

SPECIAL SECTION: ELECTION 2026

NOTL VOTES ON ITS
FUTURE

You're reading The Lake Report's comprehensive guide to Niagara-on-the-Lake's candidates in the Oct. 26 election.

For this special edition, candidates were invited to purchase advertising space to reach NOTL voters. Not all candidates opted to do so.

Here is who is running:

LORD MAYOR

Vaughn Goettler
Andrea Kaiser
Erwin Wiens

COUNCIL

Tim Balasiuk
Gary Burroughs
Adriana Cater Vizzari
Nicholas Colaneri
Maria Mavridis
Steve McGuinness
Weston Miller
Rick Mills
Andrew Niven
Sandra O'Connor
Karen Taylor-Jones

PUBLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEE

Jennifer Ajandi
M. Areeb Aijaz
Kate Baggett
Matthew Bradnam
Mike Brousseau
Lauren Bubnic
Jonathan Fast
Amir Ismael
Mark Matchem
Marwa Salih

CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEE

Natalia Benoit
Larry Huibers
Alex McKee
Jake Scervino

This year there is no regional council vote, after changes to the regional governance.





Each of our candidates for lord mayor possess strengths and weaknesses. At the end of the day, they all come with a lot of experience running corporations. What seems to matter more in this election is what their priorities will be. Voters will decide Oct. 26 whether they want to keep the status quo or shake things up. Just be sure to vote. FILE/PAIGE SEBURN

Pros and cons of our three mayoral candidates



Richard Harley
Editor-in-Chief

It's an interesting election year.

Council is shrinking to just six voices (plus the mayor) representing taxpayers, Doug Ford is going to appoint Niagara a regional czar instead of the people electing one and give mayors superpowers to override the majority of council — all while public information seems to be harder and harder to come by for residents asking questions about what's happening in their neighbourhood.

In the last four years, council has approved several hotel projects — some smack in the middle of historic residential neighbourhoods — with more aggressive developments in the pipeline, including a massive residential highrise project in Glendale.

Residents in Old Town are fed up. Many semi-urban Virgilites are lamenting the continued construction on roads, with unfinished new housing scarring the nice streets of Homestead.

Rural residents don't really care about hotels. They just want to be able to cut down nuisance trees without wearing a balaclava.

Then there are the floods. A whole lot of water in people's basements and aging infrastructure while we have a "go-go-go" provincial leader who spends more time in private meetings with developers than at Queen's Park — all while threatening amalgamation and taking away our distinct identities, leaving larger cities in control and us without a say.

If you're thinking it sounds like democracy is being eroded, you wouldn't be crazy.

With less representation, Doug Ford's puppet masters planting agents into the region (our outgoing lordly mayor has applied for the job) and the province pushing more and more directives at small municipalities, our control is being taken away. There's no arguing that.

Some will say it's still democratic because we elected Ford. Some will say the same if our new mayor decides to use strong mayor powers to overturn a democratic decision of council — note, only two candidates have said they would consider using those powers, Ford-friendly Erwin Wiens and failed Liberal candidate Andrea Kaiser. Vaughn Goettler has decried the use of the powers as undemocratic.

And so, as we can see, this election is very much laced with provincial overtones.

That's not even bringing amalgamation fully into the picture. Talk on the streets among some Conserva-

tives is that Ford still plans to amalgamate Niagara, perhaps even moreso if he doesn't get his pick as mayor in NOTL.

Apparently, with the NDP holding three of Niagara's four provincial seats — the exception being West Lincoln, where a PC candidate could shoot a puppy and still win — Ford figures he has nothing to lose by alienating an entire region of voters. Because nobody here likes him anyway.

Which brings us to our dissection of NOTL's candidates.

We want to preface this by saying they're all good people, we have good relationships with all of them and would share a drink together.

Erwin Wiens is a farmer, former cop, 2023 Grape King and involved in his church. He's the current deputy mayor, and his wife may be in line for sainthood thanks to all of her charitable and community endeavours.

Vaughn Goettler is a self-made success story. Mr. Furnace. He and his wife are huge philanthropists, investing millions in NOTL for green initiatives and beyond.

Andrea Kaiser is a wine industry leader with her own brand and has spent 11 years on regional council representing our wee town. She also served on town council from 2010 to 2014.

But this isn't a popularity contest (nor should it be).

Let's start with Wiens, our first double-edged sword.

On one hand, Wiens has a seat at the table with Ford. He endorsed the premier during a campaign stop at the Niagara District Airport during the provincial election and is often seen rubbing elbows with him when he visits Niagara.

But at the same time, he's sitting at a table with Doug Ford — the deer-in-the-headlights mascot for the party that's critically underfunding health care and education, launching an open assault on democracy and stopping public access to things like the premier's phone records.

That endorsement sort of speaks for itself. Wiens says he's the only one who can fight Ford on amalgamation.

He's the candidate for development, the candidate for the status quo.

Goettler is the anti-Zalepa and seems to be Wiens' person to beat. He comes with self-made strength and experience running complex corporations on an international scale, but as a first-time politician, he will need to learn the ropes (Carney did it and he's doing a pretty swell job).

Goettler says he'll stand up to the province when it tries to bully our historic town and will be focused on responsible and sympathetic development, which he says means slowing the roll for a bit.

Kaiser's years of experience give her a unique advantage at the region bargaining table, but as a

regional councillor she has been sort of limp.

She's rarely heard from, isn't out speaking about what she's doing and works multiple positions for her real job.

She's run several times unsuccessfully for the Liberals at the federal and provincial level, so it's reasonable to wonder where her aspirations truly lie. She would have left her regional council gig and job if she became an MP.

