on radio as the brat Baby Snooks was heard on CBS and NBC from the mid-1930s to her untimely death at 51 of a hemorrhagic stroke.

It's a daunting task to take on a role made famous on stage and screen by a 21-year-old New York singer named Barbra Streisand. It took 10 years to get the production of "Funny Girl" to Broadway in 1964. It was decided that the role had to be performed by a Jewish girl who could combine a neurotic insecurity with fierce determination, resilience and a romantic nature.

When Jule Styne shouted, "I found the girl!" to the producer Ray Stark, the search was over. Stark was married to Frances Brice, Fanny's daughter by her second husband, Nick Arnstein. Streisand dove deeply into the voice, mannerisms and psyche of Fanny Brice and came up with a winner, receiving the Academy Award for best actress in 1969.

There is a cadence, a cultural rhythm to the ethnic Jewish accent of New York. Sara Farb as Fanny has a voice with the breath control, volume and power to sustain long held notes to the rafters, but expressive nuances of heartbreak, warmth, longing and wry humour were lacking. Fanny's zaniness, her uninhibited "anything can happen" spirit were not in evidence.

Fanny was a woman in love, smitten at first sight with a man she described as well-educated, cultured, great manners and "a good speaker of mostly lies." Nick Arnstein was a 6'6", handsome professional gambler, a shady conman, a philanderer and sponger.



Sara Farb as Fanny Brice with members of the "Funny Girl" ensemble. On until Oct. 3 at the Shaw. DAVID COOPER

It was Fanny's money that paid for their homes, expenses and his legal bills as she fought to reduce Arnstein's prison time in Sing Sing and Leavenworth. Finally, a fed-up Fanny put career first and divorced Nick after nine years of marriage.

In the play, Nick is noble, attentive, generous and reluctant to take Fanny's money. Ray Stark covered up the skeletons in the family closet. The real-life Arnstein was hanging around the Broadway rehearsals threatening to sue if the production misrepresented him. He was appeased.

Qasim Khan as Nick Arnstein is, curiously, on

stage but absent from it. The swoon-worthy charisma and stature that so captivated Fanny is simply not present. Matt Alfano is solid as Fanny's friend Eddie who tap dances up a storm on top of a suitcase to the delight of all.

Damien Atkins as Florenz Ziegfeld brings an elegant reserve and steeliness to the role of Fanny's boss, who was her true-life father figure and mentor. Patty Jamieson as Fanny's mother follows the script yet seems constrained in revealing a real character study of Mrs. Borach in the tumult of the saloon and crowd scenes.

What shines in this production are James Lavoie's

sets and costumes, the lighting and the music. The First World War ensemble dance of "Rat-Tat-Tat-Tat" is a golden spectacle of imaginative energy and precision. The Ziegfeld Follies scene of shimmering silver, glitter and long-legged beauties with amazing headpieces slowly descending a high staircase captures the spectacular Ziegfeld glamour enhanced by Taurian Teelucksingh's tenor solo.

From the opening overture to the dramatic end, the Shaw orchestra conducted by Paul Sportelli swept us through the familiar "People" and "Don't Rain on My Parade" to rags and jazz. And at the conclusion, a somewhat somnolent audience that had been slow to respond, found their reason to be there.

It was Sara Farb's finale, a stationary no-holding-back solo, guaranteed to rouse emotions, that wrenched the audience to an eruption of applause. Impressive, but still not quite enough to fill the void.

Penny-Lynn Cookson is an arts and culture historian, writer and lecturer living in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

# Singers pay tribute to Canada's Indigenous musical heritage

Continued from Front Page

dream as a singer."

"And so the journey began: planning, organizing, practising and preparing," said Harry, a longtime jazz and pop singer who has performed all over the world and now operates a pilates studio in NOTL.

Besides singing at Carnegie, she helped work out the logistics for the New York performance.

Novak, a tenor who has been singing in choirs for more than 40 years, remarked that the Carnegie show was "highly organized."

After arriving on the Saturday morning prior to their May 25 Memorial Day performance, the Canadians rehearsed daily, including a full-dress run-through on Monday along with the orchestra prior to

their 1 p.m. concert.

Back at home, Chorus Niagara usually does four major shows a year — including a hugely popular presentation of "The Messiah" — at the Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines along with other concerts around the region.

But Carnegie is bigger and different, with so much history behind it.

Novak, who also is co-chair of the NOTL Public Library board, said he's also sung at Hamilton Place and Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, but hitting the stage at Carnegie Hall was "really special."

The Canadians' program paid tribute to some of this country's musical heritage through the music Allan chose for the occasion.

The members of the joint Niagara-Amadeus chorus were the only Canadians on



Kathleen Adams conducts the orchestra and chorus during their Memorial Day performance at Carnegie Hall last week. Two NOTL singers took part. MICHAEL VIOLAGO

the bill, which also featured choirs and performers from across the United States.

Besides a Brahms piece, they also "proudly" sang compositions by Canadian Indigenous composers Cris Derksen and Sherryl Sewepagaham and Andrea Neumann," Harry said.

Allan advocated for that repertoire to be premiered, she added. "It was not in the original list of options for repertoire choice."

"We were premiering these Canadian Indigenous composers' work at Carnegie Hall, where at one time, not very long ago either,

Indigenous people were not even welcomed into the venue," Harry noted.

"We were singing about important world issues and, in one song, specifically about the water crisis our planet is facing."

The choice of showcasing Derksen's "Mass for Nîpîy" was timely and immensely significant as she was killed in a car crash in northern Alberta just a week prior.

After working closely with Derksen to prepare for the concert, in the wake of her death the show was an "overwhelming and emotional and painful and affirming experience," Allan said in a Facebook post.

She felt "honoured" that Derksen's mother travelled from Edmonton to attend the concert, Allan added.

The Canadians and Carnegie Hall both dedicated the day's performances to

Derksen, 45, a cellist and composer who was a rising star in modern classical music.

"It was an emotionally fuelled, heartfelt performance," Harry said.

They also performed Sewepagaham and Neumann's "Papîyahtik" (Peace Chant) in Cree.

As the chorus was led by Sewepagaham in her a cappella song and welcome chant "Tawaw," even the New York musicians were "visibly moved by its raw, emotional power," Harry said.

"The energy and emotion and care that we had individually and collectively on that Carnegie Hall stage was palpable."

Overall, the concert "was a moving performance and one I will never forget," she added.

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# Town raises flag for **Pride month**

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake marked the start of Pride month Monday by raising the Pride flag outside town hall, but one LGBTQ+ resident who attended says the town needs to do more to bring people out.

Steve McGuinness said he was pleased the town continues to fly the Pride flag in June and maintain other visible signs of support, including the rainbow crosswalk near the community centre.

However, he said he was disappointed by the small turnout Monday.

"I was disappointed in the turnout for the town flag-raising event," McGuinness told The Lake Report in a direct message.

The ceremony was held without Pride Niagara, the region's most prominent LGBTQ+ non-profit organization, after the town declined its request that



NOTL's Pride flag.

participating municipalities also buy a table at the Niagara UNITY Awards, which town officials said cost about \$480.

Officials said the concern was the town budget and the use of taxpayer money for the awards event.

McGuinness said he attended because he identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, but said the ceremony is also a chance for the broader community to show NOTL is welcoming and inclusive.

"The town promotional communications may need

to be tweaked to draw more of the general public out for next year's event," he wrote.

Residents, town staff and council members gathered outside town hall as NOTL raised the Pride flag without an outside partner after years of Pride Niagara involvement.

"Nothing is different today," Coun. Erwin Wiens said. "It was like every other flag-raising."

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said "the key messages" for the community remained the same.

"It really just shows that the town wants to be welcoming and engaging and allow for recognizing diversity and inclusion," said Zalepa. "That's why we do the flag raising, to raise that awareness."

Zalepa said the town remains open to future flag-raising requests from community groups.

"I think we look forward to partnering with anybody that wants to bring a flag-raising

request to the town," he said.

Coun. Maria Mavridis said the ceremony stayed focused on inclusion, respect and community.

"The flag raising was well attended and, from my perspective, it was a positive event," she said.

"The message was consistent with previous Pride flag raisings in Niagara-on-the-Lake, regardless of which organization was involved."

Mavridis said the town-run ceremony should not be seen as a new direction.

"The town has raised the Pride flag for a number of years as a recognition of Pride month and support for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community," said Mavridis. "This year's ceremony continued that tradition."

Wiens said the town's relationship with community groups has not changed.

"We still work with all our community partners," he said.

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# Get a look at the Wilderness on June 9

Zahraa Hmood  
The Lake Report

The Niagara Foundation is inviting the public to see restoration work underway at the Wilderness, a historic five-acre property in Old Town being transformed into a public green space.

The foundation will open the first public path through the property at 407 King St. on Tuesday, June 9. The mulched path will run from Regent Street to King Street.

Arlyn Levy, vice-chair of the Niagara Foundation, said it will be the first of several paths opened on the land.

The foundation is leading a more-than \$2.5-million project to restore the overgrown forest, clear invasive species and hazardous trees and preserve the site's heritage for public use.

"We felt like it would be a great time to have the public, the community, come onto the site, and we'll continue to work around it," Levy said.



