



## Celebrate peaches with two festivals

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake will offer three days of peach-themed treats and all-ages fun from Friday to Sunday as two separate festivals take place.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce will host its 2025 Peach Festival on Friday, Aug. 8, and Saturday, Aug. 9.

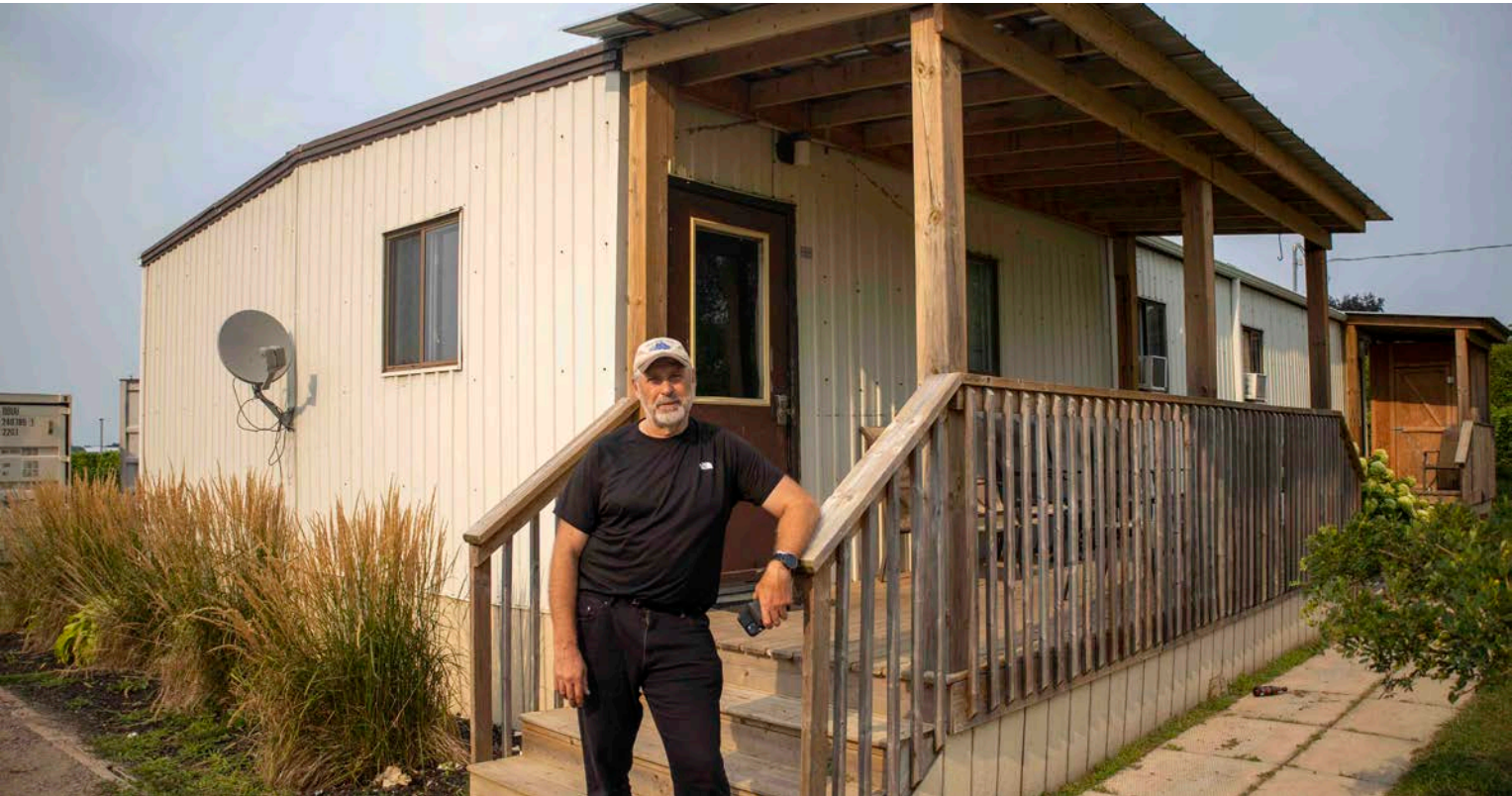
Events will begin in Simcoe Park on Friday and expand onto Queen Street on Saturday, where vendors will sell a variety of goods.

On Sunday, Aug. 10, St. Vincent de Paul Parish will host its own Peach Festival

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# Farmers deny abuse claims

## Employers say most farm workers are treated well and live in clean conditions



Farmer and Niagara-on-the-Lake councillor Erwin Wiens stands outside his farm's worker housing. The workers were not home at the time, but Wiens allowed The Lake Report to tour the interior. No photos were taken inside, pending the workers' permission. PAIGE SEBURN

Paige Seburn | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake farmers say they're proud of how they treat their workers — and frustrated by national reports that, they feel, don't reflect what's really happening on their farms.

In the wake of a cross-Canada survey detailing worker mistreatment and concerns over five proposed federal program changes, farmers point to their long-standing relationships with temporary foreign workers, strong housing standards, health care access and a system they say already works — and can be improved, if need be.

The Migrant Rights Network's report, released July 30, shared input from 514 migrant workers across Canada with an average of 6.2 years of experience in the country's temporary foreign worker programs.

It aimed to reflect how workers felt about the changes proposed by Employment and Social Development Canada, and, from its point of view, states that tied

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# First impressions of town's new official plan bring hope and concerns

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's latest draft of its new official plan is a solid starting point — one that has room for

refinement, said the councillors and taxpayer association leaders who spoke with The Lake Report.

This latest draft, now available for public review and feedback, marks a major milestone following six years of setbacks, after the province and the region rejected the previous draft.

While many admitted they haven't read through the 313-page document yet in detail (a redlined draft, with parts from the old draft crossed out in red), those who spoke with The Lake Report were fairly encouraged by what they'd seen at first glance and plan to dig in further.

Ardeth Staz, president of the Village Community Association, said the draft "tried to give something for everyone," which she expected from a comprehensive planning document.

"I wouldn't say I've read every page," Staz said. "But I did scan it."

Norm Arsenault, a director with the NOTL Residents Association, said his group was "quite pleased it was moving forward." His colleague, Steve Harda-

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# Residents call draft official plan ‘a good first step’

Continued from Front Page

ker of Glendale, called it a “good first step.”

Several residents who commented are affiliated with neighbourhood ratepayer groups, including the NOTL Residents Association, which had its first public meeting this spring.

“We are a means to look for a common ground,” said Hardaker, one of the association’s directors, referring to collaboration between different parts of town.

The draft divides the town into five broad areas: Virgil, Old Town, St. Davids, Queenston and Glendale.

Dan Segal, president of the St. Davids Ratepayers Association, said he saw nothing “obviously objectionable” in the draft, but said it is full of “generalities” and doesn’t have a clear vision for the development of St. Davids.

Coun. Andrew Niven, who called the first draft an “exciting and important milestone,” recommended the town include more specific goals and targets for the new policies.

“Personally, I’d like to see

more measurable targets, timelines, and accountability mechanisms built into the final plan,” he said.

“These elements will be key to ensuring that the policies we put in place translate into real, meaningful outcomes.”

“We’re very concerned that people on town council view Glendale as a means to an end of meeting provincially imposed intensification policies.”

STEVE HARDAKER  
GLENDALE RESIDENT

Coun. Sandra O’Connor said she hadn’t reviewed all the changes, particularly the sections on the environment — a key concern of hers as a member of the environmental advisory committee.

While residents raised a range of concerns, a common theme was the desire

to preserve low-density development. Hardaker, for instance, opposed high-rises in Glendale.

“We’re very concerned that people on town council view Glendale as a means to an end of meeting provincially imposed intensification policies,” he said.

“Why should we be any different from the other settlement areas of NOTL in terms of intensification?”

Staz also expressed concern about potential changes to zoning policies.

“We hope they will not make decisions that rezone at the drop of a hat,” she said. “Or change policies so a developer can put up a big motel or a very tall apartment building somewhere.”

The town aims to finalize a revised draft by October and submit it to the province by Nov. 1.

Public feedback will be gathered through open houses and a statutory public meeting in September and October.

Councillors said community input will be key to shaping the final version.

“Council’s role: to



NOTL Residents Association board member Norm Arsenault said he was “quite pleased” the official plan was moving forward. The plan is looking to be finalized in October and submitted to the province by Nov. 1. DAN SMEENK

ensure that the residents and advisory committees’ comments are duly considered and to make the best decision for the town,” said O’Connor.

Once the approved plan is finalized, residents said it’s important the town follows through on the groundwork it laid out.

“We hope that they stick to the plan,” said Staz.

Kirsten McCauley, director of community and development services and a key contributor to the plan, was unavailable for comment due to vacation. Chief administrative officer Nick Ruller was also on vacation and did not comment.

The official plan sets five-year guidelines for the town’s approach to development, environment, transit, sewage, wastewater and other municipal issues.

Residents can view the draft and provide feedback at [jointheconversationnotl.org/officialplan](http://jointheconversationnotl.org/officialplan).

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## Moore remains in custody in Muskoka boating case

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake native Richard Alan Moore, charged in a Muskoka boating collision that left a co-worker with serious injuries, was remanded in custody again on Tuesday after a brief court appearance in Bracebridge.

Moore, 39, who works with GGS Niagara Landscaping Inc. in Niagara Falls, faces several charges in the July 19 incident that hurt co-worker Austin Anderson during a weekend outing on Skeleton Lake in Muskoka.

He has been charged with impaired operation causing bodily harm, refusing to provide a breath sample, failing to stop at an accident causing bodily harm and failing to comply with a release order.

The former NOTL volunteer firefighter is scheduled to appear in court again on Thursday, Aug. 7, for a possible bail hearing. His case was delayed Tuesday because he had not yet



Richard Moore.

retained a lawyer.

Moore, who grew up in NOTL but now lives in Niagara Falls, appeared in court by video link from the Central North Correctional Centre in Penetanguishene, Ont.

Anderson is being treated for his injuries at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. He was in the water at Skeleton Lake when he was struck by a boat.

He has undergone several surgeries and his family is hopeful that he can make a full recovery.

Ontario Provincial Police investigators last week issued a call for more witnesses to come forward and

also said they are seeking video footage that might help in their investigation.

The Bracebridge incident is the just latest legal problem Moore is facing.

In June, he pleaded guilty to reckless driving in the death of 84-year-old Niagara-on-the-Lake cyclist Nestor Chemerika.

Moore left the scene after he struck down the senior while driving along East and West Line in July 2023. Chemerika died of his injuries 12 days later.

A sentencing date in that case has not yet been set.

Moore, who was wearing a "volunteer fire department" T-shirt on the evening that Chemerika was hit, was a volunteer with the NOTL Fire Department for a few years.

He was forced to resign about six years ago over his attendance and availability to answer emergency calls.

Meanwhile, Anderson's family launched a GoFundMe campaign to help raise \$25,000 to support him in his recovery.

The largest single dona-

tion to the campaign is \$3,600, from GGS Niagara.

Anderson is from Keswick, near Lake Simcoe, but about a year ago, he and his family moved to Welland, his cousin Steve Anderson told The Lake Report.

Relatives, including his parents, Erin and Brennan Anderson, have been staying in Toronto to be near him.