In May she told The Lake Report the pay for being lord mayor isn't enough to merit full-time hours, but in September debates suggested she would commit 60 or 70 hours a week, while keeping her real job. She'll find the time, somehow.

Maybe.

Unfortunately, the job requires someone incredibly dedicated right now.

Commendably, Kaiser has fought to adjust NOTL's share of the regional policing budget (which costs NOTL taxpayers way too much), but seems to have spoken more about it during the election than in the last four years combined. That's something all of our candidates should be questioning.

Talking to people in NOTL and looking at signs around town, it seems the real race is between Goettler and Wiens, and it seems to be pretty distinct where the signs are.

The farmers put out lots of Wiens signs along the rows of grapes and trees. Old Town is littered with

Goettler signs. Other areas are well mixed.

One thing to be wary of in this election is splitting votes. With this election so polarized and partisan politics in play in our daily lives more than ever, people who want to see change need to be careful.

Kaiser is a Liberal. Goettler has been a Conservative and Liberal, but his campaign is driven by left-leaning ideologies.

Wiens is true blue and will give up battles to save money from being spent on legal fees for losing Ontario Land Tribunal battles. He's been vocal about that.

But at the end of the day, we need someone who can get Ford to respect us until we can try again to vote him out.

The question, I guess, becomes, what's the best strategy? Kissing Ford's feet so he doesn't throw a tantrum and amalgamate us? Or putting the heat on and telling him no?

If you want the heat on, call Mr. Furnace today. If you want more of the same, pick Wiens. Of course, it's not really that simple. But what is?

Just be sure to vote.

Strategic voting might be the best choice. It would be a real shame if the winner got in with just 35 per cent of the popular vote because two of the three mayoral candidates split the vote, effectively handing the election over.

A lot to consider.

editor@niagaranow.com

No excuse for not voting in municipal election



Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Municipal elections are the lowest-profile, most mundane and least sexy democratic institutions we have.

They're also arguably the most important, the ones that affect our lives most directly and the elections over which we can have the most influence if we decide to cast a ballot.

That's because decisions made by town council literally hit you where you live. And in most municipalities only a fraction of eligible voters bother to get out and vote.

Niagara-on-the-Lake tends to be an outlier, as it is in so many other things. Here, in the last election in 2022, about 48 per cent of residents voted, town data shows.

That was more than anywhere else in Niagara Region, the town bragged in a news release. For instance, in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, only 26 to 28 per cent felt voting was worth their while.

In 2018, NOTL's turnout



With residents engaged in this election, it's our hope that we see a record turn-out at the polls on Oct. 26. Go vote.

was even more astounding, at 59 per cent, according to a summary by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

In that election, Betty Disero took half the votes cast for lord mayor and handily won.

Four years later, the electorate turned its collective sights on Disero and rejected her by giving Gary Zalepa 49 per cent support. The incumbent lost by 1,200 votes.

And this year, Zalepa is not running, after four years of leading what many people in town viewed as a pro-development council. He hopes to be appointed chair of Niagara Region.

So, as has been the case

for the past 16 years, the fickle voters of NOTL will install someone new in the lord mayor's chair. And hope they made the right choice this time.

The options for mayor are interesting — and starkly different. We have:

Vaughn Goettler, a millionaire philanthropist and former CEO with a strong record in the corporate world, but no prior municipal government experience. He promises to do the job full-time but accept no salary and put a stop to what many residents call inappropriate development. He finished a distant third in the mayoral race in 2022.

Andrea Kaiser, a winery owner and the town's

regional councillor (a job eliminated by the province's meddling in the regional governance model), she is running on her record representing NOTL both at the region and town level for years, with promises of smart growth and respect of our historic and agricultural heritage.

Erwin Wiens, the deputy lord mayor, a grape grower and retired police officer, he supports balanced growth that's in the interests of long-term residents and aims to build a strong, year-round economy for NOTL. He has the ear of Premier Doug Ford, which can be a positive or a negative, depending on your perspective.

On top of everything else, the idea of amalgamating Niagara into two or three or more larger municipalities is a non-starter for all the mayoral hopefuls. They recognize it would spell the end of NOTL as we've always known it.

However, the municipal election is more than just deciding who should be mayor.

Despite the so-called strong mayor powers bestowed by Ford, the person who becomes lord mayor still holds just one vote, and the members of council can override what he or she does. Nothing happens without council's input.

So, as always, there are many other names on the

ballot, with a wide range of candidates for council and school board.

While candidates from Old Town and Virgil tend to outweigh those from other parts of NOTL, because council is elected at-large, whoever is chosen will be representing people across town.

You owe it to yourself and your family to take a few minutes to learn about candidates' platforms, watch the excellent NOTL Residents Association debates, or greet the candidates on your doorstep.

And remember: despite their low profile, municipal elections are our most relevant form of grassroots, representative democracy.

So, what direction will NOTL voters choose?

That's impossible to predict but what we do know is it has never been easier to exercise your democratic franchise.

Whether that means hitting the polls on election day, getting out to one of the advance polls or — because it's 2026 — opting for online voting, there is no excuse for not voting this year.

The Town of NOTL has made it easy and convenient.

Now it falls to you, the voter, to decide who is the best choice for our town for the next four years.

kevin@niagaranow.com

How to vote in NOTL

WATCH THE DEADLINE

Online voting closes a day before election day.



Vote online

Until Sunday, Oct. 25
Closes at 8 p.m.

Use a computer, tablet or phone with an internet connection.

Have your **voter information letter** ready. Go to the voting website on your letter and follow the instructions to cast your ballot.

vote2026.notl.com

Opened Oct. 5 at 10 a.m.

No online voting on Oct. 26.



