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From development to taxes, residents share election concerns

Continued from Front Page

velopment, council’s performance and who to elect. But their concerns come back to what the next council needs to do: keep neighbourhoods safe, make tax dollars count and protect the town they call home.

Who’s living next door?

For Ahluwalia, protecting her Glendale neighbourhood starts with maintaining properties and keeping streets safe.

“My biggest concern is the growing impact of absentee landlords and poorly maintained rental properties on our neighbourhoods,” she said.

Ahluwalia said excessive student parking creates blind spots and reckless driving threatens streets where families and young children live.

“This isn’t about being against students,” she said. “It’s about landlord accountability, proper parking and stronger enforcement.”

In Queenston, Schoot Uiterkamp’s concern about short-term rentals is the loss of permanent neighbours.

At one point, he said, three properties neighbour-



A rendering of the planned Parliament Oak hotel, a controversial project that is shaping some Niagara-on-the-Lake residents’ voting decisions this election. FILE

ing him were short-term rentals.

“It hollows out the small community which you live in,” he said.

He wants limits on short-term rentals in each village, rather than only across the municipality.

Paula L. Paul, who has lived in Queenston for more than 35 years, also wants

fewer short-term rentals and less oversized development. She raised her family there and now has grandchildren in the village.

“Queenston was a wonderful place to raise our family,” she said. “Now, with grandchildren in the village, we hope that the sense of community will continue to thrive.”

The price of growth
For fellow Queenston resident Paul Bevan, the cost of living is his first priority.

“It’s very expensive to live here — I mean, very expensive,” he said.

He questions whether the property taxes he pays deliver enough value but still speaks warmly about

his village.

“Queenston is a great place to live,” he said, calling the community “strong and united.”

He wants to keep it that way, opposing development on land behind the Niagara River Parkway, north of York Road.

“There’s two parts of the land — one’s 30 and the other is 22 acres — and we definitely don’t want them developed,” he said.

Virgil resident Mark Dawson is unhappy about the hotel being constructed at the former site of the Parliament Oak school and the proposal for a hotel at the Rand Estate.

He wants whoever is elected to carefully consider all proposals affecting heritage properties.

“I’d say really think through before we give away our heritage properties, or think about what to do with them,” he said.

For Dutton, 77, who has lived in NOTL all her life, the Parliament Oak development is part of a deeper disappointment.

She said she is “so upset” about what officials and staff have “done to the

town.” The Old Town resident objects to a hotel neighbouring homes.

Her assessment of her confidence in decision-makers was just two words: “No trust.”

Fellow Old Town resident Rocco Marchese questions the need for more large hotels in the first place.

“I don’t know what the need is going to be for those large hotels.”

He wants to see how full they are once they open.

Plan ahead, then follow through

When Rob Hutchison moved to town 10 years ago, he thought developer John Hawley was doing a good job and looked forward to seeing his plans take shape.

Now, the Garrison Village resident sees less optimism and more negativity around development.

“I’m thinking there’s too much emphasis on anti-development,” said Hutchison.

He wants clearer planning about what should be built and where, rather than decisions that appear to follow developers’ proposals.

“And maybe they do —

Continued on Page 3

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Across NOTL, voters weigh what matters most

Continued from Page 2

and the developers are still playing games. But it just seems very unorganized," he said.

For Schoot Uiterkamp, following through on street safety is another priority.

He said he puts a pylon on the road while cutting his grass because passing coach buses come too close.

He wants lower speed limits and more speed humps, including near the village's daycare. He describes working with town staff as decent, but implementation as "super, super, super slow."

In St. Davids, Madis Tambre wants planning backed by practical work.

Flood control is his top concern.

Tambre alleges poor maintenance of existing flood-control equipment contributed to flood damage and said he wants crews to identify and clear blocked ditches, drains and culverts.

"Dam mechanisms should be tested monthly, if not weekly," he added.

Tambre also wants roads, sewers, water mains and other infrastructure ready to handle additional demand before new development proceeds, along with consequences for developers who disregard the rules.

"If developments commence without proper permits, they should be dismantled, the area restored, the developer fined, and not allowed — including any firms that they are connected to, or with — to apply for a development permit for five years," he said.

Tambre wants the hospital converted into a seniors' retirement home or rehabilitation centre. He also proposes adding a raised level above existing parking lots to create more spaces, and having tour buses drop passengers at designated locations, leave and return at a set time to keep buses from waiting in town.

Fellow St. Davids resident Cheney Venn, a recent arrival, gives council credit for preserving NOTL's size and limiting the pace of building. That matters to someone who moved here seeking a quieter life.

"I wanted to get out of the



Above: Flooding and water management erputed as one of the top issues this election, sparked by heavy summer floods in July and August — a pattern that's been increasing in recent years.

Right: For Chautauqua private chef Alex Vujcuf, the election is personal: his biggest client, Vaughn Goettler, is seeking the town's top job.

PAIGE SEBURN



GTA to have a more calm presence in where I live," he said.

The retired police officer, who spent 31 years on the job, feels safe in his neighbourhood but wants continued attention to safety. He worries that police crackdowns in one city can push criminal activity into another community.

"You're arresting people, but sometimes you're just pushing the crime out of that area and displacing it in another community," he said.

Having seen amalgamation go on in other different areas, that's also a concern for him.

"Some areas kind of get forgotten about" when amalgamated, Venn said.

Who earns their vote?

Dawson wants both experience and new voices at the council table.

"I'd say that a healthy part of the democratic process is getting a balance between

the old and the new," he said. "So I intend to vote for some of the incumbents and a couple of the new candidates."

For Alex Vujcuf, a private chef who lives in Chautauqua, a neighbourhood in Old Town, choosing a candidate means weighing what he hears against what he has seen personally.

He said infrastructure and taxes are among the issues reaching him, even though he does not closely follow politics.

"I believe in the things I see and hear and experience," he said.

Wearing a Goettler badge when interviewed, Vujcuf readily explained the connection.

"It's personal," he said. Goettler is his "number one client. "Of course I'm going to support my number one client."

Vujcuf said working for Goettler has given him a

firsthand view of the candidate.

"I can say that he is a hard worker," he said.

Other residents shared opinions but declined to give their full names.

One said she would vote against those who supported the Parliament Oak hotel and for those who opposed it.