Crews are laying down a path of mulch in the Wilderness, which will run from Regent to King Street. SUPPLIED

This summer, the foundation will begin removing invasive plants, including black locust trees, goutweed, Japanese spurge, lesser periwinkle, ivy and garlic mustard.

"That is a very long-term project," she said. "When we get to a point where we feel like we can start planting to reintroduce native species, that'll be next."

Plans call for 500 to 750 trees and shrubs to be planted in stages to reduce erosion, suppress regrowth and encourage native species to return.

The project follows the wishes of Ruth Parker, one of three sisters who owned the property. Parker died in 2013 and her will stipulated that the heritage elements of the Wilderness be preserved and maintained for the public's benefit.

Visitors can expect a "rustic" forest, Levy said, along with wildlife such as deer, coyotes and birds.

"It'll be a protected green space for the community, which I think is pretty incredible given that it's a private property that we want

to open to the public and share with the public," she said. "We feel great about that and really excited."

The June 9 event begins at 2 p.m. and includes a silent auction of butterfly-themed paintings donated by local artists, with proceeds supporting the restoration.

At 3 p.m., Tim Johnson, president of the Niagara Academy for Indigenous Relations, will discuss the site's connection to centuries of Indigenous history.


There will also be a ceremonial butterfly release with students from Royal Oak Community School, followed by a ribbon-cutting led by Lauren and Vaughn Goettler, whose family foundation pledged \$1 million to help launch the restoration campaign in 2022.

For those unable to attend, advance bids for the auction will be accepted June 9 from 8 a.m. to noon. Artwork can be viewed at [theniagarafoundation.com/the-butterfly-effect](http://theniagarafoundation.com/the-butterfly-effect).

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# A husband's message: Don't feel guilty for needing help

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Brian Crow does not describe his wife's move into long-term care as a joyful occasion.

Marilyn has dementia. Her health is still declining. Some days, he said, she can remember an old song or a sentence from the past. Other days, she may not know him.

But when a room became available at Radiant Care's new Pleasant Manor building in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Brian did feel relief.

Not because the decision to have her move there was easy. Because the care was better than what he could give her at home.

"I don't look at going to a long-term care home as a happy thing," he said. "What gets better is the care she gets."

That is the message Crow hopes reaches other spouses and children facing the same decision.

"Don't feel guilty that you can't provide the best service," he said. "The long-term care home provides a better service."



Married couple Marilyn and Brian Crow experienced a significant change earlier this year: Marilyn, who suffers from dementia, moved into Pleasant Manor's new building in January. He says the home has helped. SUPPLIED

Still, Crow knows the guilt can come.

So can the second-guessing that tells families they should have been able to carry more than anyone could carry alone.

Long-term care has not changed the course of Marilyn's disease. Crow does not try to soften that. But it has changed the care around her.

Before Marilyn moved

into Pleasant Manor, Crow cared for her at home with support from personal support workers. At Pleasant Manor, he said, Marilyn is surrounded by steady, compassionate care from staff trained to meet her changing needs.

"She gets far better care than I could ever give at home," he said.

Crow said Pleasant Manor

staff helped the home feel more familiar by walking him through the paperwork, assessing Marilyn's needs and helping set up her room with pictures and personal items to make her feel more at home.

They also took time to understand the details of her daily life, from nutrition and activity to sleep, mobility and medication.

"To me, this one is one of the best (long-term care homes), based on what I've heard and experienced," he said.

The new 160-bed long-term care home welcomed its first residents in December and marked its official opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony May 21.

"(Radiant Care) is a culture, an attitude," Brian said in his remarks at the ceremony, as he spoke about the care Marilyn has received since moving into Pleasant Manor. She moved in Jan. 16.

"Every time someone walks by her, it's, 'Hi Marilyn.'" Brian said. "And they have a smile."

"I walk in and staff are saying, 'Hi Brian.'"

Crow said that is one of

the small signs Marilyn is known at Pleasant Manor, not just looked after.

A member of the Rotary Club, Brian lives in Chautauqua and said friends, neighbours, family and fellow Rotary members have helped carry him through the transition.

"One of them said to me, 'Brian, how are you doing?' and I said, 'Well, the stress I've had for the last couple years has turned to guilt,'" he said.

A friend from Rotary stopped him when he said that.

"You've done nothing, absolutely nothing wrong to feel guilty about," Crow recalled him saying.

He has come to think of the feeling differently: "Maybe it's more like survivor's guilt."

Crow knows three other Chautauqua residents with loved ones at Pleasant Manor.

"We're blessed to have a place that provides the care it does," he said. "(One) that is close."

Having Marilyn at Pleasant Manor also means she remains close to the community that supported him

throughout all of this.

"In Niagara-on-the-Lake, I never felt that I couldn't get help," he said.

People ask how he's doing. Former nurses offer their phone numbers. Neighbours bring food.

"You have a real bad day and you come home and somebody delivers dinner for you," he said. "Turkey soup, or pies, things like that."

Crow said that support has made the hardest days feel less lonely.

"The best thing I've had in my life is friends, neighbours and family to get me through all this," he said. "And continue to do so."

Brian said he credits the health-care system for making long-term care homes available to families like his.

It is not a perfect system, he said, but it has given Marilyn care, kept her close to home and helped him understand something he hopes other families will hear.

Asking for help is not the end of caring for someone you love, he said. It is another way of doing it.

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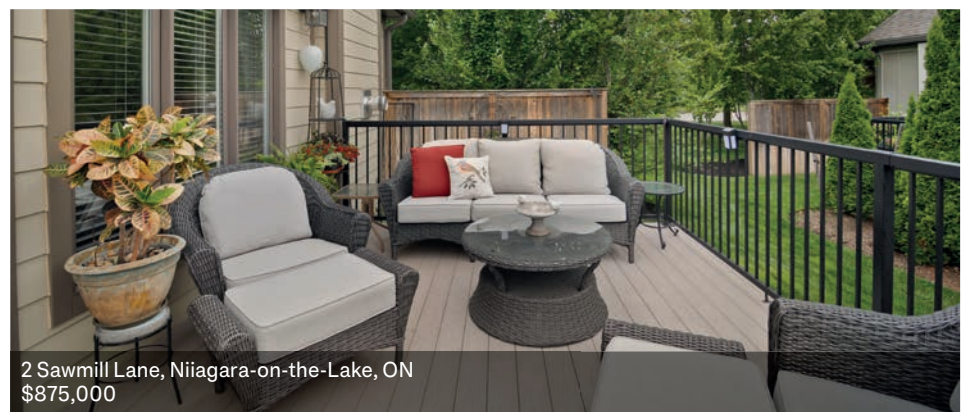
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# Yolanda Henry wins **Hunter Cup** competition

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

The weather was perfect Tuesday when the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club's nine- and 18-hole women's leagues hit the links to compete for the Hunter Cup.

The nine-hole net competition was won by Yolanda Henry, with a net score of 34, one shot ahead of Cathy Murray.

Four players were tied for third with even-par net scores of 36: Caroline Cochrane, Barbara Hastings, Tracey Peters and Linda Williams.

Hastings' short game was on fire as she chipped in for two birdies, on #2 and #7.

In the Monday business women's league, Carroll Baker was the top shooter, with a 47, to win low gross.

Erin Howe Hull bombed the longest drive on #1, Eileen Hanna was closest to the 150 marker on #2 and Arlyn Levy drained the longest putt on #7.

Closest to the pin sharp-



Yolanda Henry, pictured at the 2025 club championships, claimed the Hunter Cup on Tuesday. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Jim Meszaros was low net winner with 33 and Ted Wiens won the hidden hole with his birdie on the par-5 third hole.

Mark Derbyshire knocked his tee shot closest to the pin on #4 and finished with a birdie.

During last Thursday's men's league play, Nick Elia was the man to beat, but no one was able to match his 2-under score of 34. Mike Sanders came closest, finishing second at 1-over 37.

Elia also won the low net prize with 30 while Quinton Spagnol was right behind with net 32.

Jim McMacken's birdie 2 on the ninth hole earned him the only gross skin on the day, while Don Stewart cashed in big time with a net eagle on #3 for a \$190 prize.

John Wienseis sank the longest putt on #2, Jared Mines had the longest drive on #3 and Meszaros was closest to the pin on #4. Derek Merza was closest on #9.

kevin@niagaranow.com

shooters were Jane Barnet on #4 and Laurie Gayadeen on #9, in two shots.

Don Allen was in fine

form during the Tuesday Woofs men's competition, carding a 1-over 37 to win low gross.

  
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**Bethany Mennonite Church**

# Concert honours 60 years of seasonal farm workers

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

More than 500 people packed Cornerstone Community Church on Sunday night for Niagara-on-the-Lake's first major concert in a decade honouring seasonal agricultural workers, several months after Hurricane Melissa devastated much of Jamaica and left over 100 local farmworkers from Jamaica unable to reach their families for weeks.

The 2026 Welcome Concert, held May 31 by Niagara Workers Welcome, marked the 60th anniversary of Canada's seasonal agricultural workers program and returned the Toronto Mass Choir to the stage for the first time since 2016.