Vote early

Saturday, Oct. 17
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

NOTL Community Centre
Simpson Room
14 Anderson Lane

Earlier advance poll: completed

Oct. 7, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Council chambers, town hall
1593 Four Mile Creek Rd.



Election day

Monday, Oct. 26
10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Choose any of these five locations:

NOTL Community Centre
14 Anderson Lane

Holiday Inn Express
524 York Rd.

Laura Secord Homestead
29 Queenston St.

Crossroads Public School
1350 Niagara Stone Rd.

St. Davids Public School
1344 York Rd.

WHAT TO BRING

Bring ID showing your **name and qualifying address**. Photo ID is not required. Bring your voter letter if you have it.

NO LETTER? NEED HELP?

You can still vote. For an online PIN, visit town hall with ID and proof of address. Voting help: **905-468-3266** or clerks@notl.com.

VAUGHN

GOETTLER



BIO

Vaughn Goettler came from a modest background and worked his way through university. After years in management he became the CEO of Union Energy, now Reliance Home Comfort. In 2014, he founded and became CEO of the Right Time Group of Companies.

Vaughn and his wife volunteer and give generously to many local causes including Palliative Care, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, Rotary International, Red Roof Retreat, Niagara College and the Niagara Foundation (Wilderness). They are proud parents, grandparents and love adopted rescue animals too.

Vaughn is running because he knows that it’s time for a change at Town Hall. Vaughn has no special interests except to be the voice of local residents. He will listen to the community and work for you as your new Lord Mayor, full time.

A MESSAGE FROM VAUGHN

I’m not a seasoned politician and don’t have political insider experience. And for this year’s election, that’s a very good thing. Through all my work as a CEO and community supporter I have built teams, listened to people, solved problems and made things happen. I have accomplished great things by working with people instead of working over them. I have kept costs low and delivered value in the real world. And while I know that running a government is different than running a business, I also know how to treat every person who uses town services as a shareholder in the public trust. After the last four years, “political experience” has had its turn. My own experience tells me it’s time for a change. Come with me, and let’s get this done together, full-time.

“Leadership that listens.
Decisions you can trust.
Working together, full-time.”

Top 3 Priorities

- **Trust:** Follow the rules.
- **Transparency:** Open town hall.
- **Together:** Put residents first.

ACTION PLAN

As lord mayor, Vaughn will bring together the best ideas from residents, council and staff. He will apply his CEO experience, strong voice and generous heart at town hall and at the new Niagara Region council.

Vaughn’s leadership will respect our past and listen to residents so we can enjoy a better future.

- Trust: Follow the rules**
- Make development follow our official plan
 - Update the coning bylaw with fewer amendments
 - Hire a new integrity commissioner
 - Prosecute property owners who break the law
 - Renew infrastructure before more growth

- Transparency: Open town hall**
- Record all council votes and share the records
 - Publish meeting calendars and expense reports
 - No more texting in council chambers
 - Be open by default and share more information
 - Listen to local residents and community groups

- Together: Put residents first**
- Fight amalgamation: stand up for Niagara-on-the-Lake
 - Donate salary to local charities
 - Bring back resident committees
 - Improve recreation facilities and programs for all ages
 - Preserve and enhance an outstanding quality of life



Vaughn Goettler and his wife Lauren.

ANDREA KAISER



BIO

Andrea Kaiser is a dedicated and experienced community leader with deep roots in Niagara-on-the-Lake. She grew up here, raised her son and daughter here, and lives in Queenston full-time, with her Great Dane Millie. She served as a municipal councillor from 2003 to 2014, chairing the public works, planning, corporate services and fair taxation committees. Since 2022, Andrea has served as regional councillor for Niagara-on-the-Lake and has been an active member of the region's community services committee and vice-chair of the economic development committee. She has also served on numerous community boards and committees such as the Niagara Nursery School, NOTL Public Library board and municipal heritage committee. Andrea is also a local entrepreneur and taught at Niagara College for more than a decade.

A MESSAGE FROM ANDREA

I am prepared and ready to serve you as lord mayor of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. And I understand what this means, as I been serving this community my entire adult life. Whether it was through our family businesses, through volunteering or through my service as a municipal councillor and now as your regional councillor. I know what it means to serve and I will be able to hit the ground running on day one to bring change. I have done the work. I am doing the work. And I will always do the work. I am also ready to lead and to make our community my top priority.

AUTHORIZED BY THE ANDREA KAISER CAMPAIGN

“I believe my proven track record of protecting what makes our community so special will be critical in leading Niagara-on-the-Lake into a brighter and less divisive future.”

Top 3 Priorities

- **Transparency and public consultation**
- **Managing growth and growing resident Services**
- **Protecting our environment and building climate resilience**

ACTION PLAN

As lord mayor, I will bring experienced, collaborative leadership focused on practical action and results for residents. I will strengthen public consultation and transparency, ensuring residents have meaningful opportunities to understand and provide input on decisions. I will work co-operatively with residents, council and community organizations to find practical solutions and build greater trust in local government. My commitment will always be to listen and collaborate before acting.

I will ensure we have good policy to guide responsible growth and ensure development is supported by the infrastructure needed to sustain it. Any growth must respect our agricultural lands, heritage, natural environment, village character and residents' quality of life. As a part of this policy I will make climate resilience a priority in planning and infrastructure decisions to address flooding, stormwater management, drainage and other impacts of extreme weather.

I will also take action at the region to bring services our community needs, including improved transit, additional youth and seniors' services, another long-term care home, and more regional housing. My regional experience will allow me to work effectively with partners to achieve results and I will ensure Niagara-on-the-Lake has a strong voice at regional council and will work to protect our community from any threat of amalgamation.



Andrea Kaiser and daughter Madison Lepp.