Another wanted younger voices on council and favoured council candidate Weston Miller. A third raised taxes and amalgamation as concerns.

A St. Davids resident who has lived in town for more than 30 years wanted new and returning councillors — and no roundabout near his home.

One offered simple advice to other voters: "Vote."

Why?

"Because you could end up with somebody like Donald Trump."

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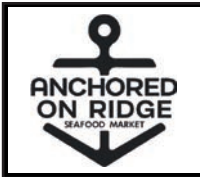
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No endorsements: NOTL residents' group won't tell voters who to write on the ballot

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents' Association spent weeks putting election candidates in the hot seat. But when it comes to telling voters who deserves a seat at the table, the group is staying out of it.

The association's board has voted against endorsing candidates in the Oct. 26 municipal election, deciding that backing a preferred group of hopefuls would go against its commitment to remain neutral.

The decision follows three candidate forums held Sept. 14, Sept. 25 and Oct. 2, where those running for lord mayor and council faced questions drawn from concerns raised by residents. The association organized and hosted these forums.

In a response to The Lake Report, association admin-



The crowd came for answers. Now, the NOTL Residents' Association is leaving the final verdict to voters, choosing not to endorse any candidates. FILE/PAIGE SEBURN

istrator Ron Simkus said the group had considered endorsing candidates but ultimately decided against it.

The association had previously told residents it would seek out qualified candidates, he said, but that was never a promise to endorse them.

"To stay true to our mandate of fairness and neutrality, two of our directors actually stepped off the board to pursue campaigns they supported personally

while this election period took place," Simkus said.

With advance voting underway, he said, announcing a preferred slate now could also confuse members who have already cast their ballots.

Instead of picking favourites, the association says it has given residents the information to make up their own minds.

Its three forums featured questions developed from a resident survey conducted

in May. A committee of volunteers, rather than the board, turned those concerns into questions for candidates.

The events have also attracted considerable attention online.

Simkus said the three forum videos have drawn roughly 3,500 views combined online.

"We feel our website and YouTube carry an information resource which is totally fair, unambiguous and as clear as possible to assist voters in making their choices of candidates," he said.

And while the election will decide who takes a seat at the council table, the association says its work won't depend on who wins.

"The (Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents' Association) is committed to working diligently with town staff and council and not just with individuals we endorse or chose to work with."

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

What's in a name? Candidate says town staff suggested she reverse her surname on ballot

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

What's in a name, really? To some, not a whole lot. But in politics, name recognition is a huge plus.

Most people know this lifelong Niagara-on-the-Lake resident as Karen Taylor-Jones.

But as a candidate for town council in the upcoming election, she is listed and will appear on the ballot as Karen Jones-Taylor.

To those who may be wondering why the discrepancy, it came about following the suggestion of town staff, says campaign manager Jennifer Jones.

The Town of NOTL, however, told The Lake Report when it comes to how candidates fill out their nomination forms, it doesn't offer advice on the process.

Karen's legal name is Jones, while her maiden name is Taylor. So, while she is Karen Jones on all her government and identification documents, for many



Karen Taylor-Jones.

years, she's been publicly known as Karen Taylor-Jones, said her campaign manager — she operated a business under the name Taylor-Jones Painting & Wallpapering for several years, for example.

So, once Taylor-Jones decided this summer to run in the election, she wanted to make sure to incorporate Taylor into her name on the ballot.

On Aug. 21, when Taylor-Jones was at NOTL Town Hall in Virgil filing her nomination paperwork, she discussed with town staff in the office how to include her maiden name. They suggested she write her name down as Karen Jones-Taylor —

placing Jones before Taylor would position her higher alphabetically on the ballot, Jones said she was told.

"Not anticipating that this might cause confusion or create inconsistencies with the name she's been known by for years, she followed the recommendation given to her," Jones said.

"There was certainly no intention to misrepresent her identity or create any confusion. She simply followed the guidance she received while excitedly completing her paperwork for the election process."

Jones added that she doesn't want to suggest town staff insisted Taylor-Jones write her name down as such.

"What I can say is that the recommendation to put Jones first did come from town staff, according to Karen, and she followed it in good faith," she said.

The town said the name issue doesn't really matter.

"The way a candidate's name appears on the ballot does not create any logistical

or administrative issues for the town or affect the election process," said town spokesperson Quinton Ascah.

"Should a candidate be elected, the declaration of results and subsequent administrative processes are based on the candidate's official nomination and election records."

It should be noted that The Lake Report identified the candidate in articles before the election campaign as Karen Taylor-Jones.

However, in the Sept. 24 story "NOTL council candidates condemn Trump," she is identified as Jones-Taylor in the body of the article, then Taylor-Jones in the article "No softballs for council hopefuls at residents' debate" from Oct. 1.

Going forward, the candidate's name will be written in future articles as the name she's been going by for many years, Karen Taylor-Jones, followed by a note that she appears on the voter ballot at Karen Jones-Taylor.

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ELECTION '26



A steady lineup forms during the first hour of in-person voting on Oct. 7 at NOTL town hall. PAIGE SEBURN

Busy advance poll reveals split views

Paige Seburn
 Local Journalism Initiative
 The Lake Report

Some voters came to town hall Wednesday morning convinced Niagara-on-the-Lake needs to change course.

Others came because voting early was simply easier.

And some came away thinking there is not much to fix at all.

That mix was on display during the first hour of in-person advance voting Oct. 7, as residents steadily moved through council chambers to cast ballots in a municipal election shaped by concerns about development, the environment, accessibility and how town rules are enforced.

Town representatives were not formally counting turnout during the opening hour, but roughly estimated between 50 and 100 people had come through by about 11 a.m. One staff member described the morning simply as “quite a lot.”

Kads Bohra and her husband, Pran, said they always vote, but this time the campaign debates helped turn their concerns into a decision.

Several issues had been weighing on the Old Town couple, but the debates helped clarify which candidates best matched the direction they want for NOTL.

“It cleared our head a little better as to which

candidate we think represents how we want to see our town moving forward,” Kads said.

Their biggest concern was how town rules are applied, an issue they said has affected them directly and could have wider consequences for the town.

Pran described it as “selective enforcement” and said they struggle to understand why some people appear able to break rules others are expected to follow.

“Our vote was more for correcting the path,” Kads said.