The concert was meant to be a bright spot for some agricultural workers from Jamaica, which endured two destructive hurricane seasons back to back. Hurricane Melissa last fall battered the island nation, cutting off communica-



Toronto Mass Choir performs at Niagara Workers Welcome 60th Anniversary concert on May 31. It was the choir's first appearance at the event in 10 years. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

tion between workers in Niagara and their families back home, and leaving some communities still without hydro.

That storm came as the country was still recovering from Hurricane Beryl, a storm that devastated parts of the island in July 2024.

Organizer Jane Andres spent four months coordinating transportation from farms and bunkhouses across the region to get

workers to the event.

"When the hurricane hit last fall, there was still over 100 men still here," said Andres, who has organized farmworker outreach in NOTL since 2005.

"For two or three of those weeks, those men were not able to get in touch with their families. They didn't know if they were even alive. They didn't know if they had a house to go back to."

the broader Niagara-on-the-Lake community.

"It's to provide them an hour and a half of respite from all their worries and just to know that they're part of a community that cares," she said.

Andres launched the concert series in 2007 after discovering that Niagara-on-the-Lake had never publicly welcomed or thanked its migrant farm workers, despite decades of their labour sustaining local agriculture and wineries.

Former lord mayor Gary Burroughs delivered the welcome at that inaugural event and returned Sunday for the 60th anniversary.

The concerts ran annually from 2007 through 2019, shifting from concerts to large outdoor picnics from 2017 onward before COVID-19 halted gatherings altogether.

"It was about breaking down some of the barriers that existed, breaking down some of the stereotypes of which there were many, and

just providing an opportunity for locals to say thank you," said Andres.

During the pandemic, Andres and her family converted their home into a donation hub, sorting and distributing clothing to workers in quarantine.

Workers arriving for this year's season come from communities in St. Elizabeth parish, among the areas hit hardest by last fall's Hurricane Melissa. Andres said winds reached 405 kilometres an hour in the Black River area, destroying buildings that had stood for three centuries.

She said she visited every bunkhouse in the weeks before the concert to distribute posters and check on workers' families.

Professional videographers who have documented the concert series since 2007 recorded Sunday's event. Andres said the footage will air on Jamaican television within a couple of months.

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

Niagara-on-the-Lake

COMMUNITY CONTEST

## NOTL's Neighbourhood of the Year

The Town is celebrating community spirit with a brand-new contest in honour of Neighbour Day on June 20!

Residents are invited to nominate their neighbourhood by sharing what makes it special, whether it's friendly neighbours, community pride, local traditions, or strong connections. Photos and short videos are encouraged!

The winning neighbourhood will receive a Town-sponsored community celebration at a nearby municipal park featuring:

- Play in the Park activities
- Refreshments & snacks
- Decorations
- Family-friendly fun

Let's celebrate the people and places that make Niagara-on-the-Lake such a connected and welcoming community!



**Nominate your neighbourhood by June 9!**  
Scan the QR code or visit  
[www.notl.com/form/neighbourhood-of-the-year](http://www.notl.com/form/neighbourhood-of-the-year)

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# Fort George resurrects Camp Niagara for re-enactment

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

Fort George National Historic Site brought Camp Niagara back from the dead last weekend, staging a full First World War re-enactment on the grounds where more than 75,000 Canadian, American and Polish soldiers trained before shipping overseas.

The two-day event, “Fort George in the Great War,” ran May 30 and 31 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Re-enactors travelled from as far as British Columbia and Virginia on their own time and without pay.

The schedule covered battlefield tactics, field medicine, nursing history, the Polish Army’s presence at Camp Niagara, the suffragette movement during the war, medal history and a funeral service honouring a real Canadian soldier buried at Vimy Ridge.

The tactical demonstration on the parade square sent re-enactors playing Canadian soldiers advancing from behind the barracks building toward a fortified position, then across the open field to a machine gun



It was known as the Great War and “the war to end all wars,” and this past weekend, it returned to the Fort George National Historic Site. The fort hosted a two-day re-enactment of the First World War, which showcased battlefield tactics, field medicine and the history of military training at Camp Niagara. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

nest staged in the guard-house doorway. Blank fire echoed across the fort. A simulated casualty dropped on the field, and stretcher bearers carried him to the medical tent for the second phase.

The medical demonstration walked visitors through treating a femur wound on the battlefield. Peter Monahan, playing the role of the medical officer, told the crowd the stakes plainly.

“A wound in the upper thigh if it broke the femur

was a death sentence because you’d bleed out,” said Monahan.

The Thomas splint, developed by British physician Hugh Owen Thomas, kept a fractured femur parallel to stop the bleed. Without one, Monahan improvised a tourniquet from a stick. He then demonstrated ether anaesthetic, counting ten drops aloud, and extracted simulated shrapnel from the wound.

“It’s shrapnel, which is the good news, but it’s in there

really deep, which is the bad news,” Monahan said.

Susan Spencer presented separate demonstrations on nursing sisters in the depot, covering the role Canadian nurses played in field hospitals overseas. A session on the history of military medical fashion ran in the officers’ quarters Saturday morning.

The funeral segment centred on Sgt. Ellis Wellwood Sifton, a farm boy from Wallacetown, Ont., population roughly 250, who

enlisted at Chatham, trained at Valcartier in Quebec and shipped to Europe as an ambulance driver before transferring to the 18th Battalion. Within six months of joining the infantry he rose from private to sergeant.

At Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917, he circled behind a German machine gun nest, threw a grenade and attacked alone, clearing the position. A German soldier he believed dead shot him in the back moments later. Sifton received the Victoria Cross posthumously. He is buried in a shell crater with 74 other soldiers near where he fell, his marker reading only E.W. Sifton V.C.

A re-enactor playing the chaplain told visitors the scale of death at Vimy made individual burial offices impossible. One reading covered entire mass graves, some stretching eight feet wide and six feet deep, filled shoulder to shoulder.

“In Canada, we had over 60,000 die,” the chaplain told the crowd. “Do you think I, as the chaplain, am going to read the burial office 60,000 times?”

Demonstrators placed a replica Victoria Cross on a

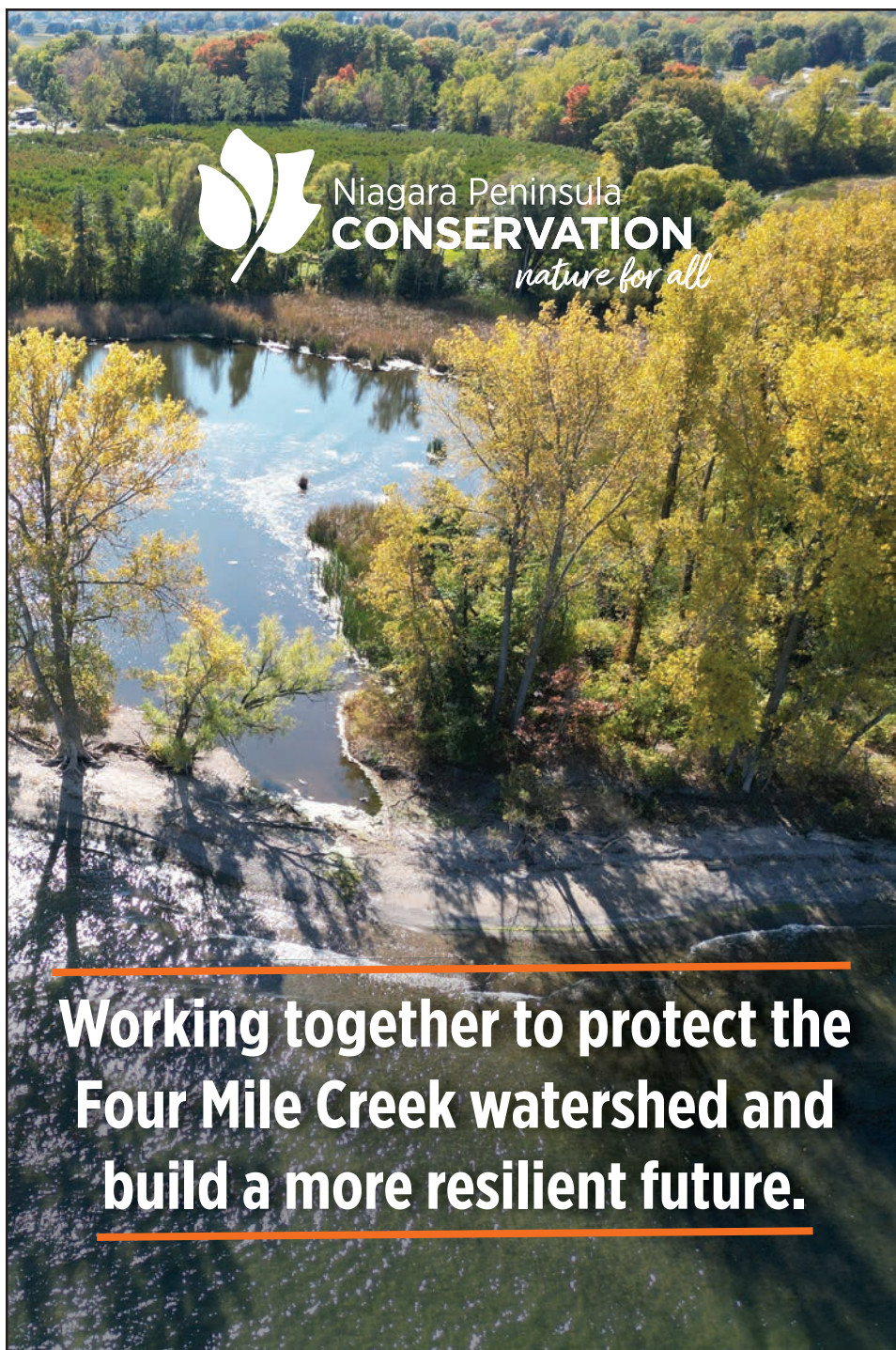
draped coffin and walked visitors through the pall-bearing sequence. Ropes replaced handles, as they would have on the front lines.