Austin Anderson and Moore, who has worked as a contractor specializing in concrete driveway installations, both were employed by GGS Niagara Landscaping.

While company owner Graham Boaretti has confirmed that Anderson is an employee, he declined to say more or to speak about Moore, noting, "We're letting the investigators do their work."

In a Facebook posting, Boaretti urged people to help the family and described Anderson as "one of my best friends."

The fund has raised about \$21,000 so far.

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

## Two peach festivals to take over town this weekend

*Continued from Front Page*

on its church grounds.

The highlight of the weekend is the wide range of peach-flavoured treats available at both events.

The Chamber of Commerce festival will also feature a peach pie contest. Bakers must submit their entries by 11 a.m. Saturday, when they will be judged by "local celebrity judges," including Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, in front of the Court House.

"I think last year we had about 10 different pies," said Emelyn Williams, manager of events at the NOTL Chamber of Commerce. "So hopefully we have around the same number of pies this year."

St. Vincent de Paul's festival will also be filled with peach products for sale.

"We're selling everything peach," said Sharyn Choules, co-chair of the parish festival with her husband, Terry.

Offerings include peach pie, peach sundaes, peach crepes and peach lemonade. Proceeds from sales will support the parish.

The Chamber of Commerce event will also feature live music, a kids' zone, an antique tractor display and a virtual reality experience.

The parish festival will include live music, a barbecue and games such as Jenga, cornhole and a ladder toss game.

Williams said the Chamber is working with the Farmworker Hub for the first time this year to reflect the seasonal importance of peaches and the work of local agricultural workers.

Choules says the parish has hosted the festival for 36 years. It began as an event for churchgoers and expanded into a three-day celebration in partnership with the town and the Chamber of Commerce.

"St. Vincent de Paul was definitely the owner of the peach festival, the creator of the peach festival, and they're still going on to this day," said Williams.

"We do collaborate and share resources with them, so I feel like it's a pretty good partnership."

Last year, Williams said their festival drew an estimated 15,000 attendees last year, while the Chouleses said the church estimated they had 2,000 people. The Chouleses said their event relies on the help of 100 volunteers from the parish.

Both events continue to be driven by strong community support.

"People come back year after year to the festival partly because of the peaches," said Williams.

"We definitely have this festival to honour the fruit and to honour the agricultural sector."

The Chamber of Commerce Peach Festival runs from noon to 9 p.m. on Friday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday.

The St. Vincent de Paul Parish Festival takes place from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Sunday.

The Chamber recommends parking at Fort George and taking the free two-minute shuttle to the old Court House, located at the centre of the festival.

Both events are free to attend.



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# Farmers say bad actors are the exception, not norm

*Continued from Front Page*

permits, poor housing, wage deductions, health care barriers and limited transportation coverage all enable exploitation.

The coalition consulted workers from the four streams within the program, but each stream has its own regulations, says William George, labour section chair of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association.

Most farmers in NOTL — including all those interviewed for this story — operate under the seasonal agricultural worker program, says George, a grape grower in the Beamsville area.

"A gold standard," he said, "and a program that should be modelled after, not discarded."

"If it's not broken, why try to fix it?" he said. "Government wants to streamline stuff, and we're just working through that process."

George and his committee commented on the federal discussion papers that were distributed to groups in May 2024.

"I'm one of the lead people that's been involved," he said. "Trying to look at how to make the program better for everybody involved — not worse."

He said it will likely be a year or two before the consultation process reaches any conclusions, so the coalition is "drawing conclusions before the process is even half over."

"It's certainly not, in my view, the right time to do it," he said about the report.

"Like if we're having big turnovers, then I can understand it. But that's not the case."

George said federal proposals weren't triggered by reports like the UN's, as he said some have claimed — they were already underway and driven by administrative efficiency.

"(The coalition) is painting a pretty negative picture," he said. "Cherry picking certain facts that aren't really being considered."

"I'm not saying they're wrong on every occasion, but some of the stuff I'm seeing, I know was wrong," he said.

At Glenlake Orchards and Vineyards, NOTL resident Kevin Buis's farm, workers drink the same water he and his family does, so the photos provided by Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, which The Lake Report ran in last week's



Clean, commercial-style kitchen used by migrant workers at Glenlake Orchards and Vineyards, where owner Kevin Buis says housing meets inspection standards and some workers have returned for decades. PAIGE SEBURN

edition, left him confused.

The Migrant Workers Alliance for Change didn't disclose the specific locations of the photos it supplied, only the provinces in which they were taken.

Buis said the program is highly regulated, turnover is low and occasional off days are normal — but he's never seen conditions like those in the photos or had to confront another farmer over mistreatment.

It's also not what happens at his farm, where some workers have returned to work for 20 years, he said.

"I had a couple of them say to me, 'Why don't you guys plant more fruit? Because we like working for you,'" he said.

Occasional off days are normal in any workforce, Buis said, but he's never seen conditions like those shown in the photos, nor had to confront another farmer over mistreatment.

"The program is highly regulated," he said, adding that turnover is not high.

Farmer and Coun. Erwin Wiens has not witnessed anything like that either, calling the photos "frivolous and unsubstantiated."

"This would never have passed any housing inspection," he said.

At Erwin Wiens Vineyards Ltd., workers have a car, internet, air conditioning and their own rooms, said Wiens. There's no on-site laundry due to a lack of city water, but he provides access off-site, sticking to contract.

Wiens wants surveys to focus on facts, not push an agenda. He questioned whether that was the coalition's intent.

"A survey is not meant to presuppose the answer," said Wiens.

People will naturally say yes to certain questions, but he said that doesn't mean the situation is unfair.

"I didn't see anything innocuous in that white paper that I disagreed with, in the sense that, how are we going to move things in a different direction if we want to?" he said.

**“(The coalition) is painting a pretty negative picture ... Cherry picking certain facts that aren't really being considered.”**

WILLIAM GEORGE  
GRAPE GROWER

The seasonal agricultural worker program, as it is now, is great, Wiens said.

**Transfers possible with or without mistreatment claims**

George said the program was never intended as a pathway to permanent residency — it's to bring workers to Canada seasonally, not for immigration. Most workers he speaks with, he said, don't want to live in Canada permanently.

While work permits are tied to specific farms, George said protections exist for workers who want to leave.

Those facing mistreatment can apply for an open work permit for vulnerable workers and be moved "as soon they possibly can."

"I think there was quite a few individuals that applied for that last year," he said.

George understands why some workers might worry about being labelled a "problem," but said he believes the system allows

them to safely transfer regardless of what an employer says.

Even without citing mistreatment, workers can request a transfer through their liaison officer and be moved to another farm, if available, like "if they don't really like picking strawberries," he said.

**Deductions: pushback on 'doom and gloom' framing**

Proposed guidelines could allow employers to deduct up to \$12,892 a year — or 0.5 to 30 per cent of a worker's gross monthly income — for housing costs.

"We're not trying to make the workers make any less than they are currently making: full stop," said George.

"I don't think what (the coalition) presented was balanced at all," he said. "There's two ends of the spectrum and they're trying to take everybody to the doom and gloom."

He acknowledged deduction figures mentioned in the papers, but said they were part of a range — with the other end maintaining the current system, which "for most of the programs, is zero housing deductions, other than a very minor \$2 or \$3 a day that the guys pay for incidentals."

If deductions were ever introduced, wages would likely increase to offset the cost, he said: "It's not a one-sided thing."

While the job isn't meant to support workers year-round, George said wages still go a long way in supporting their families.

Wiens supports the system as it is now and said it's important to understand "the small margins of agriculture."

He added that, in Canada, housing is considered "affordable" if it costs less than

30 per cent of a household's income before taxes.

It's fair, he said, what workers currently pay for housing with amenities like air conditioning, internet, utilities and transportation — all of which he said he provides — especially since it costs farmers more to offer them.

**Farms must pass inspection**

The coalition raised concerns about poor living conditions, but George, Buis and Wiens all said their worker housing meets high standards and wouldn't raise any concerns.

"They're putting photos out there that, I can't see that happening, at least for sure the brown water one," said George. "Our houses are inspected twice a year." If that's happening it should be reported, George said — "and it will be corrected."

Buis said farms must pass a housing inspection within eight months before applying for workers.

While farmers can't control the heat, Wiens said they receive regular updates and safety guidance to protect workers during extreme temperatures.

**Full OHIP, no barriers, say growers**

Workers in Ontario receive full OHIP coverage as soon as they arrive, George said, unlike in some other provinces where employers might have to provide private insurance.

"When (the coalition) says there's no health care, I'd like to know where that's happening," said Wiens.

The Migrant Rights Network says its survey indicates that workers want coverage from day one on the job, paid sick days, safe and independent access to

services and support for workers and their dependents back home.

Wiens rejected coalition claims that farmers block access to health care through interference and a lack of immediate coverage upon arrival. "Who would stop anybody from getting health care?" he said.

"They're saying things without any evidence," he said, pointing to the Farmworkers Hub, which has a nurse practitioner to support migrant workers on Sundays.

"They also have the clinic hours," he said.

Buis said his workers have no issue getting health care when needed.

"Wherever they got to go, we encourage them to get it done while they're here working producing food for Canadians," said Buis. "We encourage them to use our health care system."

"My guys go to the doctor all the time," he said. "We got them driver's licenses and both houses have minivans."

Buis said he respects their privacy, such as when he's asked to take one of his 14 workers in for a specialized test.

**Travel isn't free, but it's fair: farmers**

The coalition said proposed transportation options stop short of requiring full employer-paid travel and overlook that workers still cover flights, transit, food and lodging en route.

But George said travel costs are currently shared, with workers typically covering one-way airfare and employers covering the return trip.

"Any job you take, you're going to have to pay some costs," he said.

George said the goal is for workers to come out ahead, but farms can't operate without workers covering some costs as well.

"They're coming here for a reason," he said. "It's good for them."

Wiens said the program has long benefited both Canada and developing countries and warned against efforts to undermine it for personal agendas.

He said bad actors are the exception, but their actions unfairly reflect on the broader farming community — especially in a place like NOTL, where agriculture is central.

"(Migrant workers) are amazing employees — and they're happy to be here," he said.

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# NOTL missing from ‘Find a Doctor’ tool, highlights lack of family doctors in town

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara Region’s new online tool is meant to help residents find a family doctor close to home — but in Niagara-on-the-Lake, there aren’t any listings.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said the town is “fairly well served,” but one resident is not so sure.

The region has launched “Find a Doctor,” a webpage that aims “to help Niagara residents connect with local physicians currently accepting new patients,” said Jill Croteau, manager of the region’s physician recruitment program, in an email to The Lake Report.

The region said there are more than two dozen family doctors available in Niagara, but zero in NOTL, despite the town promoting it in a July 29 news release.

As of July, the town has 13 family physicians and 11,957 residents are enrolled with one, said the town’s communications co-ordinator, Marah Minor.

Zalepa said the town promoted the new tool to help residents connect with doctors in nearby communities, adding it’s not unusual for Niagara residents to seek care outside their municipality — he himself once had a doctor in St. Catharines.

“I think that it’s being looked at the wrong way,” he said. “I don’t think doctor availability is exclusive to borders.”