For some voters, though, getting to the ballot box early had little to do with political urgency.

Melody and Don Legere came out early because advance voting usually means avoiding a long lineup.

Wednesday was busier than they expected.

Asked whether NOTL residents seemed more anxious to vote this year, Don said, “I think so.”

For the couple, voting early did not mean they were desperate for change. They have lived in town for decades, once operated a bed and breakfast in Old Town and now live in Virgil.

Unlike voters looking for a major shakeup at town hall, the couple said they are largely happy with life in NOTL.

Melody said perspective matters.

“You have to look at the rest of the world when you compare something,” Melody said. “And when you look at the rest of the world and how some countries are and how their people are treated, we are living in a dream here.”

That did not mean the couple had no concerns. Development remains one of them, particularly large hotel projects in a tourism economy they know from experience can be deeply seasonal.

For Reid Maltby, the election also carried some urgency.

“Development is a big issue, and the environment,” he said.

Maltby and Christine McGrath, who live on Lakeshore Road, also pointed to this summer’s widespread flooding — though they were not directly affected — and the divide between the needs of different parts of NOTL.

McGrath said council needs people who understand those differences instead of deepening them.

“We’re surrounded by the farmers and the grape growers and everything,” she said. “There seems to be very different needs, in town and country, and it just creates division, which is unfortunate.”

She said she wants someone who can “bridge that divide a little bit better.”

For another voter, the priority was far more personal and practical.

Tony S., 72, said he looks at candidates based on what will do the most good for everyone. For him, that starts with seniors and people with disabilities.

He pointed to doors with accessibility buttons that do not work, high curbs, poorly placed ramps and too few accessible parking spaces.

Tony also gave the town high marks for the voting process itself, calling it fast and efficient.

“I’m 72, so I appreciate how quickly we can get through this,” he said, giving the process an “11 out of 10.”

Carole Tremblay also came out early in part because she thought advance voting would be less busy.

It wasn’t.

She said the turnout was bigger than she expected and spoke positively about Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, who is not seeking another term.

“I’d still like to keep Gary Zalepa in, but he’s going regional,” she said.

Zalepa has instead applied to become Niagara’s next regional chair. The province will appoint the chair after the Oct. 26 election under governance changes approved earlier this year.

Internet voting remains open until Oct. 25 at 8 p.m. Another in-person advance poll will be held Oct. 17 at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre, before election day on Oct. 26.

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Historical numbers tell us about **voter turnout** in NOTL

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

In a democratic system, an election is only as much of a representation of the people's will insofar as it involves the participation of as many people in a community, region or nation as possible.

Looking at the participation of Niagara-on-the-Lake's eligible voters during the last four election cycles, turnout has tended to oscillate between either slightly less than or slightly more than half of the eligible population of electors casting their ballots.

Four years ago, for example, the voter turnout was around 47 per cent, with 7,644 of the 16,100 residents eligible to vote casting their ballots in 2022 on election day or in advance polls.

That year, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa received 3,724 votes, beating out the previous term's mayor, Betty Disero, by 1,138. The third candidate, Vaughn Goet-

tlar, who's running for lord mayor again this year, got 1,268 votes.

However, the most votes cast for an individual candidate were not for Zalepa, Disero or Goettler, but Erwin Wiens, a current councillor who's running this year for mayor — he got 4,978 votes.

Going back four years before that to 2018, Disero won the race for lord mayor by securing 4,169, which was 1,426 more than the incumbent lord mayor, Pat Darte.

The strongest difference between 2018 and 2022 was in the voter turnout: 59 per cent of eligible voters in 2018's election casted their ballots, representing 8,394 actual voters out of 14,213 eligible voters. This is evident when looking at 2014's voter turnout percentage of approximately 48.5 per cent.

When taking a look at how the votes broke among the five polling stations, situated in the five settlements of Niagara-on-the-Lake,



A NOTL resident enters the Community Centre to cast his vote in 2022. FILE

one discrepancy emerges between this election and the 2022 election: in 2018, the majority of Disero's votes were cast in Old Town, more than the other four settlements combined (2,335 in Old Town vs. 1,834 at the other four stations). In Virgil, for example, she received 874 votes.

However, in 2022, while Disero still received the majority of her votes in Old Town, for Zalepa, Virgil

came through in spades: of the five settlements, the greater number of votes were cast there for him, at 1,504 votes. Disero, by comparison, got 484 votes in that settlement. Zalepa still saw strong support in Old Town, with 1,203 votes compared to Disero's 1,463.

Travelling back even further to 2014, it's evident 2018 represented a significant spike in voter turnout: 2014's turnout was around 48.5 per cent, representing 6,531 of 13,477 eligible voters.

That year's winner in the race for lord mayor, Pat Darte, earned 3,627 votes, 904 more than his sole competitor, Dave Eke. The most votes for a candidate went to John Wiens, who ran for council and received 3,641 votes.

In 2010, back at the start of the last decade, Dave Eke came out on top in the mayoral race, earning 2,310 votes, running against three candidates. Maria Bau-Coote, who ran for and won

a seat on council, received the most votes at 3,778.

Information about the number of eligible voters and total number of ballots cast during that election was not publicly available before press time, however, federal census data from 2011 indicates the population of Niagara-on-the-Lake that was under the age of 18 (the legal voting age) was 12,840.

Finally, looking back 20 years ago, the 2006 election saw current councillor Gary Burroughs, who served as lord mayor from 2000 to 2010, win another term, receiving 3,420 votes, 874 more than the other candidate, Tom Braybrook. Council candidate Terry Flynn received the most votes in the race, earning 3,553.

Voter turnout this year was 47.04 per cent, representing 6,118 voters out of 13,006 eligible voters.

Several familiar names popped up on the ballots over the years, with varying degrees of success year-to-

year. Zalepa has ran a few times for council in the past two decades, receiving 2,057 votes in the 2006 election, 2,823 votes in 2010 and 2,200 votes in 2014. He served as a councillor from 2010 to 2014. In 2018, he was voted NOTL regional councillor with 2,408 votes and held the role for four years before throwing his hat in the ring for lord mayor in 2022.