Camp Niagara served as summer training grounds between the wars for the Royal Canadian Regiment and the Royal Canadian Dragoons, then revived in 1939 as an active training site for the Second World War. Camp Borden, which opened July 11, 1916, drew the bulk of Canadian Expeditionary Force training away from Niagara, and by 1917 Camp Niagara had emptied of Canadian recruits.

The U.S. Army filled the vacancy that September, using the site to train 22,395 Polish Americans from October 1917 to March 1919 to fight for Polish independence. The camp closed permanently in 1966.

Fort George returned to presenting its War of 1812 story, and this annual event remains the one weekend each year the site addresses what happened on these grounds between 1914 and 1919.

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



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## THE PROJECT WILL:

- Assess current conditions
- Update floodplain mapping
- Study erosion and water quality
- Assess environmental health
- Consider future growth and climate change
- Identify actions to support a healthy watershed

## Public Information Session / Workshop

Wednesday, June 17, 2026  
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre  
14 Anderson Ln, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S 1J0



Visit [getinvolved.npca.ca](https://getinvolved.npca.ca) to learn more.

# Niagara Irrigation Initiative Project

## Notice of a Public Information Centre

### Upgrading and Enhancing Irrigation Infrastructure in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

#### Project Background

Part of the broader Niagara Irrigation Initiative, this project is working towards upgrades and enhancements to the existing irrigation system in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Additional capacity in the system is required to meet current water demand, improve drought resilience, and to plan for the future.

To date, the Project Team has reviewed key background and design reports, conducted multiple site visits, released a user survey, consulted extensively with the Town's Irrigation Committee, and drafted a Consolidated Engineering Report, which includes several design alternatives. Based on a technical evaluation and feedback, the Project Team has recommended four solutions to proceed to the detailed design phase.

#### Join Us - Your Input is Important

The Project Steering Committee, supported by Niagara Region and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Staff, and the Project Consulting Team, is hosting a Public Information Centre to answer questions and seek feedback about the project.

#### Public Information Centre

**Wednesday, June 10, 2026**  
**6 - 8 p.m.** (Drop in anytime)

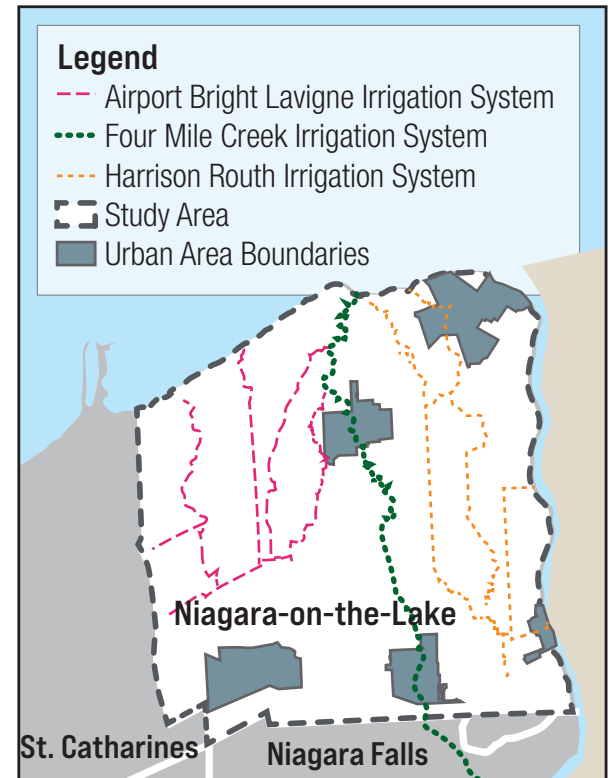
**Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre: Mori Room**  
**14 Anderson Lane, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario**

All members of the public are invited to attend, learn about irrigation in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, get a project update, and provide feedback on the detailed design process. This Public Information Centre will be a drop-in style event and will feature display boards with multiple subject matter experts available for questions. Materials will also be available on the project webpage following the event: [niagararegion.ca/projects/irrigation-initiative/](http://niagararegion.ca/projects/irrigation-initiative/)

#### Contact Us

If you are interested in providing feedback on the project but cannot attend, please e-mail us at: [irrigation@niagararegion.ca](mailto:irrigation@niagararegion.ca). For additional information, or if you require accessibility accommodations or materials in an alternate format to participate in meetings or events, please contact:

**Sean Norman**, PMP, MCIP, RPP  
Manager, Strategic Initiatives,  
Niagara Region  
905-980-6000, extension 3179  
[sean.norman@niagararegion.ca](mailto:sean.norman@niagararegion.ca)



Requests for accommodations should be made in advance to allow sufficient time for arrangements.

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



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**BKind Grateful** #78: When someone does a good job, say it in front of others. It can be a big confidence booster.

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



**Contributed by Patty Garriock**

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 dream tomorrow, live today.”  
 - Charles Weeks

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## Have a lead on a story?

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## Editorial

# Congratulations to the Shaw Festival

Richard Harley  
 Editor-in-Chief

Niagara-on-the-Lake has been here before.

Not exactly here, of course. Not with the Royal George Theatre, not with this building and not with this particular round of heritage objections, court challenges, public anger and neighbourhood anxiety.

But the pattern is familiar. In 1981, a story in the St. Catharines Standard carried the headline: “Shaw festival battles public for rights to new theatre site.”

The issue then was a proposed 650-seat tent theatre on The Commons, next to the existing Festival Theatre. Some residents were furious. One critic called it a land grab. Another dismissed the proposal as nothing more than a monument to then-artistic director Christopher Newton.

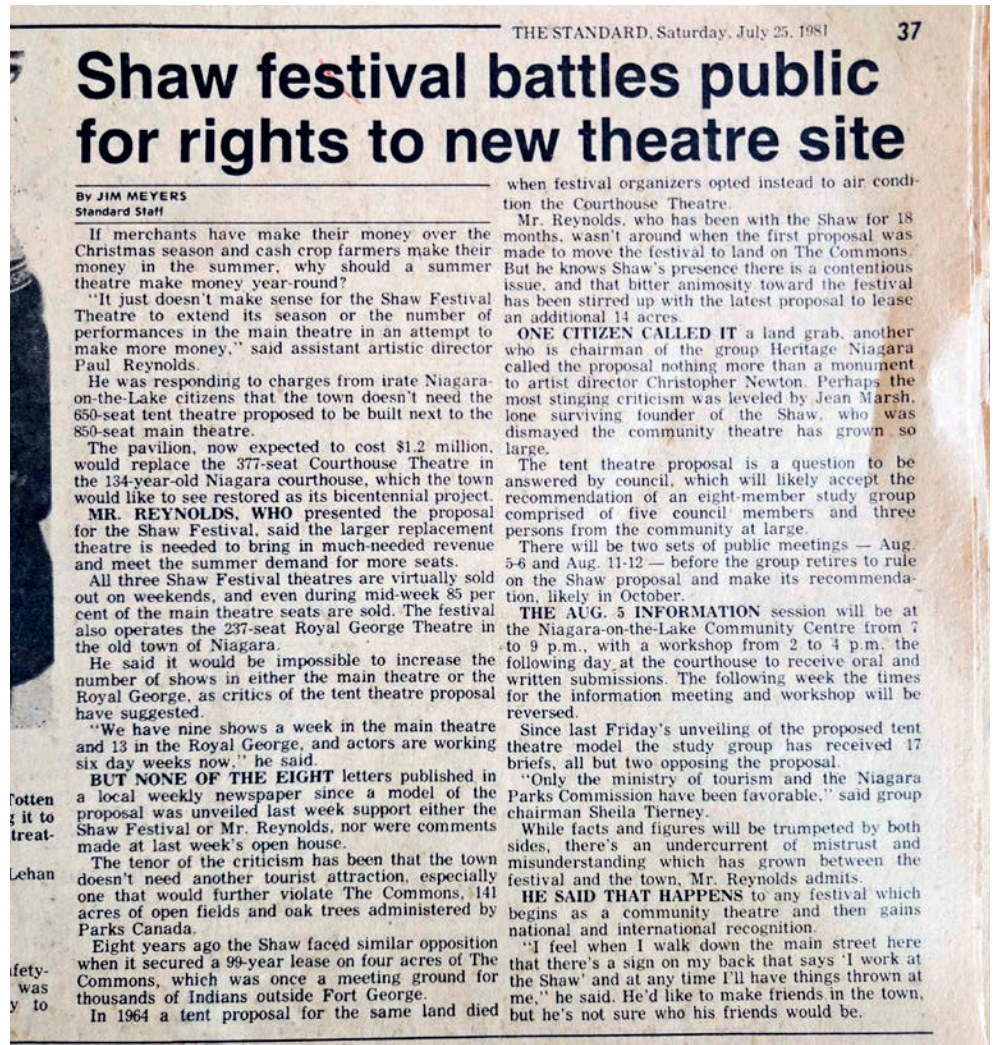
Sound familiar? At the time, assistant artistic director Paul Reynolds said the Shaw needed the new theatre to bring in revenue and meet summer demand. He also pointed out something that could have been said almost word for word today: the festival was being criticized for trying to grow in a town that already depended heavily on what it brought here.