ERWIN

WIENS

“Experienced leadership on day one.”



BIO

Born and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Erwin is the son of immigrant parents who came to Canada and built a life as tender fruit farmers. Growing up on the family farm instilled in him a strong work ethic, appreciation for agriculture and a commitment to serving his community. After earning a degree in Criminology from Carleton University, Erwin pursued his dream of becoming a police officer. He served 31 years with Peel Regional Police and Hamilton Police Service before retiring in 2020.

In 2003, Erwin and his wife, Dorothy, purchased their first farm on Line 9. He became actively involved with the Grape Growers of Ontario, serving on its board of directors and being honoured by his peers as Grape King in 2023.

Elected to town council in 2018, Erwin has served residents most recently as deputy lord mayor. He also represents Niagara-on-the-Lake on the Niagara Parks Commission. Erwin and Dorothy have raised four daughters and spent nearly four decades working together in farming, family and community service. They are long-standing members of Cornerstone Church, the Niagara Lions Club and the Legion.

A MESSAGE FROM ERWIN

I love our town. I love the farms and vineyards, the orchards and fields. I love our villages, our heritage, our river and our lake. But most of all, I love the people who call Niagara-on-the-Lake home.

This is not simply where I live, it is where I have raised my family. Where I have worked, served, volunteered and built a life.

My promise is pretty simple. I will work hard. Full-time and more. I will fight for this community and make sure Niagara-on-the-Lake has a strong voice at every level of government.

AUTHORIZED BY THE ERWIN WIENS CAMPAIGN

Top 3 Priorities

- **No to amalgamation:** None of the other issues matter if Niagara-on-the-Lake ceases to exist in an amalgamation. Ensure Niagara-on-the-Lake has a strong voice at every table. Protect local decision-making and local control.
- **Infrastructure and taxes:** Maintain current infrastructure, invest where the need is greatest, plan for the future, and make sure we receive value for every tax dollar.
- **Agriculture and balanced development:** Protect farmland and support farmers. Ensure development is balanced and appropriate to our community’s character, infrastructure capacity and long-term needs.

ACTION PLAN

Through the influence of the lord mayor’s office, my established relationships, and the collective voice of council, I will stand firmly for Niagara-on-the-Lake’s independence, ensuring our community has a strong voice at every table. Amalgamation is a hard NO!

Supported by the CAO, in consultation with council and the community, I will ensure residents’ tax dollars are respected through disciplined spending, responsible budgeting and accountable investment. Legal and consulting costs will be scrutinized as will be regional allocation of the tax burden to Niagara-on-the-lake. There will be a sharp focus on maintaining existing infrastructure, addressing priority needs, planning ahead and ensuring growth is supported by the infrastructure we have.

Protecting farmland from incompatible development, fragmentation and long-term loss, supporting farmers and strengthening irrigation and agricultural sustainability will be strategic priorities. This will be done in concert with broader town development that is supported by strong planning policies, respects Niagara-on-the-Lake’s heritage and character in each of the five unique settlement areas, reflects community input, matches infrastructure capacity, and supports a strong, resilient local economy.

Right: Erwin Wiens and his wife Dorothy Soo-Wiens



11 CANDIDATES FOR TOWN COUNCILLOR



ELECTION
2026

TIM BALASIUK



BIO

Niagara-on-the-Lake is more than where I live; it is the community that shaped who I am. I am a life-long resident, local business owner and town councillor seeking re-election for a second term. My wife, Michelle, was raised here and together we have built our lives and careers in Niagara-on-the-Lake, with our early years spent working in the local hospitality industry. My roots here span generations, with a family history connected to hospitality, agriculture and community service. My grandfather founded the Pillar and Post Hotel, my grandparents on the other side of my family were local farmers, and my great-grandmother dedicated many years to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Hospital, helping champion and fundraise for its expansion. I was raised with a strong understanding that community is something you contribute to, not simply something you belong to. For the past four years, I have brought a practical, respectful and independent approach to council, listening to residents, asking difficult questions and making decisions based on their merits and what I believe is right for our community.

Top 3 Priorities

- **Responsible growth:** Protect our neighbourhoods, agricultural lands and community character.
- **Infrastructure and fiscal responsibility:** Invest wisely in essential infrastructure while protecting taxpayers.
- **Heritage and quality of life:** Preserve our heritage, support our community and ensure residents have a voice.

ACTION PLAN

The next four years require thoughtful decisions that balance progress with protecting what makes Niagara-on-the-Lake exceptional. I will continue to advocate for responsible growth that respects our established neighbourhoods, agricultural lands, heritage and green spaces, while ensuring infrastructure capacity remains central to planning decisions. Investment in roads, water, wastewater and drainage must be prioritized through sound long-term planning, fiscal discipline and a clear focus on value for taxpayers. I will continue to champion our heritage and community character while supporting the local businesses and organizations that contribute to our quality of life. Equally important is ensuring residents have a meaningful voice in the decisions shaping their neighbourhoods and our town. With four years of council experience, I will continue bringing a practical, respectful and independent approach to the council table, asking difficult questions, considering every issue on its merits and making decisions with Niagara-on-the-Lake's long-term interests at heart.

GARY

BURROUGHS



BIO

Gary Burroughs has had the privilege of serving Niagara-on-the-Lake for more than 25 years as Lord Mayor, Regional Councillor, Regional Chair and, most recently, Town Councillor. A chartered accountant by profession, Gary also owned and operated the Oban Inn for 30 years, giving him firsthand experience running a local business, creating jobs and navigating the pressures of a tourism-based economy. Throughout his public service, Gary has worked to protect Niagara-on-the-Lake’s heritage, Greenbelt and agricultural lands, advance infrastructure and environmental initiatives and ensure the town has a strong voice at the region and beyond. He has also served on numerous committees and supported charitable, community, arts and cultural organizations throughout Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Top 3 Priorities

- **Responsible growth and heritage:** Fit the development to our community — don’t try to fit our community to the development.
- **Infrastructure and stormwater:** Growth should follow infrastructure — not outpace it.
- **Transparency and accountability:** Good government gives residents a voice — and holds elected officials accountable for their votes.