**Doctors ‘one of the most valuable’ parts of a community, says longtime resident**

For longtime resident Ron Simkus, the tool highlights a deeper issue: NOTL simply doesn’t have enough doctors.

“(A doctor) is almost like one of the most valuable aspects you have that anchors



Ron Simkus says it took two years on a waiting list before he found a local family physician. PAIGE SEBURN

you to this community,” he said.

“For seniors, in particular, that’s a really big deal.”

When Simkus moved to town in 2010, he sat on a local waiting list for a doctor for two years before securing the one he has today at the Village Medical Centre.

Today, there’s not even a waiting list due to demand, he said.

As a director with the NOTL Residents Association, he said the group plans to organize its 70 volunteers into teams focused on specialized issues, with health care and wellness being one group that’s already forming.

Croteau said that although there are no listings in NOTL, residents can apply to any doctor listed in the region, regardless of location.

“Physician listings are submitted voluntarily by local practices and are updated regularly in collaboration with our health care partners,” she said.

“We continue to work closely with clinics across the region.”

**Region works to recruit more doctors for NOTL, Niagara**

Niagara has played a key role in bringing doctors to NOTL and replacing former ones, she said, through its long-standing, active partnership with the Niagara North Family Health Team.

“The region has supported the successful placement and

transition of most of the physicians currently practicing at the two sites in Niagara-on-the-Lake,” she said.

The region is also working to recruit a new doctor to join the Virgil health care team at 1882 Niagara Stone Rd. and will announce when a doctor has been found.

Zalepa also said recruitment efforts are ongoing in the region and in NOTL.

Just over a month ago, Zalepa said, he met with more than 30 resident doctors (doctors in training) in Niagara through an event hosted in town in partnership with Niagara Region’s recruitment team.

“I brought a message that says, ‘Hey, Niagara Region is really excited to have you here and we’re hoping that when you’re done your residency, you choose Niagara as your home — and maybe Niagara-on-the-Lake.’”

Zalepa also pointed to an example of a young couple, both doctors, with two children who had just relocated to NOTL. He said he met them by chance while attending the Virgil Stampede this spring and sees their move as a hopeful sign for residents.

**Tourism seems to take priority over basic services: Simkus**

Simkus said attention paid to better access to health care stands in stark contrast to what’s given to tourism.

Provincial ministers routinely announce new initiatives to draw more visitors, he said — but there’s silence when it comes to improving basic services for residents.

“You don’t see any big announcements from the Ministry of Health saying, ‘Well, we’re going to upgrade access to medical facilities in Niagara-on-the-Lake,’” said Simkus.

He acknowledged that the tool is, in fact, helpful — he said if he didn’t already have a doctor, he would use it too. Luckily, Simkus said, he has a young doctor, as there’s no clear pathway for patients when their physician retires: “You lose your doctor, you start from square one again.”

“You’d think, even, (the town) would say something — the minimum — you know, if vacancies appear, NOTL will notify people, right?” he said.

Rising commercial development, a surge in short-term rentals and the erosion of essential services has left Simkus fearing he lives in a town no longer being built for the people living there — “a facade of an old heritage town,” he said.

“If you look around, everything is starting to increase in commercial activity here — very little in the way of institutional support.”

Minor said “supporting physician recruitment” is a “priority” in the town’s official plan.

“The town values the health and well-being of the community and sees itself as a supportive partner in improving access to primary care,” she said, adding it’s committed to “helping foster solutions that benefit residents.”

The “Find a Doctor” tool can be found at [niagararegion.ca/health/find-a-doctor.aspx](http://niagararegion.ca/health/find-a-doctor.aspx).

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

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# The Herc makes a pitstop at Niagara airport



Niagara-on-the-Lake got another visit this year from a Royal Canadian Air Force CC-130 Hercules airplane. The plane landed on the tarmac at the Niagara District Airport on July 29, a quick stop to refuel during a training run. The #602 Herc plane paid a visit to the Niagara District Airport back in May to refuel when pilots were conducting flight rescue training over Lake Ontario. The plane that landed last Tuesday was the #603. This airplane model is the CC-130J Hercules, used for a wide range of missions, including transporting troops, tactical airlift, search and rescue and training, according to the Government of Canada’s website.



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Blacksmith David Brandow of Firesword Forge demonstrates his craft while Trent Colyn, 7, looks on during Monday's heritage festival. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## Past comes to life at heritage fest

The Past is Present Heritage Festival drew hundreds to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum Monday for a free, family-friendly celebration of history. Guests explored live blacksmithing, historical fencing, live music, and re-enactments — including one unit portraying Canadians who fought for the Americans in the War of 1812. Visitors young and old were captivated, with highlights including handmade “gold” rings and displays of muskets and swords. The event, part of the museum’s fundraising efforts, aimed to support future programming and expansion. “It’s just a great day for the community,” said museum staffer Amy Klassen. Admission was free, and curiosity was plentiful.

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# Inniskillin celebrates 50 years with salute to the past

Jill Troyer  
The Lake Report

Emotions bubbled close to the surface for many who gathered to celebrate Inniskillin's 50th anniversary last Thursday. There were lots of smiles and a few tears.

The winery was founded in 1975 by Donald Ziraldo and Karl Kaiser, and it stands today as a proud pioneer of the Canadian wine industry.

Donald Ziraldo did not attend the event. Karl Kaiser passed away in 2017. His daughters, Andrea and Magdalena Kaiser, were there.

"I was there from the very start, along with my sister and brother. We were working at the winery when I was a young teen, giving tours before visitors even knew what a winery tour was. Back then, we just called it the winery. It was that simple and that personal," recalled Magdalena Kaiser, her sister Andrea by her side.



Arterra president and CEO John Boynton addresses the crowd at the celebration at Inniskillin. JILL TROYER

"As I stand here today, 50 years later, I am struck by something powerful. What we are living now, at this moment, in this industry, is exactly the vision that Karl and Donald believed in for Niagara. They saw potential where others didn't," she said.

"They believed that Niagara could produce wines of quality and character, wines that could stand with the best in the world. They set out to prove it, and they did."

Kaiser finished her remarks with a toast.

"Today, I'm incredibly, incredibly proud to raise a glass with my family and with all of you to celebrate not only what Karl and Donald started, but what continues to grow from it. I have to believe that Karl is looking down and cheering us on, with his big smile. Cheers to the incredible past and brilliant future of Canadian wine."

Debi Pratt was also at the heart of Inniskillin from

the early days, as a brilliant ambassador who educated customers and knew how to persuade the press to pay attention to what was happening at Inniskillin.

"It's a very emotional day for many of us who have our roots here. We honour, of course, Donald and Karl, whose vision, talents and tenacity created Inniskillin. They made it look easy to the outside world, but it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy to be the underdog and have so many doubting you," said Pratt.

"They both knew the importance of the team who built and believed in them and wanted Inniskillin to succeed. We did succeed because collectively, we all did it together. We worked hard. It was endless, and it was frustrating at times, but we survived, as we see today."

She reminded everyone of one of her favourite quotes, from Don Hewitt, the late producer of 60 Minutes,

who said, "You need to have a foot in the past to understand the present. Past milestones inspire future milestones."

Inniskillin is owned by Arterra Wines, whose president and CEO, John Boynton, was on hand to address the future direction of the iconic winery.

"Fifty years is a milestone. We carry the legacy, and more importantly, I believe it's going to be a turning point. This is going to be the start of a new era, shaped in creativity, ambition and our global perspective," he said.

"The world of wine is evolving. Everybody knows this and Inniskillin is leading the way. Our goal now is to be a definitive premium wine brand."

Boynton outlined four priorities.

The first, he said, is to put more Inniskillin wines on more shelves, from the LCBO and Costco to international destinations.

The second, to enhance hospitality and experiences at the winery.

The third, to focus on operational excellence and sustainability.

The fourth priority he described as "premiumization and innovation."



"Over the next three years, we're embarking on an ambitious journey to premiumize Inniskillin in every way, from our wines to our entire brand experience. We're rolling out refreshed packaging across all of our table wines, reflecting the premium quality inside every bottle," Boynton said.

"Later this year, we're excited to announce that we're launching significant luxury and ultra-luxury products over the next three years that will showcase the best of our Canadian terroir."

The last words went to Boynton.

"Here's to legacy. Here's to vision. Here's to Inniskillin. The best is yet to come."

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# NOTL players tee it up in pursuit of Legends Cup

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Nearly two dozen men over 80 turned out to contest the prestigious Legends Cup title on Tuesday at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club.

The nine-hole Woofs league event determines the top octogenarian player based on net score — the player’s regular total score, minus their nine-hole handicap.

The winner from among the 21 participants won’t be revealed until this Sunday afternoon, as part of the club’s 150th year celebrations during its annual championship weekend.

Meanwhile, in Tuesday’s regular Woofs league play, Mike Eagen was top dog with 39 and Ken Willms was closest to the pin on #4. Darryl Fry won the hidden hole by retrogression, with a par on #5.

This Saturday and Sunday, men and women in a



Some of the 21 competitors for the Legends Cup gathered for a group photo prior to Tuesday’s tournament at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club. The winner of the competition, for men over 80, will be announced on Sunday during the club’s annual championship weekend. DARREN SMITH

variety of categories will compete in a 36-hole tourney to determine the club’s top shooters.

As always, the weekend promises some excellent golf as players test their skills against one another — and the course.

On the women’s side, it appears that Carroll Baker is rounding into fine form

just in time for the championships.

On Tuesday in the 18-hole women’s league, she was the low gross and low net winner, with a regular score of 85 and net of 68. She also was among those needing the fewest putts on their round, needing just 32.

Other winners: Diana Dimmer (second low gross

with 88), followed by Martha Cruikshank (93), Maria Townley (94) and Sue Sherk (95).

In low net, Dimmer and Townley had 71, Robin Foster 72, and Sue Gagne and Sherk finished at 73.

Townley was the top putter, with only 29 putts, followed by Sharron Marlow and Cruikshank (31).

Carolyn Porter was closest to the pin on #4 and birdies were recorded by Marlow (#2), Gagne (#3) and Barbara Hastings with two, on #7 and #13.

In Tuesday’s nine-hole women’s league, Maureen Dickson’s 50 was the best gross score, followed by Joan Maida (51) and Judy Cardiff, Janice White and

Penny Green (52). Maida had the best net score (36), with Carolyn Cochrane at 38 and Barb Werner and White at 39. Jim McMacken led the way in the weekly Thursday men’s league competition. He shot a 1-under 35 to edge James Grigjanis-Meusel by one shot. Ken Burr, with 30, and Nick Miller, with 31, had the top net scores.

Other prize winners were: Greg Keldson (longest putt on #2), Dean McCann (longest drive on #3), Larry Mantle (closest to the pin on #4) and James O’Connor (closest to the pin on #9).

Gross skins, all for birdies, went to McMacken (#1), Dan Regan (#2) and Patrick Craig (#7).

In the weekly putting contest, Ward Simpson showed off his flat-stick prowess, sinking his effort from about 29 feet and collecting a cool \$600 in the process.

NEW MEMBER

# BREAKFAST Meeting

Thinking about becoming a member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce? We'd love to meet you!

You're invited to attend our upcoming New Member Breakfast — a casual and informative event where you can learn more about the Chamber, what we do, and how we support local businesses like yours.