More than 40 years later, it is almost hard to imagine the town without the Shaw as we now know it. People moved here because of what this place became. Businesses grew around it. The restaurants, shops, inns, galleries and sidewalks of Old Town have all benefited from the cultural life the Shaw helped build.

And yet here we are again, acting as if the next step forward is some shocking attack on the town’s soul.

That does not mean every concern about the Royal George was wrong.

The old theatre mattered. It was a 111-year-old building in the heart of the town’s heritage district. It was fair for residents to ask questions about demolition, scale, design, parking, construction disruption and the impact on Queen Street. People are not wrong to care deeply about this town. We would be worse off if they did not.



An article from 1981 shows history repeating itself as “Shaw battles public.” But NOTL survived the dreaded tyranny of progress before, and it will again. RICHARD HARLEY

But caring about a place is not the same as trying to preserve every piece of it exactly as it was.

The Royal George was beloved, but it was not built to last forever as a modern theatre. The Shaw has said for years the building had serious structural problems and no longer met the needs of audiences, performers or the company. The new theatre is expected to be larger, more accessible and better equipped for the future.

After all the criticism, all the public meetings, all the legal wrangling and all the predictable Niagara-on-the-Lake drama, the work is now moving ahead.

So congratulations to Tim Jennings and the Shaw Festival. That should not be difficult to say.

The Shaw is not some out-of-town developer trying to squeeze what it can from Niagara-on-the-Lake and leave. It is one of the reasons this town has the international reputation it does. It brings people here. It supports jobs. It gives local businesses customers. It provides residents with

something many communities would love to have: world-class theatre within walking distance of home.

And yes, sometimes that comes with inconvenience.

Construction downtown is going to be irritating. There will be noise, trucks, fences, dust, blocked views, parking frustration and people who suddenly become constitutional scholars because someone’s tire touched the edge of their lawn.

We hope residents can take a breath.

Support the local businesses that will have to live with the disruption every day. Buy a coffee. Have lunch. Visit a shop you normally walk past. Make the extra effort to keep Queen Street moving while part of it is behind construction fencing.

And maybe be a little kinder about the small stuff.

Let someone park in front of your house. Walk an extra block. Stop treating grass like it is a UNESCO heritage feature. It will grow back. Life will continue. The town will survive the sound of hammers and machinery.

It might even be better

for it, especially if we learn from history.

The Royal George debate has been emotional and, at times, ugly. But now that the work is beginning, the town has a choice. It can make the next few years miserable for everyone, or it can accept that a living town sometimes has to endure disruption to build something worthwhile.

The old crusty buns who fought Shaw expansion in the past did not stop the town from becoming a better, more interesting place. They just made the process louder than it needed to be.

We do not need to repeat that part.

One day, when the new Royal George is open, people will walk through its doors, take their seats and enjoy a performance in a theatre built for the next generation of Shaw audiences.

Some of them will probably be the same people complaining today.

That is fine. They should come anyway.

The old theatre had a long life. The new one deserves a fair chance.

editor@niagaranow.com

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## Editorial

# Zalepa should declare conflict on Rand

Richard Harley  
Editor-in-Chief

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa made a strange choice when he previously declared a conflict of interest on the Rand Estate file because he “lives in the vicinity.”

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, that is quite a standard.

This is a small town. Everyone lives in the vicinity of something. If proximity alone is enough to remove the lord mayor from one of the most important planning files in town, the same logic could knock councillors out of debates across Old Town, Virgil, St. Davids, Glendale and Queenston.

We said at the time it was a weak and baffling move.

We still think so.

But with the Rand Estate now back before council, Zalepa plans to be an active participant. What changed?

He says each application

is evaluated individually and that because access off Charlotte Street isn't proposed, the vicinity of his home is no longer an issue.

We don't buy the spin.

We have consistently seen councillors declare conflicts when similar scenarios arise.

There used to be a code of honour about it, so much so that if you were paying attention, you could often predict which council members were going to step aside on an issue.

In this case, Zalepa has not changed his address, he is still in the vicinity, as much as he was before, and this application is about as close as you can get to the same thing coming back again. Minus one access road.

He says he received independent legal advice.

Perhaps he hired a new lawyer, because he previously told The Lake Report he declared a conflict on Rand

after speaking with “the town's integrity commissioner and my own independent legal advice.”

All too familiar.

If the non-pecuniary conflict was legitimate before, then it is legitimate now. If he believed he could not participate before because he lives nearby, then, to be consistent, he should declare the same conflict again.

We expect Zalepa's vote will go the way it usually does: in support of insensitive development, accompanied by some polished excuse about trusting staff, following provincial policy or avoiding legal costs.

The same tired logic keeps being used to make elected officials sound powerless, as if councillors are merely there to nod along while planners, consultants, developers and provincial policy do the real governing.

As if local democracy

barely exists in Ontario any more.

That's not leadership, it's surrender dressed up as responsibility.

The Rand Estate is not just another planning application. It involves heritage, trees, traffic, public access, stormwater, sewage, neighbourhood character and the future of one of NOTL's most historic properties.

It deserves a council willing to debate it honestly.

Zalepa's previous conflict declaration was either a real conflict or it was not.

If it was real, he needs to step aside again. If it was not, then he owes residents an explanation for why he removed himself in the first place.

What he cannot do is treat conflict rules like a political convenience.

Zalepa created this standard himself. Now he should live by it.

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

## The town that chose to eat itself



### THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner  
Columnist

The big yellow excavator was enjoying its first few chomps of the building's rump as I walked by.

The construction site gate was ajar. There stood Shaw czar Tim Jennings watching the moment he'd waited so long for. The permissions had been granted. The legal stalemate had been settled. The equipment was readied. The old buildings had been cleared from the path. It was finally demo time.

As the iconic Royal George was slowly turned into a rubble pile I snapped a picture, then heard my name. Jennings had spotted me. The gate quickly closed. He retreated into the Queen Street crowd. No words, once again, from a guy who so far has refused to speak with me.

So the inevitable has

arrived. Three years of construction. Hundreds of dump truck loads. And the biggest change to NOTL's famous main drag since 1847, when the Courthouse was built. Once completed, the “rebuilt” Royal George will be three times the mass of the stone monolith down the street.

Do we all understand what Shaw Inc., the development company that used to be a theatre troupe, has planned?

Hope so. It's coming.

Built, it will be over 50,000 square feet, burrowed deep into the earth, rising six storeys at the rear with an industrial boxiness, loading docks and service area extending half the block down Victoria Street, where some of the town's signature heritage homes squat.

Some people worry this project — demolishing four structures, three of them historic — is breaking every single heritage rule NOTL has established. Now that such a hulking commercial structure has been approved, what might stop developers from wanting to piggyback with a new hotel or casino?

The precedent is there. The Ontario Land Tribunal would use that to overrun local objections. These days,

the province wants big, more, soon.

Well, too bad Mr. Jennings fled. I have questions.

Last winter, he warned any delay in the project (which happened) would jeopardize provincial funding. So, did it? Two months ago, a federal minister was expected to show up with a cheque. Why didn't that happen?

Last year, the Shaw lost millions on its operations. Won't shuttering the Royal George until 2029 deepen losses? The new complex will feature a lobby capable of hosting and feeding 300 people. What about the restaurants across the road?

And with Mississauga Road to be closed all autumn and winter to come, where will all these trucks go? Why has the construction mitigation plan not been made public?

Alas. Dunno. He's not talking.

But area houses were papered at the end of last week with a one-page flyer saying demolition would take down the theatre and the old heritage barber shop next door (lately, the Shaw box office) by the end of June, and decorative, happy-looking hoarding would soon be installed.

Meanwhile, there is deep

concern among some neighbouring businesses. Decorative or not, the fencing will force tourists onto the pavement, create a visual barrier and do nothing to curb dust or dump trucks. Can small indie shops survive three summers of that? With \$40 million in Shaw's coffers and \$100 million in construction projects in town, does Mr. Jennings have a plan for these folks?

The legacy of our current council will be forever.

A large hotel and venue plunked in a residential hood. Flaunting of rules intended to protect the old and irreplaceable. Dismissal of citizen protests. Plans to turn a former hospital into a tourist parking garage. Changes of mass and scope to the main street that can never be undone.

Is this the recklessness of part-time politicians and staff that prefers to work in the shadows? Is it carelessness? Or is this town really run by the established, monied, propertied class that Tim Jennings has been so adroit at milking?

Dunno. Only the excavator is talking.