ACTION PLAN

PROTECT HERITAGE & MANAGE GROWTH RESPONSIBLY

Consistently apply the official plan and bylaws and scrutinize proposals requiring numerous variances. Strengthen contextual-design requirements so new development respects our streetscapes, scale and community character. Protect our heritage, agricultural lands and Greenbelt from inappropriate development. Consider infrastructure capacity before approving growth.

GET INFRASTRUCTURE & STORMWATER READY

Establish a clear, prioritized and funded infrastructure plan. Maintain four or five shovel-ready projects so NOTL is ready when provincial and federal funding becomes available. Pursue appropriate development contributions and outside funding. Prioritize stormwater, drainage and maintaining the infrastructure we already own.

STRENGTHEN TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Reinstate meaningful resident advisory committees and strengthen consultation, drawing on community expertise before making major decisions. Return to routine electronic recorded voting so residents can easily see how every councillor voted. Clearly explain major project costs, funding gaps and spending priorities. With fewer councillors and strong-mayor powers, ensure major decisions remain open, transparent and subject to meaningful council and public scrutiny.

AUTHORIZED BY GARY BURROUGHS

ADRIANA

CATER VIZZARI



BIO

I was born and raised in Niagara and moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake with my husband, Cory, after attending the University of Waterloo. We live in St. Davids, where we are raising our four children. I spent my career in our family business and in residential and commercial property management, with experience in human resources and accounting. For the past four years, I have served on NOTL council, the NOTL Public Library board and NOTL Hydro board, as well as town committees, including the selection committee and youth discretionary grant committee. I’m proud that children and families became a greater priority this council term, with increased attention to parks, recreation and programming. As a mom, I want to continue asking what young families need to stay, grow and put down roots here, while also ensuring that people who have built their lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake can continue to age here. I believe every resident, in every village and at every stage of life, deserves a voice at Council.

voteadriana.com
vizzari.adriana@gmail.com

Top 3 Priorities

- **Strong villages:** Invest in recreation, services and community spaces that bring people together and support families, seniors and residents of all ages.
- **Get the basics right:** Be responsible with taxpayers’ dollars while protecting what makes our community special — our five villages, heritage and agricultural lands.
- **Responsible growth:** Support appropriate growth that follows the Town’s plans and is matched by the infrastructure, services and amenities our community needs.

ACTION PLAN

I plan to continue doing what I have done for the past four years: listening to residents, being prepared and turning concerns into practical action. I believe good municipal government means doing the work — being informed, asking the right questions, understanding the facts and budget, and getting things done without the performance. My experience on Council has taught me how to work through complex issues, understand competing priorities and make thoughtful decisions. As a mom raising four children here, I also see firsthand how our parks, pools, libraries, recreation programs and community spaces are used — and where we need to do better. I want to keep working toward better connections between our villages, safer ways to walk and get around, and infrastructure that supports a strong, connected community. I’ll continue working constructively with staff and Council and advocating for provincial and federal funding where appropriate. Most importantly, I’ll keep asking questions, learning, looking at the facts, and planning for the long-term. NOTL is a special place and I want to help ensure it remains a community where residents of all ages can build a life and stay rooted in the community. Children, families, seniors and residents of all ages need to be part of the conversation about our future.

NICHOLAS COLANERI



BIO

I was born and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I grew up on Queenston Road and still live there. My family has always been in farming and construction. I build homes for a living. For 12 years I have run my own land development and custom home company. I love this town. For over a year and a half I have used that knowledge and experience to spend most of my evenings at the town meetings delegating against inappropriate developments. It started with 263 Concession 6, a commercial/industrial proposal on Greenbelt specialty crop agricultural land. The farmers had spoken. The neighbours had spoken. The agricultural committee had spoken. I stood up and asked why it was still being recommended for approval. It didn't end there. File after file since, with no seat, no pay and nothing to gain. Everyone here is worth listening to, expert or not, and that is what I have tried to do. People noticed, and enough of them asked me to run that no was no longer an answer. From the gallery, I could shed light. At the table, I can vote and act.

AUTHORIZED BY NICHOLAS COLANERI

Top 3 Priorities

- **Residents first**
- **Protect NOTL**
- **Controlled growth**

ACTION PLAN

Residents first: Every vote recorded and public. Hard questions asked and answered, not screened. Bring back public committees and set up working groups, so residents have a real voice before decisions are made. The same rules for everyone, no matter whose name is on the application. Safe streets for walking and cycling. Real answers on seniors, families, services, removing doubt. Look at where every dollar is and where it goes, bringing the value back to the public dollars.

Protect NOTL: Heritage, agriculture, and communities protected before anyone applies, not after. Rules that are actually enforced. Decisions about NOTL made in NOTL by NOTL. Using the policies that exist and creating new ones to protect residents and what makes NOTL home. Heritage stays heritage. Agriculture stays agriculture. Refusal stays refused. NOTL first.

Controlled growth: Every application has to meet the policies and more we already have. Every application has to suit the people who live here. Development fits the community, not the community fits the development. Everything proven before approval, not promised after. Not compromising. Every project leaving NOTL better for it not worse. Every project benefitting NOTL resident needs.