Come meet the Board of Directors, the team, connect with current members, and discover how joining the Chamber can benefit your business.

**Date:** Wednesday, September 10, 2025

**Time:** 8:00 AM – 9:30 AM

**Location:** The Barn, Pillar & Post, 48 John St., NOTL  
(Parking is free; enter through the garden across from the hotel's main doors)

Scan the QR code below to register before September 5.

**Have a fabulous productive week!**

For more information regarding membership, please reach out to Stacey Mulholland, Membership Officer at [stacey@niagaraonthelake.com](mailto:stacey@niagaraonthelake.com) or call 289-547-7556.



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# Entire cast shines in Shaw presentation of ‘Gnit’

**GNIT**  
\*\*\*\*\*  
(out of five)

*Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre, 2 hours 30 minutes, one intermission, ends Oct. 4. Written by Will Eno. Directed by Tim Carroll.*

Penny-Lynn Cookson  
Special to The Lake Report

Do we ever really know ourselves? Does the face in the mirror ask, “Who are you? Really ...”

Peter Gnit, (pronounced Guh-nit, due to a typo that was never changed), is a lazy, procrastinating lad with dreams of adventure, escaping home, poverty and a dysfunctional relationship with his mother.

The world beckons and the intriguing, award-winning American playwright, Will Eno, takes us on Peter’s wild wondrous and often calamitous road trip of mishaps, windfalls, happenstance and loss. And what a

rollicking ride.

For those who love wordplay, fantasy, the unexpected and unpredictable, director Tim Carroll and his six actors deliver. They give energy, believability, humour and superb acting chops to 36 different roles plus lightning flash changes of costume.

“Gnit” is based on the famed Henrik Ibsen play, “Per Gynt,” inspired by Norwegian folk tales and Ibsen’s own family. It was first published in Denmark in 1867.

Ibsen’s friendship with the equally famous Norwegian composer, Edvard Grieg, produced Grieg’s “Peer Gynt,” 22 pieces of incidental music composed for Ibsen’s revised play, which opened in Oslo in 1876 to great acclaim.

As Ibsen upended conventional drama of the 19th century, so Eno in the 21st century takes surprising twists of the surreal and tough reality. In sharp



Gabriella Sundar Singh as Anitra and Qasim Khan as Peter in “Gnit,” on now at Shaw Festival. MICHAEL COOPER

turns of undefined time and space, the exotic and mundane, consciousness and the unconscious, the actors convince with hilarity and deadly seriousness.

Nehassaiu DeGannes, as Peter’s dying mother, exudes the sheer fatigue of her love yet a disappointed

liant as Town, a whirling dervish of movement and tongues as he voices the many recognizable dissenting and arguing opinions of every town council and citizen.

Patrick Galligan, ever an excellent character actor, remains totally convincing in the many roles demanded of him in this production.

Peter’s frequent escapades with women, played gamely by Gabriella Sundar Singh, result in abandonment, kidnapping, confrontation and an inability to commit.

Julia Course is superb in her roles as Solvay, the ever-loving woman left behind yet finding solace in one place. She also scores as a worldly fast-talking auctioneer and brings many laughs as a bored bartender who has heard it all before.

The costumes and set designed by Hanne Loosen are minimalist, imaginative and effective. Simple blocks of wood are moved around by the actors.

They become whatever is required: a bed, a bar, a chair, a dwelling. Rods suspended from the ceiling release whatever is required for a scene: flowers at a wedding, smoke, mist and amusingly at the mention of the desert: sand.

There is no need to know the original “Peer Gynt” to understand “Gnit.” It has a sense of wonder, of honesty, of heartbreak and humour at the same time.

The eternal search of “Why am I here?” is examined by Eno in a context of how we can discover ourselves in many people. We might ask if this is possible in a time of “selfies?”

Despite the absurdity of life and perhaps unreached dreams, our aspirations remain, and we can still find magic in the power of language and theatre.

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



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**Contributed by Patty Garriock**

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Out on the water

Photographer Dave Van de Laar captured this striking image of Andrew Soulliere of Fonthill paddleboarding on Lake Ontario at sunset. A kaleidoscope of purples, blues, oranges and yellows lit up the sky, their colours mirrored in the calm surface of the lake.

Opinion

Sorry, boss: Theatre design still sucks



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner  
Columnist

Hello? Are we still here?  
Well, it’s a relief to see you. After last week’s edition of The Lake Report, it seemed dead-certain this column would be spiked. Deep-sixed. Snuffed.  
Would Mr. Editor do to this scribe what Trump just did to the poor woman who counts U.S. jobs? Off with her head!  
After all, the paper has gone all-in for the mega development the Shaw folks plan for the heart of Old Town.  
It embraces the size, the massing, the demolitions, the height, the truck bays, the big-box architecture, the gobbling-up of a residential street and the three or more years of construction chaos involved. Bring it on. Shaw good. Critics wrong.  
The last fanboy edition delivered a positive front-page story, a half-page from Shaw Festival execs justifying the Royal George redo, two pictures of the guy who will be building it (he owns a slice of this publication) and an editorial suggesting

I’m out to lunch. But still, all is not good. There are concerns, fears and anger.  
“Allowing this heritage-designated building to be essentially demolished and replaced with a modern one will set a precedent for other neighbouring (or not) historical buildings to also be demolished by developers eager to replace the existing NOTL landscape with buildings that can generate profits,” says Gienek Ksiazkiewicz.  
“And, town council, through their actions (or inactions) appear to be complicit in allowing this to happen. Is this the beginning of the end?”  
“The thing I have against the Shaw’s new building is that it does not blend with the main street,” says Jim Smith, famed author and NOTL chronicler. “The building has an ultra-modern appearance that does not blend in. The town has no concept of heritage.”  
Speaking of council, let’s turn to our elder statesman, Gary Burroughs. He’s been in politics for decades, served as lord mayor, was chair of the Shaw Festival and operated the Oban Inn for 30 years. When it comes to running this place, many say, he’s the adult in the room.  
And he’s worried.  
“Shaw believed that they were so loved in town and beyond that they would automatically get approved,” he says. “They are loved



Overbuilding the Royal George could destroy Queen Street shops, then drown us in buses, warns Coun. Gary Burroughs.

and I am certainly a big fan. But their arrogance in the way they approached this project that will affect our town.”  
That effect could be huge. Burroughs fears it may kill off swaths of the main street.  
“It’s a big industrial box on a very important piece of property. This is bigger than the courthouse, and it doesn’t fit. The construction process is a huge issue. They’re saying three years, but that will destroy half the shops in town. With this project, they won’t have a future. Those on Victoria, frankly, will be devastated.”  
Scale is an issue, as well. “The storm water on that massive building will suddenly be directed into our storm sewer. But it was never built to take that kind of volume,” says Burroughs — who also fears the main

drag will be awash in buses once the theatre complex is built.  
Besides the arrogance, the lousy architecture, the out-of-scale size, the strain on services and the withering impact on existing businesses, he agrees this might be the beginning of the end of NOTL as a heritage refuge.  
“Shaw’s consultants told us, ‘You know in 50 years this will be the standard and all of those old buildings will be gone.’ But there are thousands of European cities that are a hell of a lot older than ours and they haven’t destroyed their heritage,” he retorts. “So, don’t say that stuff!”  
What’s next?  
The Shaw proponents need a zoning change. An official plan amendment. Demo permits. Site plan approvals. Building permits. And they want it all pronto, saying taxpayer funding will disappear if the process drags.  
“I think they get it now,” says Burroughs. “They’ve been hammered to the point of ... gee... maybe we should have done this differently because we’ve been talking down to people all the time. I’m still confident they’re going to make some major changes.”  
“And people should keep complaining until it happens.”  
Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.  
garth@garth.ca



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## LETTERS OF THE WEEK

### Official plan ‘slap in the face’ to Chautauqua

Dear editor:

As a resident of Chautauqua, I am writing to express my full support for the Chautauqua Residents Association’s request that NOTL’s town council honour its commitment to an area-specific secondary plan for the Chautauqua neighbourhood.

This commitment was clearly outlined in the draft 2019 official plan and is based on years of consistent feedback from residents.

Diluting this promise to a mere “consideration” in the latest red-line version of the plan feels like a slap in the face.

Chautauqua is a beautiful, unique and distinct neighbourhood within Niagara on the Lake, and it deserves recognition as such.

I respectfully urge council to reinstate a firm commitment to developing a secondary plan for Chautauqua, ensuring that the neighbourhood’s history, distinct character and unique needs — within Niagara on the Lake — are properly respected and preserved.

*Robin Cardozo  
Old Town*

### Residents group unfairly criticized by mayor

Dear editor:

The town’s revised official plan deleted “Secondary plans will be developed for all or a portion of Old Town and Virgil, including Chautauqua...” The revised official plan just states that Chautauqua “will be considered” for a secondary plan (“Chautauqua neighbourhood group accuses town of dropping key planning promise,” July 31).

How can the lord mayor state that there is a “misunderstanding” by the Chautauqua Residents Association and that the Chautauqua Residents Association “misstates” the town’s direction when it quoted from the town’s redlined draft document?

The lord mayor is also quoted in your article as saying that the town still intends to make a secondary plan for Chautauqua. Then why did the town remove its commitment in the new plan?

The Chautauqua Residents Association just asked why the change was made and restated its support for a long-agreed-upon secondary plan.

The town asked for input on the revised official plan and as a respondent, the Chautauqua Residents Association (in my opinion) gets unfairly criticized.

*Brian Crow  
NOTL*

### We should make Chautauqua a gated community

Dear editor:

Clearly, the overwhelming majority of our town residents would agree, Chautauqua is indeed unique within our community.

Furthermore, I would suggest that the Neighbourhood Association is one of the more professionally attuned groups working not only for the local residents, but with a broader perspective of enhancing the overall image of NOTL.

A template, if you will, for our other outlying communities.

I further maintain that within the revised official plan. The residents of Chautauqua would best be served by delegating it: “A Gated Community.”

*Samuel A. Young  
NOTL*

### Council got it right in 2019. Don’t get it wrong now

Dear editor:

Anyone who takes five minutes to drive or stroll around Chautauqua can see it’s not like the rest of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The streets are narrower, the cottages are humbler and the whole place has a distinct, quirky charm.

Spend a few more minutes Googling — or better yet, visit the Chautauqua Residents Association website — and you’ll uncover the remarkable history of this small neighbourhood.

Did you know, for instance, that what’s now Circle Street once bordered a very large amphitheatre?

Most residents of NOTL know that Chautauqua is a community with deep roots, its own character, and needs that deserve respect.

That’s why, back in 2019, town council got it right when they included a commitment to a secondary plan for Chautauqua in the draft official plan.

They recognized this isn’t a copy-and-paste neighbourhood. It needs thoughtful, area-specific planning to protect what makes it special.

What doesn’t make sense is why the current council has backed away from that commitment. There’s no good reason for it.

I fully support the Chautauqua Residents Association’s request that council reinstate its commitment to create a proper secondary plan for the neighbourhood.

It’s the least we can do to protect a community that’s been a distinct part of NOTL’s story for over a century.

*Jeff Richardson  
Old Town*



This week’s riddle is “Jeopardy!” style.  
Category: A WORD FROM YOUR DOCTOR

When I ask if you have this kind of pain, I mean is it sharp or sudden, not from an angle of less than 90 degrees.