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

[garth@garth.ca](mailto:garth@garth.ca)



This week's riddle is “Jeopardy!” style  
Category: BEASTLY TELEVISION

**This man's loyal direwolf Grey Wind tragically perishes just like him during the Red Wedding.**

Last issue category: BUSINESS “&” BUSINESS

Clue: Founded in 1971, this bath, body & hair care chain named for two 17th century Brits began as a small shop called The Soap Box.

Answer: What is Crabtree & Evelyn?

Answered first by: Tuija Johansson

Also answered correctly (in order) by:

Bob Wheatley, Sue Rautenberg, Lynda Collet, Jesse Agnew, Jeff Lake, Esther VanGorder, Donna Pearce, Katie Reimer, Debbi Irving, Claudia Grimwood, Susan Dewar, Sylvia Wiens, KC King, Marla Percy, Catherine Clarke, Alice Vandermeer, Sheila Meloche, Margie Enns, Hedy Wiebe

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

\*REMEMBER TO PUT “WHAT IS” FOR JEOPARDY QUESTIONS!

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# Council has put NOTL's small-town charm **in danger**



**ARCHITEXT**

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

Nobody is sure who coined the term “sleepy little town,” but one thing is for certain: in the past few years, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake certainly cannot be described in those terms.

During the period of the current sitting council, there have been a multiplicity of developments and events that have divided the community while threatening the character and built heritage of the town.

Of course there are the “big” ones which, amongst many others, include:

Approval granted for the construction of a major hotel in a residential neighbourhood, with adverse impacts — all of which can be found defined as “do not do this” in the standards and guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada — on at

least eight historic homes in the immediate vicinity, while permanently altering the peace and reasonable liveability expectations of neighbouring residents.

This is not to mention the potential legacy issues — associated with infrastructure, stormwater management, etc. — which, if realized, will burden NOTL taxpayers for years to come.

And, approval of the Shaw Festival's new Royal George development — which required the demolition of five historic buildings — which, should the plans as currently presented be built out, will not only permanently and negatively alter the historic Queen streetscape.

These plans, which the town's consultants (ERA Architects) specifically stated would have negative impacts on the preservation of our established Queen-Picton heritage district, fly directly in the face of the 1986 conservation plan.

This is not to mention the loss of the heritage streetscape integrity (a major tourist drawing card) and the long-term liveability and enjoyment of property for the residents within the established heritage district.

These two examples, amongst others, demonstrate that the majority of our current councillors and



The Chapman House, a mid-century modern home on the Niagara Parkway, has been relegated to “the dustbin of history” by the town's approval of its demolition, writes Brian Marshall. And it's hurting NOTL's heritage. FILE

lord mayor care not for the integrity of NOTL's built history and preserving the character of our wee town but instead subscribe to Doug Ford's “Ferris wheel” underwritten vision of Niagara as Las Vegas North.

Let's go from big to small and visit Niagara River Parkway.

Last April, Glencairn Hall, a rare example of early 19th-century Greek revival architecture in Niagara, was burnt to the ground in what our police have classified as arson.

Apparently, our law enforcement agencies have not been able to identify the perpetrators of this crime to date. The residents of NOTL (and the country) are left poorer by its loss.

As an indirect result of the destruction of Glen-

cairn, the heritage property was allowed to be subdivided with the severed portion of the property attached to the holdings of the neighbour to the south.

This past May, said neighbour began work on the circa-200-year-old heritage-designated stone schoolhouse sitting on the lot between his residential property and the newly acquired severed Glencairn lands with a backhoe — both removing the roof and impacting the building walls.

Thankfully, the alarm bells were rung by neighbours and the town moved to halt work, but the building remains exposed to the elements and vulnerable to demolition by neglect.

I am forced to note that the town has yet to publish

their response (fines) associated with the property owner's actions relative to the destructive work done on this heritage building.

Then, as we move north, Don Chapman's iconic mid-century modern home at 15319 Niagara River Pkwy. has been recently relegated to the dustbin of history by the municipal heritage committee and subsequently town council approving a demolition application.

Now, beginning as far back as January 2021, I have described this building as an architectural tour-de-force — a brilliant creative expression of a pivotal Niagara architect (“Architect: A masterwork,” Jan. 6, 2021, The Lake Report).

And, as such, I believe that every effort should have been made to preserve the building in perpetuity. However, such was not the case.

After reviewing the application and accompanying submitted documents pursuant to applying for a demolition permit, a notable Ontario heritage architect of my acquaintance penned an open letter which stated that, in his professional opinion, “The information provided to town staff, the municipal heritage committee, council and the public, was insufficient to conclude that any conservation mea-

asures were exhausted and demolition was required.”

He went on to state that: “the [submitted] documents contain no evidence of analysis of the building design, no specific condition data, nor any conservation consultation or ‘measures,’ nor evidence of a specific risk to public safety, and therefore nothing to support the Staff rationale for recommending approval [of the application].”

In 10 paragraphs, he cited specific deficiency issues with the application, up to and including the failure to comply with provincial legislation: Architects Act (see sections 1, 11(1&5a), and 46).

As a result, he called for NOTL's council to reverse a “poorly informed decision.”

This open letter was ignored by our sitting council.

Typical of most of the divisive decisions rendered by our current council and lord mayor, it seems their priority pivots around, and allow me to paraphrase an old axiom, “Money talks and good sense walks.”

But apparently, NOTL residents, like you and I, can be handily ignored.

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

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## NOTL Palliative Care offers respite services right here

Dear editor:

I'm writing in response to your article in the May 21 edition, "Harder to care in NOTL: Caregivers face gaps, inconsistency in support services."

One of the local resources available to caregivers that wasn't mentioned in the article is the Community Palliative Care & Wellness Niagara-on-the-Lake.

While many NOTL residents may know us as a hub of services and resources for end-of-life care, we also support individuals, families and caregivers throughout all stages of short-term/long-term life-changing illness.

For caregivers, our

services include compassionate, trained volunteers who offer caregiver relief through home and long-term care visits. Our volunteers offer companionship, compassionate listening and emotional support for a caregiver's loved one — and regular respite from caregiving duties.

We also hold a recharge caregiver group, a safe space for those caring for others, where we listen, encourage and provide interactive sessions designed to prevent caregiver burnout.

Some of our other services designed to help caregivers include volunteer drivers, mobility equipment, and lots of information,

resources and guidance on accessing local and regional programs.

Anticipatory grief is taken very seriously at on set of diagnosis; we have group support, one-on-one support and walking groups.

We've been supporting NOTL for 40 years, and our small but mighty team is located at 1882 Niagara Stone Rd. in the Medical Building with the Niagara North Family Health Team.

We invite caregivers to visit us at notlpc.com, call us at 905-468-4433 or email at notlpc@bellnet.ca.

**Bonnie Bagnulo**  
Executive director  
NOTL Community  
Palliative Care & Wellness

## Prepare for another parade

Dear editor:

Niagara-on-Lake loves a parade. Crowds line the streets and cheer on the Christmas Tractor Parade in Virgil, the Christmas Parade in the Old Town and the Canada Day Cake Walk on Queen Street.

The only parade that hasn't drawn cheering crowds is the Parliament Oak heavy truck parade which has run daily since last fall, even though it touches much of the community.

Highway 55, Virgil, Mississauga Street, Mary Street and King Street in the Old Town. Hundreds of heavy truck runs, which even pass both primary schools leaving diesel fumes and mud in their wake.



Letter writer Rick Monette warns NOTLers to prepare for a parade of dump trucks for the Royal George build.

And now our town councillors are being asked to be the grand marshals of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel and tourist rental heavy truck parade ("SORE says new Rand plan 'flies in the face' of OLT ruling," May 21, The Lake Report).

The conga line of trucks will go on for years, an-

other parade to celebrate developers and tourists rolling over the town's streets and residents.

What parade route will it follow? Certainly not past the winery on John Street — that would be bad for business. Charlotte and Niagara streets will be the fastest way in and out.

With such a short route dozens of times a day for years, perhaps this heavy truck parade will attract a crowd eager to celebrate the vision of our current town council and staff.

We love a parade here. Even if it rolls over us and breaks our backs while it destroys our town.

**Rick Monette**  
NOTL

## No one should be dismissed by class

Dear editor:

I laughed out loud when I read Mr. Turner's list of my cousin Rainer Hummel's accomplishments ("The Turner Report: The voice from the big house," May 28). Especially, the big house. The old Phillips-Lansing estate. Renovated. Still a home. Not a hotel.

All that by a person born in a backward South American country, about the time when Fidel Castro (friend of Justin Trudeau's family) and his compatriot Che Guevara were instigating a revolution against the American-affiliated Batista regime.

Our family grew up in dire poverty. Prussian refugees fleeing a Stalinist military of killers and rapists.

Rainer lived, literally, in a mud hut. No running water. Old newsprint for toilet paper. Food was whatever you could grow or catch and kill.

In the mid-1960s, our families moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake. A paradise. The patriarch of our extended family instilled upon us that we must all work together, specifically to build businesses to supply products and services that our community needed. Everyone helps everyone so that we all thrive.