MARIA MAVRIDIS



BIO

Maria Mavridis is a Niagara-on-the-Lake councillor, local businesswoman, advocate, mother and longtime community volunteer. Raised in Old Town, Maria has also lived in Glendale, St. Davids and Virgil, giving her a strong understanding of the different communities that make up NOTL. She co-founded the NOTL Youth Collective and Anchor Niagara and has spent years supporting local NOTL charities and community initiatives. During her first term, Maria has served on the Niagara Regional Transit Commission, short-term rental committee, Chamber of Commerce, Tourism NOTL board, discretionary grants committee, tourism strategy committee, NOTL Library board and, in 2026, was appointed to the Destination Ontario board.

AUTHORIZED BY MARIA MAVRIDIS

Top 3 Priorities

- **Infrastructure and core services:** Prioritize roads, drainage, ditches, culverts, water and wastewater while planning responsibly for future needs.
- **Responsible growth and heritage:** Protect our heritage, agricultural lands and neighbourhood character while supporting thoughtful, sustainable growth.
- **A community for every generation:** Invest in recreation, parks, trails, housing options and community services for youth, families, seniors and everyone in between.

ACTION PLAN

My priority for the next four years is to finish the work we started while preparing NOTL for the future. I will continue advocating for investment in roads, drainage, culverts, water and wastewater infrastructure and for our fair share of regional, provincial and federal funding. I will support responsible development that respects our official plan, heritage, agriculture and neighbourhood character while recognizing the need for housing and a strong local economy. I will continue working to strengthen bylaw enforcement, support local businesses and improve transportation and connectivity between our communities. Above all, I will bring the same approach to council that I have throughout my first term: Do the research, ask the questions, listen to all residents and make decisions based on what is best for the entire community, objectively.

STEVE

MCGUINNESS



BIO

Steve is a retired chartered professional accountant (CPA) and the holder of an MBA degree from McMaster University. Steve has decades of executive experience in financial management with major corporations and “Big 4” professional service firms. He has a strong track record as a team player and analytical problem solver. Since retiring to Niagara Steve has served as a community organizer, founding the 800-member group Residents 4 A Better NOTL — a forum to advocate for positive, progressive change. He was a regular contributor to The Lake Report and served as a NOTL Residents’ Association sub-committee member. He has also served as a school advisory council president, a scout group leader, a junior achievement tutor and founded several Toastmasters clubs. Steve lives in Virgil with his husband Gary. He is a dad to two grown children, a proud grandfather and a pet parent to a nine year old yellow lab named Lucy.

Top 3 Priorities

- **Open the books:** Plain-language reporting so residents can see what a CPA sees before the council vote.
- **Protect neighbourhood character:** Growth that respects our heritage and infrastructure with developers paying their fair share.
- **Full-time commitment:** Retired with time to fully and independently devote to the council job.

ACTION PLAN

Open the books: Council’s job is to know where the money goes. I will push for plain-language reporting on every major spend and every reserve, so residents see what a CPA sees before decisions are made, not after. Growth must pay for growth: developers — not existing taxpayers — should carry the cost of servicing their projects.

Protect neighbourhood character: Development cannot outrun our infrastructure. Severe storms are the new reality; storm-water and sewer capacity must be fixed before more is built on top of it. New development must respect our heritage neighbourhoods and farmland and short-term rentals must be governed so our streets stay neighbourhoods.

A full-time councillor: I am retired. I will read every report, attend every meeting and return every call, deciding every issue on the facts, putting residents first before special interests.

AUTHORIZED BY STEVE MCGUINNESS

RICK MILLS



BIO

As third generation residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Cathy and I just recently celebrated our 46th wedding anniversary. Raised around the corner from one another, on both Castlereagh and Davy streets, we raised our two sons here in Old Town and Virgil. A life of service and volunteer work was modelled for us by our parents, in particular, my mom, Violet Mills, and Cathy’s dad, Nick Marino, both former citizens of the year. I worked all my teenage years as a lifeguard and swimming instructor at the Niagara swimming pool, coaching the Swim Club at St. David’s pool. My career took me to the thermal treating industry, as plant manager at H&S Heat Treating in nearby Port Robinson. My pastoral heart has kept me in service through the local congregation of Life Abundant Niagara here in NOTL, also serving in numerous positions on boards and committees for charitable organizations. My history of yesterdays, still living here today and the need for carefully thought out tomorrows are what bring me to run as a town councillor.

Top 3 Priorities

- **Responsible growth, maintaining green space, and affordability.**
- **Service delivery for town residents.**
- **Continual connection with residents, constructive communication and support of/with town staff.**

ACTION PLAN

It’s said if you’re on one side of the fence, you’re flying too low. I made the decision to serve as town councillor seeing myself not so much a politician, but rather a participant. Not always standing strongest on just one side of the fence, but striving to work as a whole. It won’t be perfect, but better together, with less division and more participation, promoting the use of respectful and accurately informed dialogue. I’ll work with residents and staff, bringing the experience of listening to concerns, ideas, and perspectives of others. My life history in this community, where I continue to live and serve, has led me to run for town counsellor where — if elected — I hope to carefully help in the shaping of our future as a town.

AUTHORIZED BY RICK MILLS

WESTON MILLER

“Our future shouldn’t just happen to us. I want residents to have a say in shaping it.”



BIO

Putting residents first is not what I say. It’s what I do.

As president of the Chautauqua Residents Association, I’ve worked alongside neighbours for five years to win safety and traffic calming measures, safeguard our tree canopy, preserve the Ryerson Park waterfront and press for a secondary plan to protect our distinctive character. I’m proud that Chautauqua, where I grew up and live with my wife, Mel, was named 2026 Neighbourhood of the Year.