Last issue category: THEY COME IN PAIRS  
Clue: Before cellphones, every kid wanted a pair of these rhyming handheld communication devices.

Answer: What are walkie talkies?

Answered first by: Gary Davis

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Susan Hamilton, Bob Wheatley, Sue Rautenberg, Tammy Florio, Jane Morris, Lynda Collet, Mike Gander, Gordon Yanow, Becky Creager, Margie Enns, Esther VanGorder, Nancy Rocca, Randie Topps, Wade Durling, Jim Dandy, Jeff Lake, Claudia Grimwood, Bob Stevens, Howard Jones, Margaret Garaughty, Edna Groff, Dana Beeton, Sylvia Wiens, David Spencer, Marla Percy, Sheila Meloche

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)

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# Where is the Parliament Oak hotel project’s engineering report?



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

Off the top, let’s take a moment to circle back around on the Two Sisters Resorts’ Parliament Oak application.

You may recall that in the Feb. 14 edition of The Lake Report (“Arch-i-text: Points of interest and infrastructure”), this columnist visited the efforts of three eminently qualified local experts to raise concerns with town planning staff, namely the probable issues that this development would pose to our existing infrastructure, the potential of exacerbating the already existing flooding events which impact over 100 homes along One Mile Creek and the town’s (taxpayers) liability exposure associated thereto.

During their February meeting with town employees, these experts were assured that the concerns which they had raised

would be forwarded to Associated Engineering — the firm contracted to conduct a peer review of the original R.V. Anderson report submitted by the developer as a part of the application — for their consideration.

Now, last month the town posted the applicant’s third set of submissions pursuant to this application (see “325 King Street - Site Plan” on the Town of NOTL’s website: [notl.com/business-development/public-planning-notice/325-king-street-site-plan](http://notl.com/business-development/public-planning-notice/325-king-street-site-plan)), which included a site plan, civil drawing set and landscape plans (none of which departed markedly from early submissions) apparently intended to address and complete town staff’s outstanding requirements prior to moving forward with site plan approval.

That said, Associated Engineering’s peer review report — which should have been completed long since — is conspicuous in its absence.

As a “related document” that has a direct bearing on the validity of the premises, upon which the application has been developed and, more specifically, examining the issues raised by the local experts surrounding site servicing, stormwater management and the



Without full consideration of our infrastructure and proper engineering, new development will exacerbate our flooding problem, writes Brian Marshall.

hydrogeological assessment, why has this report not been published on the town’s website in accordance with town council’s direction?

In the event this report has not been completed — which would be odd given that we’re eight months into 2025 — the question then becomes why would staff be proceeding with this application in the absence of any form of validation of the applicant’s claims?

It should be noted once again that R.V. Anderson (the applicant’s consultancy firm) specifically disclaimed all and any liability for decisions made by any third party — which includes the town — for decisions made based on their report(s).

As a final question at this juncture, why is there no employee parking plan included in this application? Even at a four-star hotel level (since the five-star suggestion is unlikely in the extreme), the underground parking capacity is woefully inadequate to address the number of spots that will be required by hotel staff.

Let’s turn the page on Old Town and head out to St. Davids, where, over the past few months, residents have been raising very legitimate questions regarding the capacity of the existing infrastructure in light of the new developments — both planned and approved.

After several communications with town staff,

it was suggested that this infrastructure fell under the region’s jurisdiction and that we contact them.

Regional staff replied promptly to an inquiry and, during a meeting in their offices, stated that the region is only responsible for the sanitary sewer pumping stations (including the one at the old Town of NOTL dump), the force mains to the Stanley Road Niagara Falls sewage treatment plant and some main water mains in the St. Davids area.

Whereas, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is responsible for all the sanitary sewer lines (that is the design, layout and maintenance thereof) and the quantity of sewage that enters #1 pumping station on Creek Road beside the cold storage in St. Davids. Further, the town is responsible for keeping track of the number of units connected to the sewage system and the volume of sewage (litres per second) that, at peak, could flow into the pumping stations.

As is typical of similar town or city jurisdictions across the province, these considerations and others (such as stormwater management) should be a normal part of the planning process associated with approval of new development applications, as guided by the parameters contained within a master sewage servicing plan.

Apparently, according to information provided by town staff to these residents, the town either does not have or cannot locate a master plan. As a result, it appears that development applications are being processed in the absence of the critical criteria necessary to evaluate the impact on our aging infrastructure.

Nor does it seem that the town actually knows what the current connected load versus the design capacity load is for #1 St. Davids pumping station.

So, how can planning and council legitimately allow for additional dwellings to be added to the sewage system?

And similar concerns have been raised vis-à-vis stormwater management.

In a rational world, the processing of current unapproved applications and the acceptance of new applications would be put on hold until the answers to these questions can be quantified.

In a rational world ...

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



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# Royal George: A stage for connection, creativity and community

Tim Carroll  
Special to The Lake Report

Every actor knows that the most important part of their job is not speaking but listening.

This is, of course, true of life, too. I've been having a lot of conversations about the Royal George recently — in the lobby, in the street, in the grocery aisle — and what I have heard in those conversations has had a profound impact on my thinking about our planned new theatre and its role in our community.

One thing we have heard from many people is how fond they are of the look of the George. We all know that it is a confection, a kind of stage set put up less than 50 years ago to create the illusion of a past that never was.

But it was a witty creation, which in turn inspired other buildings on Queen Street to go for the "historical" look, which is part of the town's charm.

So, in that spirit, we are now working to create something that continues this playful tradition, while ensuring that we meet the current and future needs of a modern audience and



Tim Carroll says the Royal George is a "confection," put up 50 years ago to look historic — but it never was.

our workers. We are also reviewing the design with an eye to creating a more residential look and feel from Victoria Street.

As for the inside of the theatre, I know many of you have been relieved to hear that the new Royal George will retain the intimacy and elegance that makes it many people's favourite place to watch a play.

I hope it will also have a few new tricks up its sleeve: a small orchestra pit will make it possible for us to stage chamber musicals, while upgraded technical abilities will doubtless make possible many spectacular effects we currently can't achieve.

But I don't want to change too much about the essential Shaw Festival experience: sitting in the George and watching the best actors speaking the best words.

When we launched our All.Together.Now. campaign in the spring, our aim was to transform the Shaw into a leading centre for communication, creativity and curiosity.

The campaign goes beyond the bricks and mortar of the Royal George and the Shaw Artists' Village — it's about building meaningful connections for the people who walk through our doors and live in our community.

I want the new Royal George to be a place where

people connect — not just with the art onstage, but with each other.

Last year alone, aside from the 800 performances seen on our stages by hundreds of thousands of people, the Shaw offered over 5,000 events, reaching 100,000 people.

Incredibly popular, they are gaining momentum: we've seen a 63 per cent rise in community participation, an 82 per cent increase in adult engagement, and a staggering 247 per cent boost in student involvement over the past year.

Behind these bare figures lie all sorts of human moments: couples rediscovering the joy of dancing together; seniors making each other laugh in improv classes; doctors honing their interpersonal skills; kids in masks parading down the street for "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe." The new Royal George will allow us to create many more such moments.

One program we're particularly excited about is "Every Kid in Niagara." We want to give every student in the Niagara region in grades 6–12 the chance to spend a day at the Shaw each year, free of charge,

seeing shows and taking classes.

But to make that dream a reality, we need a venue where not only the auditorium but also the workshop and public space are fully accessible. If a school can't bring everyone, they can't bring anyone.

This is part of the answer to another question I have been asked a lot recently: do you really need so much space?

Many of you have heard Tim Jennings or me explaining that the increased size of the building is to a great extent to do with meeting the required AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) standards: no new building can be built, for example, with the pitiful excuse for a lobby, or the obstacle course of stairways, or lack of accessible washrooms or elevators that we currently have.

But we are going further: we aim to be the first Rick Hansen Foundation Gold Certified performing arts venue in North America — the most accessible theatre anywhere on the continent.

Why? Because many of our patrons have mobility issues, and each of us should assume that we

ourselves will have them one day.

When we say All.Together.Now., we mean it. The days when it was considered OK to exclude or humiliate people are gone, and it is our job to ensure they never come back. If that means making space for wheelchairs to turn around, I don't think that is too much to ask.

We will be hosting an open house later this month to share with the community our progress on all these fronts (and backs). I hope you'll come, have a look, and continue the conversation.

Theatres are by their nature community spaces. People come together to share an experience, to laugh, gasp and sometimes cry together.

In an age when human connection can feel increasingly elusive, we believe the new Royal George can become more than just a theatre. It can be a place where we reconnect with each other and with our capacity for joy. A place for being fully alive.

Let's build that together.

*Tim Carroll is artistic director for the Shaw Festival.*

## Mayor's response to inquiries leaves us in limbo

Dear editor:

During the past number of months, the public has made requests for information and clarification from town staff regarding town infrastructure.

The information provided by town staff seemed to have technical discrepancies that could impact any valid conclusions regarding the adequacy of that particular infrastructure to service the community's needs and any approved expansion plans.

Subsequent emails pointed out those discrepancies along with information for town staff's consideration. Delayed or no responses from town staff were followed up with emails (as would normally be the case) regarding these outstanding matters.

Well, it seems that some members of council and the lord mayor have taken exception to these requests for specific information.

Information which appears to have mysteriously disappeared from their data banks, specifically the most recent St. Davids urban area water distribution and sanitary sewer system master plan (possibly completed



Letter writer Gienek Ksiazkiewicz says Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa's responses to his questions have been less of answers and more of accusations of harassment and intimidation of staff.

somewhere between 2003 and 2005).

A master plan that would have identified projected infrastructure capacities to handle ongoing real estate developments.

Town council(s) should be, (or should have been), extraordinarily attentive to this subject matter.

Comparing what the system/infrastructure was

technically able to cope with on a projected basis (which a master plan would have identified) with the residential/commercial expansion that has occurred during the last 20 years would have been invaluable impactful information to consider in their recent decision-making process during their term in office, if not the most important consideration.

An infrastructure which requires significant capital expenditures because of years of neglect would require a significant increase in the town's normal budget, with probable resulting increases in property taxes affecting each and every taxpayer in NOTL.

Did council and town staff take the capacity of the infrastructure into account when approving residential and commercial real estate developments?

And what are we to think of the town's record-keeping — where did that master plan go? You would think that they would approach the original consultant for another copy, but it appears that course of action isn't being followed up on.

Lord Mayor Zalepa, rather than striving for better relations with the public vis-à-vis these informational requests, has characterized these legitimate requests for information as accusations of town staff's incompetence and indicated these requests represent harassment and intimidation.

Quite a push back.

Staff's difficulty in sourcing specific answers to these questions surely cannot be construed as an accusation of incompetence?

The lord mayor appears to be refusing to provide the information and has instructed the new CAO to merely prepare a summary of the historical correspondence and to "close the loop."

What seems to be the message from the lord mayor is that no further clarification on the adequacy of infrastructure will be provided, and excellent questions are left in limbo. Mum's the word, I guess.

What, pray tell, are we the electorate to think of these actions?