Our matriarch reminded us that, in Europe we might



Letter writer Wallace Wiens says her cousin Rainer Hummel may live in a mansion now, but he spent time living in a literal mud hut in his childhood. Hummel worked hard to get there. She says her cousin's defence of Andrea Kaiser is because they were raised with a sense of community.

have been enemies, but in Niagara-on-the-Lake, we are community. That includes the Pillitteris, Moris, Burlands, Ahluwalias, Patels, Obamas — everyone.

Rainer took that to heart. That ethic prompted him to speak up for Andrea Kaiser. They may not know each other well, and they may not share the same politics, but anyone who is trying to make a difference for the community deserves a fair hearing.

Besides, her ideas might make a positive impact. Never take anyone for granted.

No one in Rainer's large extended family ever forgets that the difference between a mud hut and a mansion is only the next bad political decision, aided by a self-indulgent press.

As a former legislator,

always intimately involved with lawmakers and attorneys, you must understand the root of our legal and political tradition: the Socratic method. The search for universal truth.

Every point of view and fact is important and should be given due deference. Unless you rely on personal bias? But as any lawmaker can tell you: never be your own advocate. That way lies foolishness.

My point? Class distinction may not be as significant as some believe. Wealthy, middling or poor: we all need to hold ourselves to account. No one is perfect. Give everyone grace.

And give every idea, every vision a chance to flourish.

**Wallace Wiens**  
Old Town



217 Butler Street | Offered for sale at \$4,750,000

Situated in one of Niagara-on-the-Lake's most admired settings, this remarkable property is set on nearly an acre at the prominent corner of Queen and Butler, with views across the golf course toward Lake Ontario, all within steps of the shops, restaurants, and charm of Queen Street. The classic white clapboard residence offers more than 5,500 square feet above grade and has been thoughtfully restored, renovated, and expanded. The property also includes a separate one bedroom annex, offering excellent flexibility for guests, family, or private work space. Outdoors, the grounds feature mature trees, English-style gardens, flagstone patios, a koi pond with bubbler fountain, and a large inground pool. Enjoy all that the Niagara Region has to offer; the Shaw Festival, golf, biking, boating, wineries, and more!



478 Johnson Street

Offered for sale at \$2,100,000

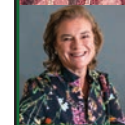
Welcome to this charming three bedroom bungalow in the best location of Old Town in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Situated on an exceptional 102.92'x161' south facing lot surrounded by mature trees, this side of town is extremely quiet and peaceful. This house can be enjoyed as is, renovate or build new on this spacious and private lot, with a possibility of severing into two 50' lots for development of two houses. Located just minutes away from the center of town.



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# Hidden Rye Park honours a giant of NOTL history



## ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

Out and about our eminently walkable town, it's so nice when people exchange smiley nods of heads. And, continuing my long established habit, perhaps a brief greeting. "Top of the day to you," or a reasonable facsimile thereof. During the past few years, increasingly, I have had to learn not to expect a reply from many people. They are not cold, unsociable or rude. They are simply wearing little earbuds, so they don't hear me. So be it — I just have to get with the program.

And my goodness, how about the promotion, hype and buzz around the upcoming FIFA World Cup? Can you believe it? Without a doubt, an authentically "world" championship. So many nations are in the tournament, from all areas of our world. Are there really 48 countries playing? Unlike ice hockey and baseball, where we kind of stretch the word "world" when naming our annual playoff series. How many countries are really competitive? So, the World Cup is upon us. We have been reading so much about the heavy handedness of the FIFA folks, and the almost ludicrous prices of accommodation, transportation and other necessities. Whatever. I have never been a soccer (or is it football?) kind of sports guy, but I have determined to get on the bandwagon. I am looking for a way to make this whole World Cup thing enjoyable. Help

me find an underdog team to cheer for, because in this type of sudden death knock-out format, there are always incredible upsets. This is statistically undeniable. Speaking of statistics, I learned many years ago that 72 per cent of statistics are made up on the spot. Further, some 87 per cent of Canadians think they have an above average IQ. Rambling dynamically now back to the overbearing advertising during the recent Stanley Cup playoffs, I saw two clever new ads during Game 7. And yes, that game didn't end well for mes Canadiens de Montreal. But my favourite player, Cole Caulfield, starred in a new Hall of Fame ad for Old Spice deodorant: "The best smell in the NHL." Bewdy! Also, a new Tylenol scrolling ad on the rink boards and on the previously totally white ice surface: "Tylenol. We've got Canada's backs." And someone please



Ross Robinson is a fan of the local Avondale stores.

explain to me, "Tim's, tastes of the globe." Now, a big detour to convenience stores. Internationally, there have been a couple of multi-billion-dollar buyouts in various parts of the world. Circle K, 7-11, Kum and Go, and more. How on Earth do they put a value on these businesses? Thousands of stores, tens of thousands of employees. Just imagine counting the inventories that have to be recorded. There are some really smart people in the world. And I just hope that our local Niagara Avondale stores can continue to

fly under the radar. Well-located, clean, staffed by friendly, informed and dependable "Avondale people." We are so lucky that "the Avondale" is a known and trusted brand name. And nearly always has what we pop in for. Lately, they have been selling lots of Niagara wines. Hurray. I will ramble to this week's conclusion by drawing attention to yet another historical giant of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Do many of us know where Rye Park is located, even though it really lacks street signage, and is hard to find? Go north on King Street, turn left on Cottage, and then jog right on Rye Street for about 20 metres. Turn left down a little road that has no sign, but is "number 704." This will take you to Rye Park, also known as Rye Heritage Park. Not the site of a long-ago moonshine producer. A large and wonderful park

with two tennis/pickleball courts, a fine soccer/football field and an asphalt basketball area. And, a very fine playground apparatus for young NOTLers. What's not to like? And such a well-used park, by pooches and their people. Not that long ago, in 1869, Maria Rye founded Our Western Home on this site. She and her staff and the Church of England's Waifs and Strays Society placed over 5,500 impoverished, abandoned or orphaned children here, and literally "gave them a chance in life." Enough said by Ross the Rambler. Make time, and find Rye Park. There are two large plaques that detail the huge contributions of Maria Rye and her co-workers. Both installed by the Niagara Historical Society and the museum back in 2018. You will be glad you learned about this NOTL giant. [rossrocket9@gmail.com](mailto:rossrocket9@gmail.com)

# LOST DOG



Our little Italian Greyhound is missing in NOTL/Virgil area. Please keep an eye out for her!

DO NOT CHASE  
DO NOT CALL OUT
DO NOT WHISTLE  
SHE WILL BOLT

If you see her, please call me immediately at **905-325-4132** with the following information for the volunteer rescue team:

- Exactly where she is sighted.
- Exactly at what time you saw her.
- What direction is she travelling in?
- Her condition. Is she limping? Is she fine?
- At what speed is she travelling? Is she running, trotting, or walking?

**Please help us bring her home. THANK YOU!**

905-325-4132



# CELEBRATE OUR GRADS!

Send us your photos with full names, grades and schools and we'll run them in our June 25 edition!

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# Have some fun



**Across**

- 1. Low sculptures rising from a plane surface (7)
- 5. Pull through (7)
- 9. Peeping Tom (6)
- 10. Enduring (4-4)
- 11. Never use ill-gotten earnings (8)
- 12. Spokelike (6)
- 13. Home of Cox's Bazar beach (10)
- 15. Arrest (4)
- 16. Eye problem (4)
- 18. Some of them are Grimm (5,5)
- 21. Shaft key (6)
- 22. Chosen as a career (4,4)
- 24. Learnt of a mess in Derbyshire (8)
- 25. Tooth covering (6)
- 26. "Salome" composer (7)
- 27. Guided (7)

**Down**

- 2. Wear away (5)
- 3. Polar wrecker (7)
- 4. Established form of words (7)
- 6. York, from London (2,5)
- 7. Picked democratically (5,2)
- 8. Adaptable (9)
- 10. Eavesdropping (9,2)
- 14. Thoughtless state (9)
- 17. African state on the Red Sea (7)
- 18. Elaborate Hispanic parties (7)
- 19. Yak seen running wild in North America (7)
- 20. Energize (7)
- 23. Tear up sheet for this lot (5)

## Crossword Puzzle

1	2		3		4			5	6		7		8	
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Last issue's answers

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3	R	I	D	G	S	U	D											
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# EXPLORING HISTORY

WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## Memorial Hall turns 120

Built in 1906, Memorial Hall stands as a lasting symbol of Niagara-on-the-Lake's commitment to preserving its history. Built under the leadership of Janet Carnochan and the Niagara Historical Society, the building was constructed to provide a permanent home for the community's artifacts, documents and stories at a time when few communities were actively preserving their heritage. When it officially opened on June 4, 1907, Memorial Hall became Ontario's first purpose-built public museum. For more than a century, it has connected generations of residents and visitors with the people, events, and objects that have shaped the history of Niagara-on-the-Lake. As we mark 120 years since its construction, Memorial Hall continues to stand as a reminder that it is more than just bricks and mortar. It reflects the ongoing commitment that the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum will continue to create new opportunities to share its collection, tell the community's stories, welcome visitors and inspire future generations to connect with the history of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Happy Birthday, Memorial Hall.