Andrea Kaiser, NOTL's current regional councillor, is running against Wiens and Goettler to become the lord mayor. She served on NOTL council for eight years after winning back-to-back elections in 2006 and 2010, receiving 2,832 and 2,618 votes, respectively. She wasn't a nominee in the 2014 or 2018 elections, but joined the local race four years ago and earned the regional councillor spot, running against four other candidates and securing 3,100 votes.

zahraa@niagaranow.com



Niagara-on-the-Lake On-Farm Diversified Uses Review Public Information Centre

The Town has retained WSP to undertake an On-Farm Diversified Uses Review. This project will consider how the Town's policies can support farm viability, appropriate diversification, agritourism and economic growth, while protecting agricultural land and the Town's unique agricultural character.

Public Information Centre (PIC) Details

You are invited to attend an in-person, drop-in PIC to learn more about the project, ask questions and provide feedback.

Date: November 3, 2026, from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Location: Simpson Room, Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre (14 Anderson Lane)

If you would like to submit a question or comment about the On-Farm Diversified Uses Review, contact planning.development@notl.com or a team member as listed on the project website.



For more information on the project and to stay informed, please visit www.jointheconversationnotl.org or scan the QR code.



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Hon. Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing/
Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens



Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens/
Hon. Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture



Erwin Wiens
FOR LORD MAYOR

wiensformayor.ca
erwin@wiensformayor.ca

Authorized by the Erwin Wiens for Lord Mayor campaign.

Four years later, NOTL voters concerned about similar issues

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

One new mayor, four new councillors and 1,451 days later, many of the issues facing Niagara-on-the-Lake voters in 2022 remain concerns ahead of this year's municipal election.

In its Oct. 13, 2022, election edition, The Lake Report outlined the top issues facing voters, including regional taxes, overdevelopment, tourism management and transparency.

The regional tax portion topped the list, with residents concerned about the high taxes they pay compared to what they receive in return.

Overdevelopment in residential areas was another major concern. Residents wanted council to take their concerns to the provincial level to help protect historic areas.

Other issues included a tourism plan addressing parking and traffic, a stop to short-term rentals and the



Gary Zalepa embraces Andrea Kaiser as both candidates win their electoral races in the 2022 municipal election.

exploitation of neighbourhoods, and better management of tax dollars.

Transparency also featured prominently, particularly the ban on town staff speaking to media without going through the communications department. The Lake Report urged the town's chief administrative officer and communications team to be more transparent.

Four years later, many of those same concerns remain part of the conversation.

Ahead of the Oct. 26 municipal election, The Lake Report asked residents

about their priorities for the next council.

Development again emerged as a leading concern, with residents expressing unhappiness with the Parliament Oak hotel and a proposed hotel at the Rand Estate.

The Parliament Oak hotel was proposed in 2023 and approved by council in June 2024. Construction began in late 2024.

The latest proposal for a five-storey hotel and residential property at the Rand Estate was brought to council in May.

Residents also raised

concerns about political transparency, landlord accountability, short-term rentals, high property taxes and organized town planning.

While the issues may sound familiar, the town has made decisions on heritage protection and planning over the past four years. It has also assessed its progress against a strategic plan intended to guide priorities through 2027.

The question is whether those decisions have addressed the concerns residents raised in 2022 or whether the next council will inherit many of the same challenges.

Strategic plan progress under scrutiny

Approved in July 2023, the town's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan established priorities for community development, governance, infrastructure and organization.

In a September 2026 end-of-term report, the town said 80.3 per cent of

its strategic-plan measures were complete or on target, while 17.3 per cent were below target. Of the 127 measures assessed, 73.2 per cent were classified as fully complete.

During a September meeting, Coun. Sandra O'Connor questioned some of the items the town had marked as complete.

"[The] concern for me is in the completed items you saved for the climate and environment. For me, I mean, I haven't seen these completed," she said. "If they've been done I'd love to see it," she said.

Development and taxes remain concerns

Development was a concern in 2022 and remains one four years later.

In February 2025, council approved research into expanding the Old Town heritage district. In February 2026, council adopted a new heritage conservation district plan, expanding the boundaries and establishing clearer rules for renovation, demolition and new construction.

tions, demolition and new construction.

The cost of municipal government was another issue in the 2022 election, and property taxes remain a concern heading into the next vote.

For 2026, council approved a budget with a 2.19 per cent property tax increase. The town planned \$44.2 million in operating expenditures and \$8.3 million in capital projects, excluding water and wastewater.

Infrastructure funding is another challenge. A January 2026 report on the town's asset management plan estimated that Niagara-on-the-Lake needed to spend approximately \$22.3 million annually to maintain its infrastructure at current service levels, but was funding about \$9.2 million annually. That left an estimated annual shortfall of \$13.08 million.

The town has developed a 10-year capital plan.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com

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St. Davids roundabout delayed, date of construction unknown

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

The St. Davids roundabout project, which was set to start the summer of next year, is being delayed by the Niagara Region, with the roundabout set to open a year later than the original completion date.

In an email to The Lake Report, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake confirmed the project remains active, with design work and property discussions continuing, but that the region decided, during its capital budget process for next year, to defer it.

Stephanie Hupponen, the region's manager of capital projects, said the project is still currently moving through detailed design.

Archeological investigations are currently underway and the region will be moving forward with property acquisitions and utility relocations as next steps, she said.

The construction schedule will be updated based on the timing of those pre-works.

Last week, the region's online project page listed



What the St. Davids roundabout, to be located at York and Four Mile Creek roads, will look like. The region's online project page now lists winter 2028 as the completion date, instead of the original winter 2027 target. SOURCED

winter 2028 as the completion date, instead of the original winter 2027 target.

The page is currently inactive.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa released a statement confirming the project's delay on Oct. 5, after information circulated online suggesting the project had been terminated.

He said that the Niagara Region advised the town the project was deferred through its capital budget planning process, which is currently underway, to allow infrastructure investments that are a higher priority to go forward.

This will coincide with the region continuing to work on "broader St. Davids improvements," he said, such as enhancing pedestrian infrastructure.

The announcement came two days after Vaughn Goettler, a candidate for lord mayor in the municipality's election, posted on Facebook the afternoon of Oct. 3 that he had heard the St. Davids roundabout "has been terminated once and for all," while noting the information had yet to be confirmed.

"I have advocated against it for the past four years and am satisfied that the right

decision has been made. We can now get on with the business of fixing infrastructure in the village," he said.