*Gienek Ksiazkiewicz  
NOTL*

## Let's be civil when talking about public projects in town

Dear editor:

It's disappointing to see Robin Ridesic, someone who has dedicated countless hours to supporting education, the arts and heritage in our community for decades, along with her husband, reduced to a caricature in Garth Turner's recent column.

Robin is a respected festival director and tireless advocate whose efforts have made a meaningful cultural impact. Her support for the Shaw proposal stems from a sincere desire to see our town thrive, not from the "charm offensive" tone so dismissively implied.

To trivialize her contribution with patronizing commentary says more about the author.

It's especially rich coming from someone who was best known for weighing in on real estate speculation and finance in Toronto, holding himself up as the voice of the locals despite only having lived here for a couple of years.



Letter writer Kate Morris says columnist Garth Turner should be more respectful of fellow residents.

Engaged dialogue about public projects is vital, but let's not allow condescension to replace civility.

Robin and many like her bring intelligence, integrity and vision to the table. They deserve respect, not cheap shots.

If we are going to have serious conversations about the future of our shared spaces, perhaps it's time to treat the people who have actually invested in them with the credit due to them, instead of deflecting with thinly veiled personal jabs.

*Kate Morris  
NOTL*






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# Royal George must fit with heritage

The following statement was released by the Niagara Foundation on Tuesday, Aug. 5, signed by Lyle Hall, chair of the foundation. It was forwarded to The Lake Report for publication.

As with many of the recent development projects in town, a flood of comments followed the Shaw's recently announced plans to create a "centre for communication, creativity and curiosity," replacing the Royal George with a "historically inspired, world-class jewel-box theatre" (i.e. a more intimate setting of 350 seats, similar to the current capacity).

While much of the community feedback has been negative (e.g., too big, too modern), almost universal support exists for the Shaw, given its importance in the cultural, business and social makeup of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Continuation of a live-performance theatre on the main street is also seen, by many, as a positive attribute for the town.

The Niagara Foundation supports the Shaw Festival and understands its desire to replace the Royal George in its current location — and to build a new theatre that enables sustained success in the face of the evolving nature of live theatre and associated programming.

We also recognize the Shaw's requirement to meet today's building codes and provide accessibility, as well as the wish to create an efficiently co-located rehearsal/programming space.

All of this, however, adds



Niagara Foundation chair Lyle Hall says plans for the new Royal George Theatre, while necessary, also must be done in sympathy with the existing heritage feel of Old Town.

significant footprint and mass to the site, which is why we believe greater effort is required to minimize the heritage impact and create a more sympathetic design.

The Niagara Foundation acknowledges that while located within the existing Queen Picton heritage conservation district (with a boundary expansion currently under consideration by the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake), neither the Royal George nor the adjacent residential properties are individually designated as heritage structures.

However, this diminishes neither their value nor their role as part of established heritage streetscapes.

Further, as part of the designated "National Historic District" — the first to be so recognized in Ontario — the importance of these streetscapes should not be overlooked.

With the future role of the Royal George in mind, and before the next submission

to the municipal heritage committee and council, we encourage the Shaw to:

Further reduce and soften the massing of the proposed structure with the intent to lessen the negative impacts on the Queen Street corridor and adjacent neighbours.

Ensure the building exteriors/facades complement the adjacent heritage structures, including both the Queen Street commercial and Victoria Street residential buildings.

Consider some form of commemoration within the new structure that addresses the history of the Royal George, its original name and use for soldiers and early 20th-century history in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

In addition, we believe the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake should ensure that the new Royal George theatre is not used as a precedent for any future redevelopment within the Queen Picton heritage conservation district (current or expanded).

Maintenance of the existing heritage streetscapes should be the goal. A new Royal George theatre should be clearly identified as a one-time-only approval, not the basis for general commercial expansion.

To get ahead of speculative land assemblies and the fear of commercial creep, the town and Shaw should convert the site zoning to a non-commercial/institutional use, aligned with the Shaw's non-profit mandate and its role as a valued cultural institution.

The Niagara Foundation was established to champion and safeguard the architectural, cultural and environmental integrity of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

We recognize and value the Shaw Festival as a core cultural element and encourage it to be equally respectful of the heritage elements of this town, ensuring the Royal George "fits" within our heritage district.

# Council should be hiking, not advocating to lower, Parliament Oak hotel project's fees

Dear editor:  
Development charges by the region and the municipality are required to provide the roads, walkways, and services to the proposed Marotta Hotel ("Council backs developer's fight against regional fees — with dissent," July 24).

There will have to be road widening of King Street for the additional left turn lanes onto Centre Street, into the hotel driveway, and onto Gage Street.

Also, service trucks will soon discover that the easiest route from Mississauga Street to the hotel service areas is on Centre Street, Regent Street, and Gage Street.

This will require the widening of these streets by



A rendering of the future Parliament Oak hotel.

about 12 feet and their reconstruction to allow for the weight of the food, beverage and garbage trucks required to service this huge commercial property.

Council should be requesting more development charges by the region and the town, not less, to pay for all of the necessary changes

to the streets and services in the old town.

As to parking, the hotel has to provide only 248 spaces according to the site plan agreement, which is less than half of the number experts have determined are required for staff, hotel rooms and dining facilities for about 1000 people.

Considering any reduction to the already inadequate parking spaces would be irresponsible.

Clearly, council shouldn't have approved such a colossal commercial development on a property surrounded on four sides by single-family houses on quiet, narrow laneways.

But having done so, they must now ensure that the parking be contained on-site and not spill out onto the residential streets, and that the costs to make land usable as a large commercial hotel continue to be charged and collected in an amount even higher than previously requested, certainly not less.

Wayne Murray  
NOTL



# Weekend snaps



Deborah Whitehouse gives a pottery lesson during “Art at the Pumphouse” on Saturday. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



Rose Shaver and her pup Sophie enjoy live music by the Trophy Husbands at the Legion’s Civic Holiday barbecue on Monday. **Read more at [niagaranow.com](http://niagaranow.com).** JULIA SACCO

# Breast cancer ride hits town Aug. 10

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Two organizations in Niagara are teaming up this summer and fall in the fight against breast cancer, the illness affecting thousands of women in Canada every year.

MEGABike Canada is running its annual fundraiser for Breast Cancer Canada through the end of September, with 29-person tandem bike rides taking place in municipalities across the country.

Niagara-on-the-Lake will host its ride on Aug. 10, beginning at 10 a.m. at the NOTL Community Centre.

All proceeds support breast cancer research, advocacy and education.

One of the participating teams is Sedona Care Communities, a retirement care organization with facilities in Niagara Falls and St. Catharines.

Sedona staff will ride



Sedona’s team will ride a tandem bike along with Simpson’s Pharmacy on Sunday at 10 a.m.

together in support of the cause, joined by staff from Pharmasave Simpson’s Pharmacy in NOTL, a long-time partner.

For Laura Byers, Sedona’s community relations director, the ride holds personal significance.

“My mother was diagnosed with breast cancer,” said Byers. “I’ve always said to myself, this is something I want to stand behind. I believe in the power of progress.”

Tammy McDowell, home health care manager at Pharmasave Simpson’s Pharmacy, said the Sedona team reached out for help filling extra seats.

“I’m going to be joining the Sedona community team,” McDowell said. “We’re hoping to have a couple other members jump on the bike as well.”

Byers said riding a tandem bike with others is both a symbol of teamwork and support. Her team will cycle one kilometre together.

“What better way than getting on a bike?” she said. “We’re pedalling on bike, in one direction, that’s going to support breast cancer research.”

According to Breast Cancer Canada, approximately 30,000 Canadians will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year. The Canadian

Cancer Society reports the disease kills 5,500 women annually.

“There’s like 50 different types of breast cancer,” Byers said. “And I don’t think a lot of people know that.”

She hopes MEGABike continues until breast cancer is eliminated.

“We hope for a future without breast cancer,” said Byers. She added, “There’s still time to donate.”

MEGABike Canada offers registration for individual riders (with a \$150 fundraising minimum), half-bike teams of 14 (\$2,500 minimum) or full-bike teams (\$4,000 minimum).

To register a team or rider, visit [megabikecanada.com](http://megabikecanada.com) and click the Niagara-on-the-Lake button under MEGABike locations.

To donate directly to Sedona Care Communities’ campaign, visit [megabikecanada.com/sedona-care-community](http://megabikecanada.com/sedona-care-community).

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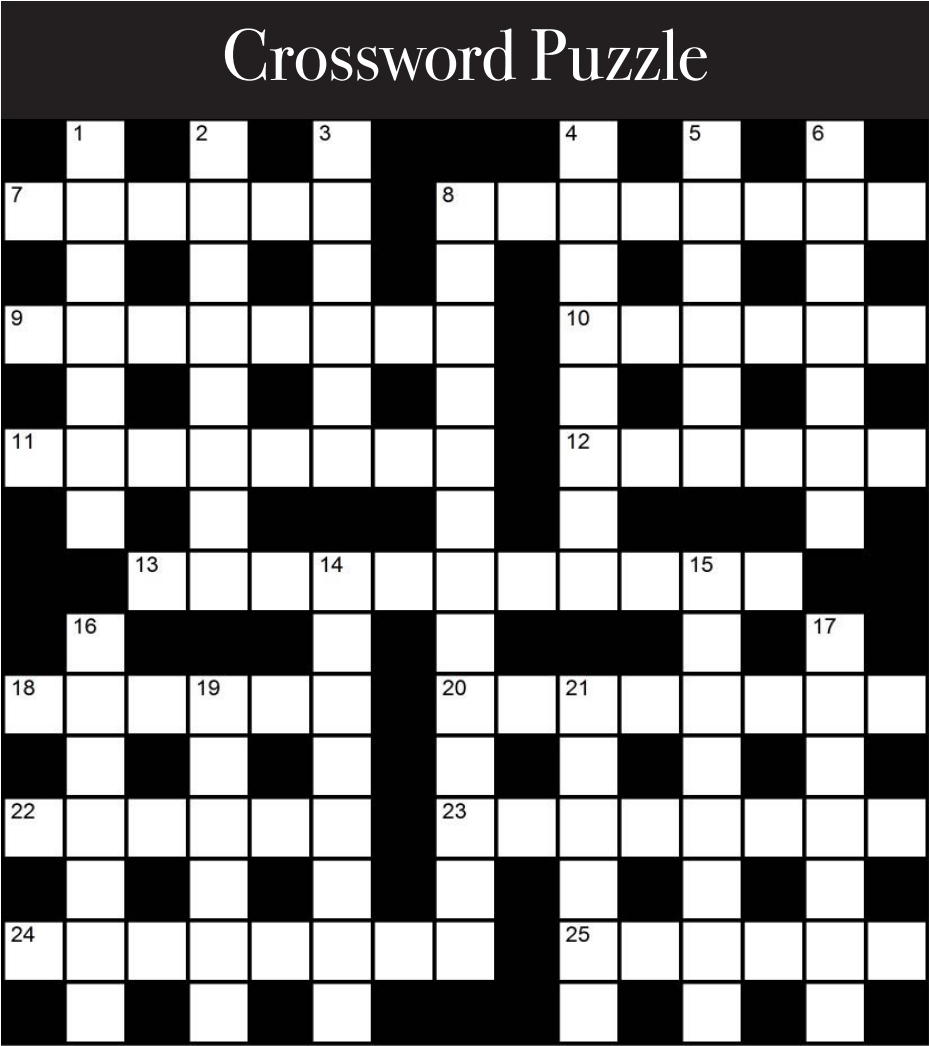