On the board of the Niagara Foundation, I served as treasurer through the acquisition of the Wilderness, helping preserve heritage for future generations. I’m a board director of Royal Oak Community School and a long-standing Shaw Shivaree volunteer and 2026 committee chair. Twelve years ago, I established the Michelle Lezetc-Miller Character Award at Governor Simcoe Secondary School, honouring my late mother by recognizing a student who shows strength, positivity, and kindness in challenging times.

So, as a third-generation local, why am I running?

Studying political science at Trinity College, University of Toronto, taught me how decisions get made. But the past few years, I’ve seen who gets left out of them. With our culture, heritage and farmland at risk, I want to represent the community that raised me and help residents reclaim a role in how it grows.

A MESSAGE FROM WESTON

If you vote for me, what can you expect?

- An independent voice for all communities
- A champion for resident quality of life
- An advocate for transparency and strong ethics
- A defender of what makes this town home

Top 3 Priorities

- **Thoughtful development:** without sacrificing character, heritage, farmland and green space.
- **Transparency:** straight answers on every vote — and full accountability.
- **Your voice restored:** residents heard before decisions are made.

ACTION PLAN

Treat bylaws as rules, not suggestions

- Demand answers on stormwater, sewer capacity, parking, traffic and climate impact before development approvals
- Defend the official plan, support secondary plans
- Insist on consistent and fair zoning and bylaw enforcement

Make votes public

- Explain my votes, with reasons, after each meeting
- Call for easily accessible electronic records for all of council
- Limit closed-door sessions to the legal minimum

Listen first

- Restore resident advisory committees
- Consult resident associations across Niagara-on-the-Lake
- Seek resident input at the outset, not after-the-fact



Top right: Weston Miller and his wife Mel.

Bottom right: Weston Miller with his father Troy, left, and grandfather Roger, centre.



ANDREW
NIVEN

“I believe good leadership means being accessible, listening to residents, asking the right questions and doing the homework needed to make informed decisions. Residents deserve someone who takes the time to understand the issues and get the details right.”



BIO

I believe our best future is one we build together, while protecting the things that make Niagara-on-the-Lake special. With its rich history, agricultural roots, natural beauty and vibrant neighbourhoods, NOTL is unlike anywhere else. As we plan for the future, we need to protect what makes us unique.

Over the years, I’ve had the privilege of working with local businesses, supporting community initiatives and serving in leadership roles that have given me a broader understanding of our community. I’ve served as chair of the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL, and contributed through the tourism strategy committee, NOTL Museum board, NOTL Soccer board and many other local organizations.

Serving on council has reinforced my belief that good leadership starts with listening, asking thoughtful questions and making decisions based on facts, not politics. Every resident deserves to be heard, and every decision should consider its impact on our long-term future. My approach is straightforward: listen, weigh the facts and put our community first.

A MESSAGE FROM ANDREW

Niagara-on-the-Lake is a special place, and I believe our best future is one we build together. As a member of Council, I’ve tried to approach every decision by listening to residents, asking questions and weighing the facts, always keeping the long-term interests of our community in mind. There is important work ahead. I will continue to advocate for responsible growth, strong infrastructure and thoughtful financial decisions, while protecting our heritage, agricultural lands and the character of our neighbourhoods. I’m asking for your support so we can protect what makes NOTL special and build a strong future together.

AUTHORIZED BY ANDREW NIVEN

Top 3 Priorities

- **Responsible growth:** Protecting our character while planning for the future.
- **Strong infrastructure:** Addressing infrastructure challenges with practical, long-term solutions.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Prioritizing needs and making thoughtful investments.

ACTION PLAN

I will continue to advocate for responsible growth that respects our heritage, neighbourhoods and agricultural lands, infrastructure improvements that address our needs today and into the future and careful financial decisions that deliver value for the community. I believe in being accessible, asking the right questions and holding decisions to a high standard.

I’m asking for your support because there is important work ahead and I want to continue working alongside residents to protect our community’s character and build a strong future together.

Website: voteniven.com
Email: andrew@voteniven.com



Andrew Niven with his wife Cassie, son Owen and daughter Riley.

SANDRA O'CONNOR



BIO

I was born and raised in Niagara, where my grandparents farmed in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I attended Brock University, specializing in physical geography and urban planning. I worked in research for mainly scientific organizations (eg. government, university) and my own business. I have the skills to do the job of representing you. I have served you on council for six years and I believe in giving back to my community.

www.sandraoconnor.ca

www.facebook.com/sandraoconnornotl

Top 3 Priorities

- **1. Responsible growth**
- **2. Protect what matters**
- **3. Transparent. Accountable. Residents first**

ACTION PLAN

- Support development with infrastructure that protects neighbourhood character, and strengthens our community.
- Balance the growth needs of our Town with conservation of our cultural and natural heritage upon which our economy is based.
- Plan for variable densities across our urban areas in consideration of our heritage and environment.
- View Official Plan amendments as an exception to the rule, not as a norm.
- Complete/update secondary plans, and develop clear zoning by-laws to implement our OP objectives.
- Ensure that all plans are complementary e.g. OP, secondary, transportation, parks and recreation, tourism, etc.
- Advocate for holistic planning decisions, not piecemeal approvals
- Council needs to approve the infrastructure plans – not leave it for staff to approve at the site plan stage.
- Conserve our unique and extensive cultural heritage especially our National Historic District
- Maintain the boundary of the greenbelt and protect agricultural land
- Fully implement the NOTL Climate Change Adaptation Plan
- Complete the municipal natural assets management plan
- Oppose commercialization of agricultural land
- Support minimum cultivation requirements for wineries to ensure agricultural prominence
- Put residents first with open decision-making (record all votes), meaningful engagement (regular townhall meetings, re-establish a strong advisory committee structure). TRUST has been eroded and needs to be rebuilt with the community.