Goettler told The Lake Report he was called by multiple credible sources claiming the project's cancellation.

"The information from everybody — this was all folks from St. Davids, was that the roundabout had been cancelled."

"I decided that I would carry that, because the people who I was speaking with are people I know, and I think they have fairly credible sources."

Goettler further said he believes the region's response claiming the project was deferred, not scrapped altogether, is a way to ease the public into an impending cancellation of the roundabout.

"I think that this is probably a way of easing out of it gracefully, because 'deferred,' in my books, means it's not going to happen still."

Goettler cited the amount of money spent on studies and the debates that have gone on about the develop-

ment as reasons the region may not want to admit the project is cancelled right away.

From his perspective, as someone opposed to the roundabout, a deferral is better than a go-ahead, he said.

Goettler has since posted an update on his campaign page sharing that he got the distinction between deferred and cancelled wrong.

"Niagara Region has now confirmed that the project has been deferred, not cancelled. I got that distinction wrong, and I want to correct the record," he said.

"Having said that, deferred is not cancelled. The region needs to listen to the residents of St. Davids and cancel the project — once and for all."

The St. Davids roundabout, set to be built in the village's main intersection of York and Four Mile Creek roads, has been several years in the making — during that time, it's drawn vocal pushback from some St. Davids residents.

Critics have argued against the region's position that the roundabout will improve traffic safety in the

area for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.

They've shared concerns that the roundabout will impact businesses along these roads, alter the historical nature of the village and invite more traffic into their community, making it difficult to navigate for locals.

Regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser said the information in Zalepa's release is accurate.

Kaiser met with the lord mayor and the director of transportation on Monday to check in after the confusion.

"I think delayed is a better word than deferred," she said. "It's moved from one year to another in being delayed as when it will be budgeted."

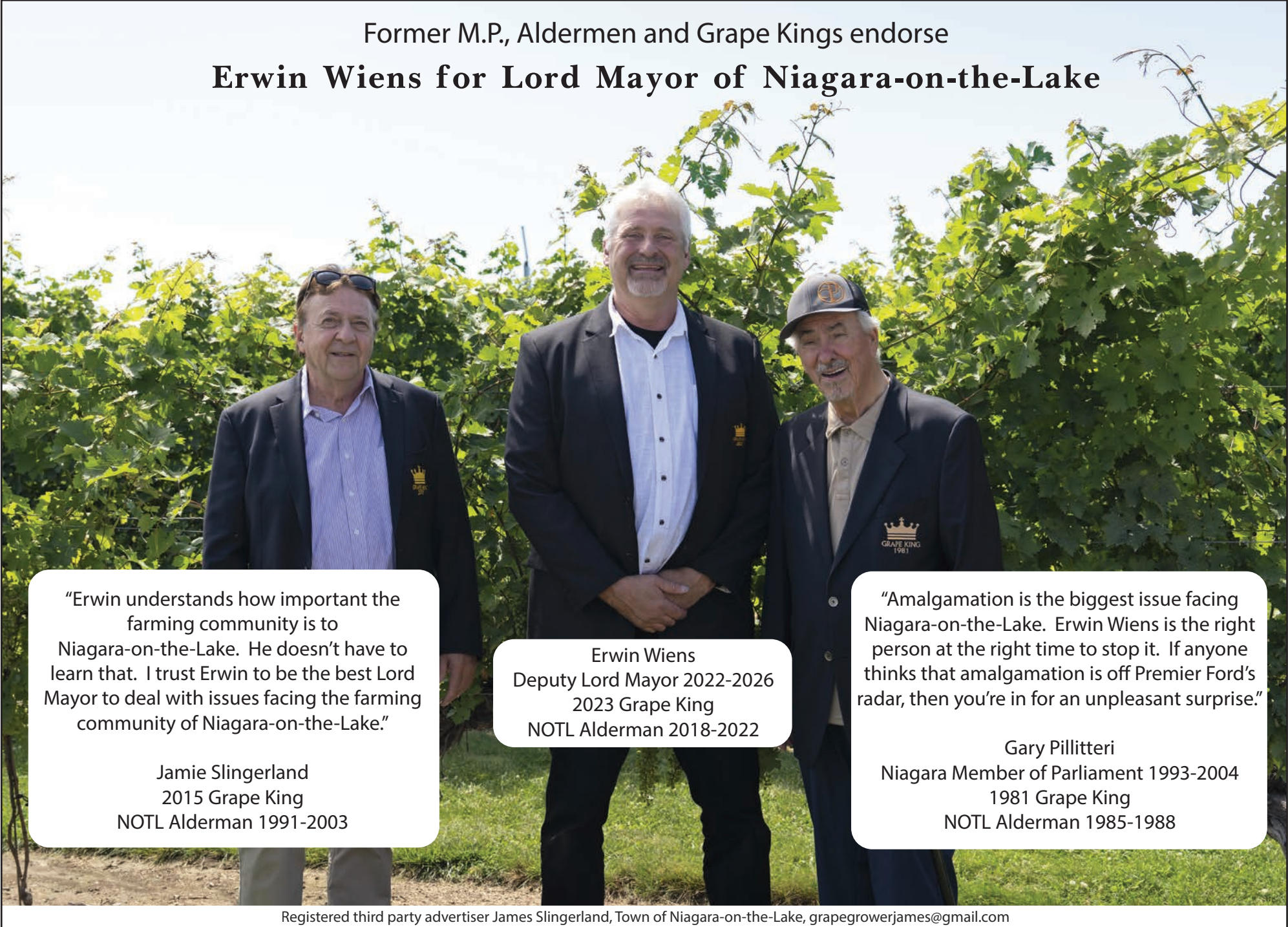
Kaiser emphasized the delay of the roundabout will not delay the road reconstruction in front of St. Davids Public School.

"The region understands that's a really high priority with safety for children," she said.

Road reconstruction connecting sidewalks with the Cannery Park subdivision and pedestrian crossing also will not be delayed.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com

Former M.P., Aldermen and Grape Kings endorse Erwin Wiens for Lord Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake



"Erwin understands how important the farming community is to Niagara-on-the-Lake. He doesn't have to learn that. I trust Erwin to be the best Lord Mayor to deal with issues facing the farming community of Niagara-on-the-Lake."