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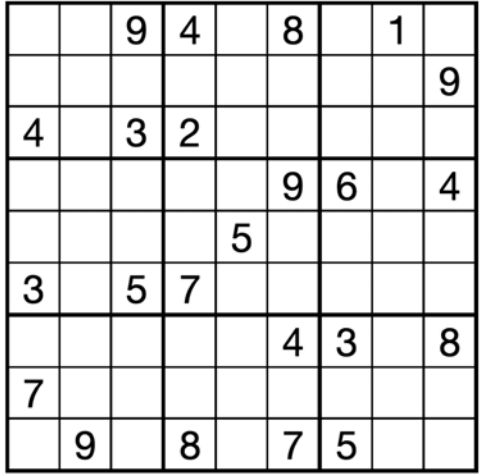


# Have some fun

- Across**
- 7. Missing (6)
  - 8. Enormous (8)
  - 9. Type of lights (8)
  - 10. Shrink back (6)
  - 11. Saviour (8)
  - 12. Man (6)
  - 13. Moving to and fro (11)
  - 18. Austrian composer (6)
  - 20. Inspector (8)
  - 22. Light-hearted TV show (6)
  - 23. Person practising deception under an assumed name (8)
  - 24. Forced high notes (8)
  - 25. Tooth covering (6)
- Down**
- 1. Belly (7)
  - 2. Uneasy (8)
  - 3. Flowing water (6)
  - 4. Yes (3,5)
  - 5. Tapered frozen mass (6)
  - 6. Circumscribed (7)
  - 8. Supreme commander (13)
  - 14. Cosy (8)
  - 15. Abroad (8)
  - 16. Of local interest (7)
  - 17. Regimental commander (7)
  - 19. Charge (6)
  - 21. Small sword (6)



## Last issue's answers



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\*\*Source: Google Trends and Google Reviews    †Source: RE/MAX LLC rankings for Large Team Residential, 2024.    \*\*Source: REDATUM Agents by units - listing and selling combined performance in TRREB Jan 1 - June 30, 2024. RE/MAX Escarpment Golf Realty Inc., Brokerage. Independently owned and operated.



**EXPLORING HISTORY**  
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## Peach time in NOTL, 1937

It is that time of year when the farmers bring their tasty peaches to the Old Town district to celebrate the peach harvest. Here we have a young Jim Hutchison who was picking peaches on the Dawson Farm, which was previously located at East West Line and Concession 2. Jim has the peach basket strapped to himself to help with peach-picking out in the orchards. It looks like there is a good start to the harvest already in the barn, too.



# HARPER

## TREE CARE

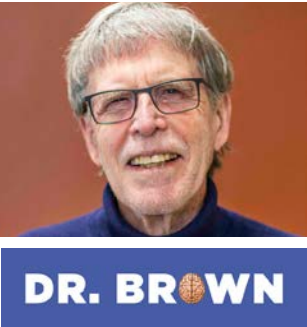
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# The Muon experiment was successful. Does it matter?



Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

Muons are hardly the hot stuff of everyday conversation — unlike the media frenzy stocked by the volatile to and fro outbursts of politicians these days.

But it's fair to say that long after the current verbal crossfire is over and no more than a footnote in history, muons will still be there playing their part in the subatomic universe of atoms, and hence molecules and everything that began within seconds of the Big Bang.

The Camelot years in physics from 1900 to 1930 sorted out the major players in the subatomic universe — protons, neutrons and electrons — and the next third of the century was spent identifying subatomic forces and a dizzying array of yet smaller particles before coming up with a Standard Model for the subatomic universe in the 1960s.

The latter turned out to

be highly predictive for the existence of other particles, such as the Higgs and neutrino particles, later shown to exist by experiments.

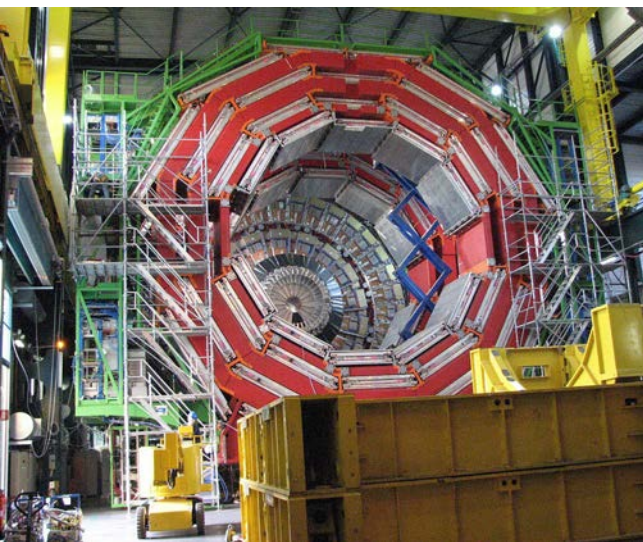
But however predictive and precise the Standard Model may be in the everyday world of quantum mechanics, the model fails to solve some big puzzles, including the nature of dark matter — a glaring omission given that dark matter is thought to make up one-third of the universe and six times more abundant than ordinary matter with which we're familiar day to day.

That's where the muon comes in. Muons are similar to electrons but are more massive.

Because of their intrinsic magnetic properties, muons wobble in the presence of external magnetic fields, a measure of which wobble is called  $g$  and equals 2, where only muons are present.

However, according to quantum theory, empty space isn't empty but is jam-packed with all kinds of "virtual" particles, popping in and out of existence, which could influence the value of  $g$ .

Hence, theorists suggest that measurements of  $g$ , which deviate from 2, might point to as yet unidentified particles and perhaps a window into how the Standard Model might be changed to explain enigmas such as



The muon barrel, one part of the Large Hadron Collider in Europe, is designed to detect subatomic particles that can penetrate large amounts of matter. WIKIMEDIA

dark matter and why some neutrinos have mass.

Sorting all this out is the business of experimentalists such as the physicists and engineers at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab) accelerator in Batavia, Ill., and theoretical physicists.

However, so far, the two groups don't agree on the value of  $g$  with no clear way forward in sight. Which brings the obvious question. Why do these questions matter? Why invest more money on inconclusive results now and in the future?

Good questions. In the current climate of funding cuts, this is surely a justifiable cut — or is it?

Basic science — of which this study is a good example

the low-lying fruit of high-value, cheap projects is over — no more Einsteins working at patent offices with no university affiliation yet managing to come up with profound answers to fundamental questions in the universe.

Research in much of the early and middle 20th century was cheap — many instruments were handmade. Compare that with astronomy these days — telescope design, whether for space or land-based, manufacture, launch and maintenance, to say nothing of the scientists and engineers involved, are all very expensive.

So far, most programs have been highly successful, such as the James Webb telescope and luckily so far, continue to live to tell their tales.

The sciences of computer chip design and artificial intelligence have proven to be hugely successful. Indeed, without them, much of modern science and, increasingly, high-powered medicine would be impossible.

In the case of the Standard Model governing subatomic physics, it's clear that the model has shortcomings and will need updating or perhaps even an entire rethink. But again, I must say, that's how the best of science works.

Questions and hypotheses

arise and must be tested, and if they don't pass the test of experiment, then, as the famous American physicist Richard Feynman proclaimed, it's time to go back to the drawing boards.

That's a tough standard, but it has stood up well over the centuries. However, there's a hitch.

Experiments have to be well imagined, tested and carried out — if not, too often science fails as it has for new drugs in Alzheimer's disease, where the standards of design and execution have too often been mediocre, even deliberately misleading.

Back to those muons. I have no idea how or when the muon controversy will be resolved, but it's worth the odd failure to achieve really meaningful science.

Science, after all, has perspective on its side. What is proven to be true will remain true in a century, a million years from now and beyond — even if, in the case of Newtonian physics, or perhaps general relativity or the Standard Model of the atom, it needs revision in the light of new evidence.

*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.*





## Celebration of life for Arthur Janny

It is with profound sadness that we announce the sudden passing of Arthur Janny on July 4, 2025.

Arthur was a devoted father to his young sons, a caring son and brother, a cherished friend, and a valued coworker. He will be remembered for his warm heart, generous spirit, and the deep love he had for his family and friends.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Monday, Aug. 25, 2025 from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Olde Angel Inn garden patio, 224 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake.

All who knew and loved Arthur are warmly invited to attend.

Jolanta and Howie extend their heartfelt thanks for the outpouring of condolences, flowers, Pathstone donations, and prayers that have brought comfort during this difficult time.

A special thank you to Father Greg from Our Lady of the Scapular Parish for his beautiful service and prayers at the funeral, and to Ruth-Ann from Patterson Funeral Home in Niagara Falls for her compassionate and impeccable care during such a difficult time.

Sincere gratitude as well to Kelly and Keith, owners of the Olde Angel Inn, and their wonderful staff and wine, beer and food suppliers for organizing this meaningful gathering.

Arthur’s memory will live on in the hearts of all who knew and loved him.

Have an  
opinion you  
want heard?



Email  
editor@niagaranow.com

## Robert ‘Bobby’ Donald Allan



ALLAN, Robert —  
Passed away peacefully, on Sunday, July 6, 2025 at the Greater Niagara General Hospital, in his 89th year. Predeceased by his wife Beverley (2010), his second wife Carol (2024) and his son David (2009). Dearly loved Father of Robert (Nicole) and Andrew (Darla). Loving Grandpa to Nathan and Charlotte. Dear brother of Jo-Jo (Patty), and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

After serving in the United States Army during the Korean War, Bobby became an Electrician. He then went on to study and became a Secondary School Teacher. Teaching at AN Myer and Westlane Secondary School in Niagara Falls. After retiring from teaching, Bobby proudly served on the NOTL Hydro Electric Commission. He will be remembered for running the Clam Booth at the St. Davids Lions Carnival for many years as a member of the St. Davids and District Lions Club. Bobby became an avid golfer and could often be found playing at Queenston Golf Club where he was a member for several years.

Other then golf, Bobby participated in many sports including, softball, basketball, and racquetball, pickle ball, cross country skiing, and downhill skiing. As a sportsman Bobby enjoyed the outdoors, especially canoeing and camping in Algonquin Park with his sons. Fishing and hunting are traditions he held dear. With a thirst for adventure and knowledge, Bobby travelled extensively with the Road Scholar Program. Inspired by the places he travelled and things around him, he studied art, mainly drawing in graphite and pencil. He was known for carrying a portfolio with him and generously sharing his artwork with people. It was during an art class in Florida that he would meet and eventually marry Carol. Bobby and Carol had a twelve year adventure that took them around the world. They were grateful for every day and made every day together count.

Bobby’s family would like to thank the staff at Elgin Falls Retirement Community and GNGH for their kind and loving care. A special thank you to Bobby’s sister-in-law, Linda Rix who helped support Bobby’s care and continues to support Robert and Andrew.

In keeping with Bobby’s wishes, cremation has taken place. Interment will take place at Florida National Cemetery - Bushnell at a later date.

## Walter ‘Wally’ Pietersen



PIETERSEN, Walter —  
Passed away peacefully at his residence on Monday July 28, 2025 at the age of 69.