Proven leadership, proven record, proven integrity.

AUTHORIZED BY THE SANDRA O'CONNOR CAMPAIGN

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE / 2026

Your town. Your vote.

52.2%

of eligible voters **did not vote**
in NOTL's 2022 municipal election.



HOW MANY OF US VOTED?

2018

58.7%

Turnout fell **10.9 percentage points**.

2022

47.8%

66 votes

The gap between the last elected councillor
and the next candidate in 2022.

Go vote.

Monday, Oct. 26
10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

VOTE EARLY

Oct. 17, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
NOTL Community Centre
14 Anderson Lane

VOTE ONLINE

Until Oct. 25 at 8 p.m.
notl.com/elections
Online voting ends before election
day.

JENNIFER AJANDI



BIO

As a local candidate who grew up in St. Catharines and went to high school at Niagara District, Jennifer knows the communities well. She is a parent, an educator, researcher, and community advocate whose work is rooted in a longstanding commitment to equity, inclusion, and systemic transformation in education and social work. She brings over two decades of combined experience in academic teaching with a doctorate in education and equity. She has experience in governance, and community-based advocacy, with a focus on building inclusive structures that address inequities across institutions and communities. Dr. Ajandi was elected to serve a four-year term as a trustee with the District School Board of Niagara from 2014 to 2018, where she provided leadership on several key committees, including policy, special education advisory and student discipline. In this capacity, she advanced initiatives that prioritized student well-being, equitable access to education and systemic accountability. At the provincial level, she represented her board as a director with the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association, where she contributed to shaping education policy across Ontario through a lens of equity and social justice.

Top 3 Priorities

- **Smaller class sizes**
- **Community building and connections**
- **Mental health and well-being**

ACTION PLAN

Trustees hold an important link in the education system by representing their local communities’ interests and needs. I will advocate for stronger representation and communication within each school community. First, safe and caring schools need to be prioritized in order for students to learn. Equity and inclusion benefits our whole community and must be supported at every level in the system. Creating community within and outside of schools require smaller class sizes that prioritizes student learning and support. No one benefits from teachers and staff who are over worked or students who cannot get the kinds of supports they need in the classroom. Funding needs to be reallocated in order to look at education and the people within it in a holistic framework. Children and communities need to be connected to mental health resources, breakfast and food insecurity programs, and Education Assistants who can make sure all children get the quality education and emotional and social support they deserve. Increasing community supports can be done by utilizing our schools as community hubs once again and nurturing our community connections. Our communities should also play a role in voicing their concerns and opinions on how the budget is actually distributed.

AUTHORIZED BY THE JENNIFER AJANDI CAMPAIGN

2022 MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Where NOTL’s votes came from

Old Town and Virgil supplied nearly three-quarters of the valid votes for lord mayor.

HOME DISTRICT	SHARE OF TOWN-WIDE MAYORAL VOTE		VALID VOTES	ELIGIBLE VOTERS
Old Town		42.6%	3,227	5,920
Virgil		30.4%	2,301	4,777
St. Davids		17.0%	1,287	3,064
Queenston		5.3%	399	952
Glendale		4.8%	364	1,283

73%

of valid mayoral votes came from **Old Town and Virgil.**

7,578

valid votes for mayor across all five districts

WHAT THESE NUMBERS SHOW

Votes are assigned to the district where the voter lived, regardless of where or how they voted. Counts combine votes for all three mayoral candidates. They exclude ballots with no valid mayoral selection and are **not total ballots cast or overall voter turnout.**

Source: town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, 2022 Municipal Election Results by Poll. Percentages rounded and may not total 100 per cent.

ELECTION 2026: BY THE NUMBERS

The Lake Report

Here's what change looks like
in Niagara-on-the-Lake

11

candidates for town
council in 2026

13

in 2022 election

COUNCILLOR
POSITIONS

6

IN 2026

8

IN 2022

POPULATION

Pop. 2021

19,088

2016 17,511

9.0

% increase
between
2016 and
2021

614

Increase in the number
of private dwellings
from 2016 to 2021

10

Number of doctors in
town in 2022

.....

13

in 2026

PROVINCIAL INCREASE
IN POPULATION %
FROM 2016 TO 2021

5.8

NATIONAL AVERAGE OVER
SAME TIME PERIOD

5.2

%

CHARACTER LOST

IMMEASURABLE

26 OCTOBER: ELECTION DATE

A MESSAGE FROM THE NIAGARA FOUNDATION

Election Day isn't just the start
of another four-year cycle.

IT'S A TURNING POINT.

Council decisions shape everything from property taxes and flood prevention to heritage protection and responsible development.
So, what if you sit this one out?

Well, in 2022...

ONLY 47%
of eligible electors
cast a ballot.

Old Town 55%, Virgil 48%,
Queenston and St. Davids 42%,
Glendale 28%

TURNOUT
FELL 9%.

7,578 people selected a
mayoralty candidate,
down from 8,314 in 2018.

JUST 66
ballots determined
the final Council seat.

In 2018, the margin
was only 31.

Don't just vote. Vote strategically.

- **Strong-mayor powers demand a strong Council.**

Five members can override strong-mayor decisions.

- **Vote ONLY for councillors you trust.**

You may select up to six—but you *don't have to*.

When a seat can be decided by a handful of ballots, each additional choice could work against a preferred candidate.

- **If incumbents broke their commitments,** or new candidates didn't engage on local issues, did they earn your vote?

Status Quo or Change?

MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT ON OCTOBER 26



The Niagara Foundation—a charitable organization with a volunteer Board—has helped to champion and safeguard the Town's architectural, cultural and environmental integrity since 1962.

theniagarafoundation.com