Jamie Slingerland
2015 Grape King
NOTL Alderman 1991-2003

Erwin Wiens
Deputy Lord Mayor 2022-2026
2023 Grape King
NOTL Alderman 2018-2022

"Amalgamation is the biggest issue facing Niagara-on-the-Lake. Erwin Wiens is the right person at the right time to stop it. If anyone thinks that amalgamation is off Premier Ford's radar, then you're in for an unpleasant surprise."

Gary Pillitteri
Niagara Member of Parliament 1993-2004
1981 Grape King
NOTL Alderman 1985-1988

Last market of the season for a new Village

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

The Market at Garrison Village wrapped its 2026 season Saturday with a bustling Thanksgiving weekend crowd and plans to continue expanding.

Shoppers filled the market on its final Saturday, with some picking up Thanksgiving essentials and others looking for a piece of Niagara-on-the-Lake to take home.

Organizer Sandra Neufeld looked back on the market's first season in its new location, in the Clayfield Commons, and the growth it experienced.

The season began with vendors lining a single laneway.

"It had sort of a European walkable vibe," she said. "As it got busier, we were excited to be able to grow all the way around. So about halfway through the season, we were able to come around the green and



Annie Karaim and her son Bennett enjoy their take on a game of corn hole on Saturday at the last day of the farmers' market at the Village. This is the market's first year at its new location in the Village beside the newly opened Clayfield Commons. JULIA SACCO

include this entire space."

Laura Townsend, director of marketing for the Clayfield Hotel, said moving the market from the Garrison Village parking lot to the new greenspace has reinvigorated the market and attracted new visitors.

"It's such a staple in the

community, but to be able to expand it and to activate it in different ways, I think, is really what we're most excited about," she said.

"It's been really cool, for the locals as well as the guests that are staying at the hotel."

Samantha Sutherland,

co-owner of the Hive, has been a market vendor for five seasons.

"It used to be in the parking lot, with the local people. It was great, but I think now that we have it here it attracts more people from out of town," she said. "The flow is a bit better."

Sutherland said the market has been a great place to grow her business.

"That's why we keep coming back."

Miranda Colcuc manned the stall for Alpine Nurseries, wrapping up the farm's first season at the market.

Colcuc said a mix of locals and visitors stopped by throughout the season, adding that her favourite part has been meeting the people.

"It's amazing to feed the community and be with all these other vendors that are selling their hard work."

The community spirit was on display Saturday as residents and visitors of all ages browsed the stalls.

Neufeld said the market has built a loyal group of regulars, including two older men who share meat pies together every Saturday.

Last weekend, one of the men's birthdays brought the market together to sing "Happy Birthday," she said.

David Harrison visited the market for the first time Saturday and sampled a meat pie from Koru & Crust.

It was delicious, he said.

"I've been to New Zealand so I know a good meat pie."

Neufeld said the larger space has created more opportunities to celebrate Niagara's local businesses and products.

"It's amazing how we're able to blend both loyal locals who love making this part of their weekly tradition, with people that we're welcoming in."

Townsend said Garrison Village was designed with the market in mind, allowing for vendor stalls on both sides of the walkway as the market continues to grow.

As more retailers, cafés and vendors join the 24 that finished the 2026 season, Townsend said she looks forward to seeing more people discover local businesses and products.

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Air Canada bus adds two more departures

Staff
The Lake Report

After the launch of a new bus service this year that connects travellers to Toronto from Niagara, the service is set to expand to five from three daily departures starting mid-December, just in time for holiday travel.

Air Canada and the Landline Company announced Tuesday that its luxury motorcoach service between Niagara District Airport and Toronto Pearson International Airport, six months after the bus service started running in mid-June.

The service allows passengers to book the airport as the starting point or final destination of an Air Canada trip. The motorcoach ride is included in the same itinerary at no additional cost.

The expanded schedule will add two departures each day from both the NOTL airport and Pearson. The companies say the additional trips will give



Starting Dec. 14, just in time for holiday travel, the Air Canada motorcoach service will leave Niagara District Airport five times a day. FILE/PAIGE SEBURN

travellers more flexibility when planning connections through Pearson to Air Canada's North American and international network.

Right now, the service runs seven days a week, with departures from the airport at 5:30 a.m., 11:20 a.m. and 4:05 p.m. Each trip is around an hour and 20 minutes.

Starting Dec. 14, it'll depart from Niagara District Airport five times a day: 5:20 a.m., 11:10 a.m., 1:10 p.m., 4 p.m. and 7:10 p.m.

Air Canada said the service has been well-received since its launch. Ranbir Singh, the airline's director of regional airlines and markets, said the expansion would make it easier for residents and visitors to access the airline's network through Pearson.

Niagara District Airport CEO Dan Pilon said the airport had received positive feedback from travellers, including requests for more departure times. He said the increased frequency, along

with free parking at the Niagara airport, would give passengers more flexibility to begin their journeys in Niagara.

The service offers an alternative to driving from the region to Pearson, where travellers may face traffic, fuel costs and airport parking fees. Instead, passengers can leave their vehicles at the NOTL airport, board the motorcoach and travel to Pearson as part of their booked Air Canada itinerary.

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NOTL 2026

Migrant worker advocates call for action

Continued from Front Page

killed or seriously injured. Additional signs will be installed outside municipal offices in Niagara-on-the-Lake, St. Catharines and Lincoln.

Standing beside a busy road to discuss action and next steps, Andres encouraged attendees to reflect on what it feels like to travel along the roadside.

“This is how our migrant farmworker neighbours feel every single day when they’re travelling these roads: vulnerable, scared, at risk, unsafe, unprotected,” they said.

Andres emphasized that migrant workers’ rights, including access to housing and road safety, cannot be separated.

“When you don’t have washers and dryers in your home, you’re going to have to go to the laundromat. And what happens if you don’t have a car? You’re going to ride your bike.”

Ceto Reid, a seasonal worker from Jamaica, was struck while biking to do laundry in 2022.

Andres quoted Reid on Wednesday, emphasizing the responsibility of Niagara residents and politicians.

“People need to respect farmworkers more and what we’re doing for the community. We are the ones feeding the people, so look out for us. We have to use the roads. We have to live here. We have to work here. Look out for us. We are here,” Reid said.