### Obituary

## Rick Kingma



**KINGMA, Rick** — It is with much sadness that we announce the passing of Rick Kingma on May 14, 2026.

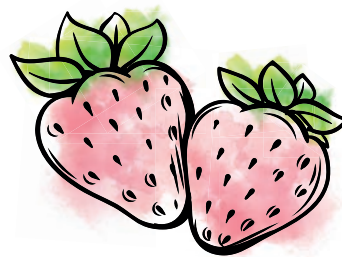
Rick will be greatly missed by his loving wife, Sandra; his children, Kevin (Subee) and Chrissy; his siblings and their families:

Annie Rutherford, Sam (Anne), Andy, and Dorothy Kimber (Jay) of Ontario, and John (Anita), Dina (Ron), and Rita (Steve) of British Columbia. He is also survived by his in-laws and their families: Elisabeth Riss, Larry Riss (Cheryl), Karen Cherubini, Linda Riss (Russ), and Dennis Riss (Claudia). Rick was predeceased by his parents, John and Aukje; and his siblings Douglas, Gerda, Susan, and Clarence

Rick was born in Welland on May 13, 1956, and grew up in Wainfleet. In 1980, he met Sandra, and they married in 1983, settling in Niagara-on-the-Lake to raise their family. Rick was a dedicated truck driver whose quiet and gentle nature left a lasting impression on everyone who knew him. He was a devoted family man who loved spending time with those closest to him. Rick was also a passionate sports fan who faithfully cheered on his teams, the Montreal Canadiens and the Buffalo Bills. He will always be remembered for his kind heart and deep love for his family.

In keeping with Ricks wishes, cremation has taken place, and a private family Celebration of Life has been held. The family wishes to extend a heartfelt thank you to the compassionate staff at Hamilton General Hospital and the Toronto General Hospital CICU and CVICU for their care.

To honour Ricks memory, please consider a simple act of kindness by signing up to be an organ donor through the Trillium Gift of Life Network, which facilitates organ retrieval and donation programs.



### Niagara-on-the-Lake STRAWBERRY SOCIAL

The Town is looking forward to its annual Strawberry Social event, where community members (aged 65+) are invited to gather for lunch, fun, and friendship. Admission is free for all attendees.

**Who:** Niagara-on-the-Lake residents (65+)

**When:** Wednesday, June 24, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Doors open at 10:30 a.m.

**Where:** NOTL Community Centre  
14 Anderson Lane

**Registration Details:**

Spots are available on a first-come, first-served basis. If the event reaches capacity, participants can request to be added to the waitlist.

**How to Register:**

- Online at [forms.office.com/r/E2WT6JXmJE](https://forms.office.com/r/E2WT6JXmJE)
- Scan the QR code
- Call 905-468-3266 ext. 0.



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**Niagara-on-the-Lake**

# What's the **best-before date** for the average world leader?



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

Why do politicians so often feel they can carry on in public office, much beyond 70, even 80 years of age, despite cognitive problems?

That was the case for Joe Biden and continues for some members of U.S. Congress. Ditto probably for U.K. and Canadian politicians.

Biologically speaking, life can be divided into three stages: first, development (in utero to the early 30s), then maturation marked by growing experience and maturity (early 30s to the early 60s), and thereafter by what some so aptly call progressive diminishment beginning in the mid-to-late 60s through to death.

By the 60s, atrophy of the brain and losses of nerve

cells are obvious. About this time, MRIs reveal micro-vascular changes and even small asymptomatic infarcts in five to 10 per cent of brains between 60 and 69 years of age, figures which rise to 10 to 24 per cent of brains between 70-79 years of age, and 25 to 40 per cent of brains for those over 80. Those are striking numbers.

That doesn't mean that older folk can't be sharp (many are), but increasingly we're aware, as I am approaching 87, that we're not quite as sharp, our memories not quite as reliable, our senses not quite as keen and we don't get about as effortlessly as we did in mid-life and certainly nowhere close to teenagers with their boundless energy, young bodies and clean-slate learning machines for brains primed to learn much faster than we and I can.

Young brains are probably why most truly original thinking in theoretical physics and mathematics takes place in the 20s or early 30s of life, and related to that, why complex, fast, highly co-ordinated activities such as gymnastics are best learned in the teens —



How old is too old to run for a leadership position?

young brains to co-ordinate young muscles and joints.

Fortunately, there's plenty of evidence that regular exercise, healthy diets and richer cognitive lives slow the aging clock — but not the inevitability of aging. If you have lingering doubts about the effects of aging, just watch teenagers and children at play or talking. It's hard to keep up with the speed with which they talk, understand and move.

The sweet spot, as I call it, for effective politicians lies somewhere between the early 40s and mid-60s when the brain, if not quite at its peak, remains high-functioning, they've acquired the requisite experience and

judgement, and possess the needed stamina required for demanding jobs. Mark Carney is 60 and obviously high-functioning.

But given the silent accumulation of age-related changes in the brain, is it any surprise that leaders begin to fumble cognitively and behaviorally in their 70s and much beyond — and earlier for impaired judgement and discretion?

During President Biden's first term and even during the run-up to that election, there were growing worries about his physical and cognitive fitness for the job: he looked frail, moved slowly and gingerly, and once in office appeared increasingly dependent on lap notes to keep track of names and the agenda when hosting world leaders in the Oval Office.

Then, in the first presidential debate for his second election bid, he lost his wit and focus badly, leaving a nationwide audience to gasp and wonder what happened, and could what they witnessed happen again — perhaps many times or worse while he was president?

Eventually, Biden caved under mounting pressure

from his party and increasingly unfavourable poll numbers and gave up his run for a second term, while never acknowledging his health problems. He was 81 at the time and would have been 85-86 at the end of a second term — a frightening prospect, given his obvious decline in the first term.

Biden wasn't the only worry. Mitch McConnell, the Republican head in the Senate, twice froze and looked blank in mid-sentence at the podium while fielding questions. The cause was never made public but might have been speech arrest related to a localized seizure or ischemic event. There had been other events, including falls. That was fall 2023. But only with the coming midterm election this November is he finally slated to retire.

McConnell and Biden aren't the only examples of questionable suitability for office. One common trait in the early stages of dementia is denial that there's anything wrong, which reveals poor judgment and even hubris.

A selection of political leaders in European, Middle Eastern and Asian countries

reveals six in their 70s, three in their 60s, one in his 50s and two in their 40s, with the oldest being Donald Trump, soon to turn 80. Six are in the sweet spot, 40 to 65, and six in their 70s — beyond the cognitive sweet spot.

For comparison, many Nobel Prize winners in the sciences win prizes in their 60s and 70s for work carried out 20 to 30 years earlier, well within the sweet spot when they were most productive.

Many make it to their 80s, even 90s, cognitively in good shape, but overall, the numbers tell a story of progressive physical and cognitive diminishment in the last third of life.

The trouble is that politicians have a habit of hanging on long after their best-before dates, believing the country, province/state and local government can't get by without them. That's a sign of cognitive impairment, not an encouragement.

*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.*

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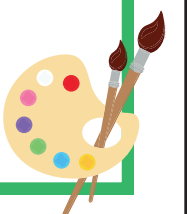
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# HOW I SOLD MY OWN HOME IN 3 DAYS

*I recently sold my own home at 354 Johnson Street, at the corner of Johnson and Dorchester here in town, and in doing so, I was reminded in a very real way what so many of my wonderful clients go through when they trust me to help them sell their home and move on to their next chapter.*

*This is something I have the incredible privilege of being part of every day in this beautiful town.*

*My only job has always been simple: to sell your home in the least amount of time for the most amount of money.*

*But selling my own home gave me a fresh reminder of the emotional side of what my clients experience.*

*The second-guessing.*

*Did we price it right?  
Are these the best photos?  
Should the video feel more cinematic...or more emotional?  
Does this room need paint?  
Do we replace that...or sell it as-is?  
Should the pool chairs be angled...or perfectly straight?*

*And while those decisions may seem small, when it's your home, they don't feel small at all.*

*Because a home is never just a property.*

*It's where life happened.*

*Where your grandkids ran through the backyard.  
Where birthdays were celebrated.  
Where difficult conversations were had.  
Where dreams were built.  
Where chapters of your life unfolded.*

*Even after helping so many families through this process, I was reminded how vulnerable it can*

*feel to let go of a home that holds so much of your story.*

*And yes, even in one of the most challenging real estate markets in Canadian history, I was grateful to generate a flurry of interest and sell our home above asking in just a few short days.*

*But what stayed with me most wasn't the result.*

*It was the reminder that every time someone calls me to list their home, they are not simply hiring a Realtor.*

*They are trusting me with memories.  
With uncertainty.  
With hope.  
With a major life transition—and with the property they poured time, love, and resources into.*

*And that trust is something I will never take lightly.*

*If you're thinking about selling in Old Town or anywhere in Niagara-on-the-Lake, I want you to know this:*

*I understand in a fresh way what this journey feels like.*

*And I promise to care deeply about both the strategy and emotion that come with selling a home.*

*After nearly 20 years and more than 1,000 homes sold, I can tell you with certainty: results matter—but so do people.*

*And both deserve someone who truly cares.*

**With gratitude,  
Greg Sykes**

**GREG SYKES**  
SALESPERSON



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