Beloved and cherished husband of 47 years to Marilyn (nee Jeffery) Pietersen. Devoted and proud father of Jay (Vasilisa) Pietersen and Sarah (Rob) Redekop. Loving Papa to Reese, Ryan Redekop and Valeria, Valentin Derkach. He will be lovingly missed by his brother John (Lee) Pietersen, in-laws Karen Pietersen, Ruthann Sharkey, Warren Jeffery as well as many nieces, nephews, cousins and good friends. Predeceased by his parents Walter and Mary (nee Wendel) Pietersen, brother Harry Pietersen and brother-in-law Michael Sharkey. Wally was the kind of person who gave without hesitation, helped without being asked and worked harder than most could imagine. Generous to the core, he would lend a hand to anyone in need. His work ethic was unmatched, after putting in a full day at G. M, he would come home and often work until dark on the farm, a place that wasn’t just work, but his passion. A place he felt the most at peace. He loved nature whether it was fishing, camping, boating or skiing, he embraced the outdoors. Wally was incredibly strong willed, resilient, supportive and loving, he made sure those around him knew they mattered. For several years he built a hockey rink for his family, friends and neighbours to enjoy. He was incredibly handy, able to fix or build just about anything. Wally will be deeply missed. In accordance with Wally’s wishes, cremation has taken place. Friends are invited to join the family at Patterson Funeral home, 6062 Main St., Niagara Falls, on Wednesday August 13, 2025 from 3:30 pm to 7 pm. A Funeral Service celebrating his life will be held at the funeral home on Thursday August 14, 2025 at 10:30 am with an interment to follow at St. Davids Cemetery. In memory of Wally memorial donations can be made to Niagara Health Foundation (Walker Family Cancer Center) and would be greatly appreciated. Online condolences may be shared at [pattersonfuneralhome.com](http://pattersonfuneralhome.com).

## John Linwood Kaloyanides



KALOYANIDES, John — Sept. 14, 1934 - July 19, 2025

Born to an English Mother and Greek Father, John was the second oldest of 13 children, 10 siblings still active. He is survived by his loving wife Gail Marie Martin of 29 years, his three daughters, Susan Koppendrayner, Lyn (Rex) Hartman and Kathy (Tom) Quinn. Grandchildren Mattie, Nathaniel, Jacob, Johnathan and Sarah, plus two great grandchildren Ezra and Eliza.

John grew up in Boston amongst a boisterous group of brothers and sisters. He put himself through university by working at a pharmacy, where not only was he the soda jerk, but also dispensed prescriptions.

In his early career in made a major move with the family to Scarsdale, N.Y where he worked for Barnstead Corporation and when it was sold, he and three former employees started Vaponics and subsequently moved to Hingham (south shore Boston). He then decided to leave Vaponics and started his own company K & A and Associates which specialized in water purification plants.

Personally, John was extremely active whether Golfing, playing tennis or his favorite sailing. He was an experienced sailor which enabled him to sail to many places around the world. He won many trophies and cups for finishing in first place. He also was a wine connoisseur, with a formidable wine cellar. John will be best remembered for his beautiful bass voice, whether singing “Old Man River” or “You Raise Me Up So I Can Stand On Mountains”, his voice now silenced.

Most of all he will be missed by his strong loving wife and all our travels, adventures, wine trips, theatre and other pleasures that they shared in beautiful Niagara-on-the-Lake and around the World!

A special thank you to Lundy Manor whose staff and residents provided a loving safe place for him to him to enjoy over the last two years.

There will be a visitation at Morgan’s Funeral Home 415 Regent St. Niagara-on-the-Lake, on September 12, 2 – 4, funeral service and reception at Grace United Church 222 Victoria St, Niagara-on-the-Lake, September 13, at 2 pm. For those who wish in lieu of flowers donations to Grace United Church or Niagara Cancer Centre would be appreciated.



# Exploring the versatile world of ornamental grasses



**GROWING TOGETHER** 

Joanne Young  
Columnist

There is something to be said, on a hot, humid summer's day, about watching your tall ornamental grasses waving in a refreshing breeze. Grasses can add many different elements to a garden.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking: "Aren't they messy?" or maybe, "Don't they take a lot of work to maintain?"

Ornamental grasses are incredibly versatile and can be used in many ways to enhance your landscape's texture, movement, colour and structure. Let's look at each of these areas and at how ornamental grasses can easily fit into your garden.

Grasses can be used as focal points in the garden. Many of the tall or dramatically coloured grasses can be used to draw the eye and anchor garden beds. Their strong, vertical forms, with either wide, bold blades or fine, wispy blades, can provide architectural detail to draw the eyes to a certain area of the garden.

Ornamental grasses also add texture to your garden and provide contrast to other plants. Pairing fine-textured grasses with bold-leaved plants or flowering perennials will create striking visual contrasts.

Whenever you mix different textures together in the landscape, the garden comes alive. Suddenly, plants will stand out from each other and your eyes will start to pick up on all the details your space has to offer.

A mix of fine, wispy textures with broad or colourful foliage makes the garden feel dynamic and layered.

One of the grasses that I like to use in designs is miscanthus sinensis "morning light" (morning light silver grass). Its fine, wispy, silver-coloured blades are a perfect contrast of colour and texture with the dark



Miscanthus, or "morning light," with hydrangea.

green, bold leaves of a pink flowering hydrangea.

Low-growing ornamental grasses like carex, hakonechloa grass, blue fescue and fountain grasses make excellent plants for edging gardens or paths. They can be used to soften hardscape features like walkways, retaining walls or patios.

Just imagine walking along a shaded brick path with a low mounding, yellow and green varie-

gated grass spilling over the edges.

When planting grasses, they can be planted as individuals or in small groupings (i.e., group of three or five plants). If your space allows, they can also be planted in drifts (larger groupings).

Repeating clusters around the landscape can provide visual unity and natural beauty. This works especially well in meadow-style

plantings or xeriscapes.

Another way that ornamental grasses can be used is as a screen or hedge.

Tall, wide-bladed grasses can be used as a seasonal privacy screen. Many of the grasses in the miscanthus sinensis family will work well for this: zebra grass, porcupine grass and gracillimus silver grass.

There is also a grass named northern pompom grass that can grow up to 10 feet tall. The one drawback with using these tall grasses as a screen is that you cut them back down every spring to about six inches, so it won't always be six feet. Taller grasses can also act as a wind block or a bit of a noise buffer.

Even though grasses are perennials, they do provide year-round interest.

Instead of cutting down the grasses in the fall, leave them intact until spring gives you another season to appreciate the texture.

Many grasses have striking fall colour and winter form (frosted plumes look beautiful in winter). A favourite grass of mine that is underused is "standing ovation" little bluestem grass (schizachyrium scoparium

"standing ovation").

It grows to be about four feet in height and only two feet in width. The colour of the blades is blue-green from spring to mid-summer — at that time, it starts to transition to a plum colour. It continues to intensify in colour going into the fall. Leaving the foliage there for the winter prolongs your enjoyment of the plant.

Other grasses also have great fall colours like huron sunrise miscanthus and any cultivars of panicum (switch grass).

I find that the grasses that stand up the best throughout winter are the ones with narrower blades. The snow does not catch on them as much and weigh them down. This would include varieties in the miscanthus family such as "gracillimus," "graziella" and "morning light."

So, the next time that you're analyzing your garden, trying to figure out what is missing, you may want to consider an ornamental grass and see if that is what you need.

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

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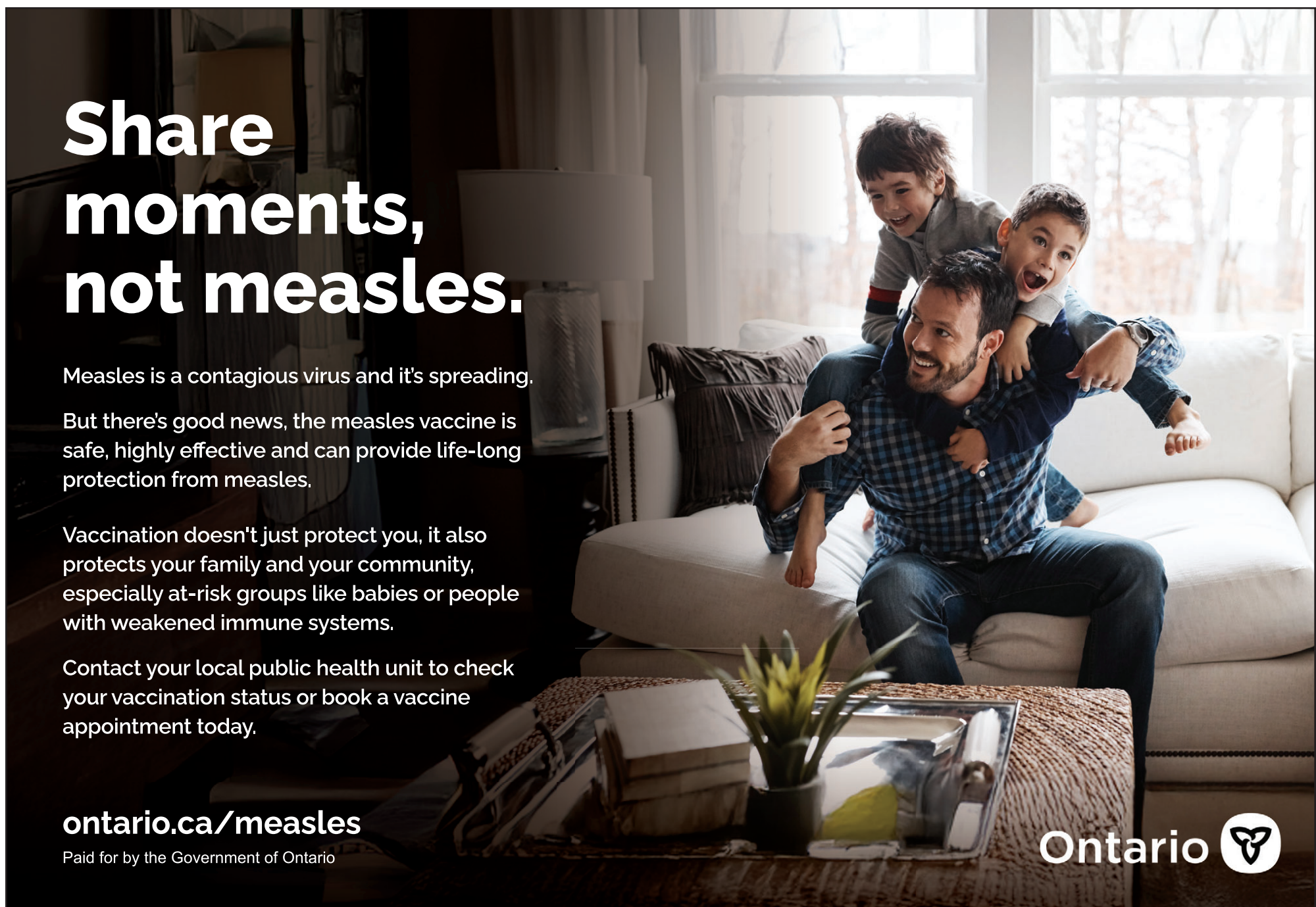
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