Syed Hussan, co-executive director of the alliance, called on Niagara Region and local municipalities to implement road safety measures in consultation with migrant workers.

“We have been calling on the Niagara Region to actually do an audit with farmworkers so that they can point out which roads are the most unsafe. At the same time, the Niagara Region is responsible for housing standards,” he said.

The alliance is also calling on the Ontario government to hold a coroner’s inquest into migrant worker deaths in the region and make recommendations to prevent further deaths, Hussan said.



“The near misses and the injuries are far more than the seven names that we have today.”

“Obviously, we support everyone taking personal responsibility for safety, but we also want to make sure that the blame is not on the people who are being injured, who are being killed.”

KIT ANDRES
MIGRANT WORKER ADVOCATE

All levels of government must take action, Hussan said, adding that the issue extends beyond bicycle safety.

Migrant workers have been coming to Niagara for 60 years, and there have been 60 years of oversight and non-inclusion, he said.

“The United Nations has called Canada’s temporary worker program a breeding ground for modern forms of

slavery,” Hussan said. “We really need to focus on the decision-makers and policies at all levels of government.”

Hussan said the alliance and community members have a responsibility to provide basic material support, but that alone will not prevent injuries and deaths.

“We have been raising the same call. Zenaïda died around the corner in 2019 and I was standing right there. Now it’s been seven more years and seven more people.”

Zenaïda, a 33-year-old Mexican farmworker and mother of two, was killed in a hit-and-run while walking in 2019.

Andres said community members have personal responsibilities, but the conversation should not shift to blaming migrant workers.

“You can do everything in your power to protect yourself, and it’s not enough. So obviously, we support everyone taking personal responsibility for safety, but we also want to make sure that the blame is not on the people who are

Top: Signs are being erected around Niagara to remind people to watch for migrant workers.

Bottom: Mark Calzavara and Nathan Brigham install a “Look Out For Migrant Workers” sign outside Niagara-on-the-Lake’s municipal offices.

JULIA SACCO

being injured, who are being killed,” they said.

“We want to shift that responsibility where it belongs, and that’s on the decision-maker.”

So far, 36 of the 63 municipal candidates across Niagara-on-the-Lake, St. Catharines and Lincoln have signed the Migrant Worker Safety Pledge, Andres said.

“These actions must happen no matter who signs the pledge and no matter who wins the election.”

Standing outside NOTL’s town council office, Andres encouraged NOTL residents to contact election candidates about migrant worker safety and find out who has signed the pledge.

As migrant workers leave the region for the season, Hussan said, the question is what will have changed by the time they return in the spring.

“We just want to be very clear that we’re not going away. We are done, and we are tired of our family members, our friends and our community members killed.”

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Muslim youth group holds 5K run for Niagara hospitals

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Rain was in the forecast and Thanksgiving dinner was on the calendar, but a few dozen people still signed up to run or walk for Niagara Health Foundation, which took them on a trek through several parts of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association Canada held its fourth annual Run for Niagara, a five-kilometre run and two-kilometre walk, near the Niagara Floral Clock in Queenston on Oct.11.

Rizwan Khan, the race's emcee, said members planned to stay at the site after the awards to answer participants' questions about Islam.

"These days, the global environment against Muslims, and Islam in general, is negative," he said. "This is an opportunity for people to come out and talk to us — maybe we can clarify some of their negative thoughts."

Munir Ibrahim, chairman of Run for Niagara, said Niagara's Ahmadiyya Muslims had heard negative comments but knew of no physical attacks on their community.

"It's there, it is part of our lives, and we hope to educate people," Khan said.

Two of the group's members worked as doctors in Niagara, one reason Ibrahim gave for choosing Niagara Health Foundation. He also pointed to the new hospital Niagara Health is building in Niagara Falls, set to open in 2028.

"Our community has been here for 35 years, so we see the daily challenges people go through in life," said Ibrahim, who added that his faith required Ahmadiyya Muslims to give back to the community where they lived.

Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates said in a speech before the race that Ontario's health-care system was in crisis.



Sunday's two-kilometre and five-kilometre runs kicked off in Queenston and saw participants of all ages trek around Niagara to raise money to support the region's public health-care organization. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Gates urged participants to donate and to press the provincial and federal governments on health care.

Thirty-four participants ran or walked this year. Ibrahim said this year's race was much smaller than last year's, likely because

of the rain forecast and the Thanksgiving weekend.

The association planned 18 charity races across Canada this year for local charities and hospitals under its Mercy for Mankind campaign.

The Litt Legends, a

NOTL family team, took two of the top three spots in the two-kilometre event. Priya Litt said she signed up her family because the race was close to home.

"It's kind of nice, just like a family outing, and you're supporting the local

community and the Niagara Health Foundation," she said.

Ibrahim said the association would start its yearly food drive for the St. Catharines food bank within the next two months.

andrew@niagaranow.com

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SPECIAL SECTION: ELECTION 2026

NOTL VOTES ON ITS
FUTURE

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

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

Here is who is running:

LORD MAYOR

Vaughn Goettler
Andrea Kaiser
Erwin Wiens

COUNCIL

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

PUBLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEE

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

CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEE

Natalia Benoit
Larry Huibers
Alex McKee
Jake Scervino

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





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

Pros and cons of our three mayoral candidates



Richard Harley
Editor-in-Chief

It's an interesting election year.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

regional councillor she has been sort of limp.

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

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

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

Maybe.

Unfortunately, the job requires someone incredibly dedicated right now.

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

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

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

Goettler signs. Other areas are well mixed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Just be sure to vote.

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

A lot to consider.

editor@niagaranow.com

No excuse for not voting in municipal election



Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

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

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

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

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

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

In 2018, NOTL's turnout



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

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

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

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

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

So, as has been the case

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

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

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

Andrea Kaiser, a winery owner and the town's

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So, what direction will NOTL voters choose?

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

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

The Town of NOTL has made it easy and convenient.

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

kevin@niagaranow.com

How to vote in NOTL

WATCH THE DEADLINE

Online voting closes a day before election day.



Vote online

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

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

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

vote2026.notl.com

Opened Oct. 5 at 10 a.m.

No online voting on Oct. 26.



Vote early

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

NOTL Community Centre
Simpson Room
14 Anderson Lane

Earlier advance poll: completed

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



Election day

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

Choose any of these five locations:

NOTL Community Centre
14 Anderson Lane

Holiday Inn Express
524 York Rd.

Laura Secord Homestead
29 Queenston St.

Crossroads Public School
1350 Niagara Stone Rd.

St. Davids Public School
1344 York Rd.

WHAT TO BRING

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

NO LETTER? NEED HELP?

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

VAUGHN
GOETTLER



BIO

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

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

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

A MESSAGE FROM VAUGHN

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

AUTHORIZED BY THE VAUGHN GOETTLER CAMPAIGN

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

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

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

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

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

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



Vaughn Goettler and his wife Lauren.

ANDREA KAISER

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



BIO

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

A MESSAGE FROM ANDREA

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

AUTHORIZED BY THE ANDREA KAISER CAMPAIGN

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

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

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



Andrea Kaiser and daughter Madison Lepp.

ERWIN

WIENS

“Experienced leadership on day one.”



BIO

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

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

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

A MESSAGE FROM ERWIN

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

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

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

AUTHORIZED BY THE ERWIN WIENS CAMPAIGN

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

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

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

Right: Erwin Wiens and his wife Dorothy Soo-Wiens



11 CANDIDATES FOR TOWN COUNCILLOR



ELECTION
2026

TIM BALASIUK



BIO

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

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

GARY

BURROUGHS



BIO

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

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

PROTECT HERITAGE & MANAGE GROWTH RESPONSIBLY

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

GET INFRASTRUCTURE & STORMWATER READY

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

STRENGTHEN TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

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

AUTHORIZED BY GARY BURROUGHS

ADRIANA

CATER VIZZARI



BIO

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

voteadriana.com
vizzari.adriana@gmail.com

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

NICHOLAS COLANERI



BIO

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

AUTHORIZED BY NICHOLAS COLANERI

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

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

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

MARIA MAVRIDIS



BIO

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

AUTHORIZED BY MARIA MAVRIDIS

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

STEVE

MCGUINNESS



BIO

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

AUTHORIZED BY STEVE MCGUINNESS

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

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

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

RICK MILLS



BIO

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

AUTHORIZED BY RICK MILLS

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

WESTON MILLER

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



BIO

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

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

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

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

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

A MESSAGE FROM WESTON

If you vote for me, what can you expect?

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

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

- Treat bylaws as rules, not suggestions**
- Demand answers on stormwater, sewer capacity, parking, traffic and climate impact before development approvals
 - Defend the official plan, support secondary plans
 - Insist on consistent and fair zoning and bylaw enforcement
- Make votes public**
- Explain my votes, with reasons, after each meeting
 - Call for easily accessible electronic records for all of council
 - Limit closed-door sessions to the legal minimum
- Listen first**
- Restore resident advisory committees
 - Consult resident associations across Niagara-on-the-Lake
 - Seek resident input at the outset, not after-the-fact



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

ANDREW
NIVEN

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



BIO

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

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

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

A MESSAGE FROM ANDREW

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

AUTHORIZED BY ANDREW NIVEN

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

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

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



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

SANDRA
O'CONNOR

BIO

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

www.sandraoconnor.cawww.facebook.com/sandraoconnornotl

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

Proven leadership, proven record, proven integrity.

AUTHORIZED BY THE SANDRA O'CONNOR CAMPAIGN

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE / 2026

Your town.
Your vote.

52.2%

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

HOW MANY OF US VOTED?

2018

58.7%

Turnout fell **10.9 percentage points**.

2022

47.8%

66 votes

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

Go vote.

Monday, Oct. 26

10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

VOTE EARLY

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

VOTE ONLINE

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

JENNIFER AJANDI



BIO

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

Top 3 Priorities

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

ACTION PLAN

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

AUTHORIZED BY THE JENNIFER AJANDI CAMPAIGN

2022 MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Where NOTL’s votes came from

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

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

73%

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

7,578

valid votes for mayor across all five districts

WHAT THESE NUMBERS SHOW

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

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

ELECTION 2026: BY THE NUMBERS

The Lake Report

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

11

candidates for town
council in 2026

13

in 2022 election

COUNCILLOR
POSITIONS

6

IN 2026

8

IN 2022

POPULATION

Pop. 2021

19,088

2016 17,511

9.0

% increase
between
2016 and
2021

614

Increase in the number
of private dwellings
from 2016 to 2021

10

Number of doctors in
town in 2022

.....

13

in 2026

PROVINCIAL INCREASE
IN POPULATION %
FROM 2016 TO 2021

5.8

NATIONAL AVERAGE OVER
SAME TIME PERIOD

5.2

%

CHARACTER LOST

IMMEASURABLE

26 OCTOBER: ELECTION DATE

A MESSAGE FROM THE NIAGARA FOUNDATION

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

IT'S A TURNING POINT.

Council decisions shape everything from property taxes and flood prevention to heritage protection and responsible development.

So, what if you sit this one out?

Well, in 2022...

ONLY 47%
of eligible electors
cast a ballot.

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

TURNOUT
FELL 9%.

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

JUST 66
ballots determined
the final Council seat.

In 2018, the margin
was only 31.

Don't just vote. Vote strategically.

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

Five members can override strong-mayor decisions.

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

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

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

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

Status Quo or Change?

MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT ON OCTOBER 26



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

theniagarafoundation.com

This 13-foot-tall giraffe briefly lived on Queen



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

Last week was a random Ramblings to be certain, but who knew Silks Country Kitchen had so many fans here in our town? The number of comments regarding my column discussing the name Silks has been remarkable.

So many good vibes, such positive karma and such respect for the quality of the meals and staff. And the drinks.

I spend far too little time on the internet, but have often been intrigued by just how much useful and useless information can be found with even basic surfing. The natural flow from the name Silks to jockeys (watch the spelling) fasci-

nated me, and so very few even long time NOTLers had any idea. It really was interesting to learn that this Silks had absolutely nothing to do with lingerie. The Kentucky Derby, indeed.

It is indeed a small world, and my recent browsing brought me to another long-forgotten memory. The segue to the Gerry the Giraffe sculpture snuck up on me, and this short-time Niagara-on-the-Lake character deserves some comment. It certainly garnered a lot of attention back in 1987.

Gerry the Giraffe is a memorable 13-foot-tall sculpture created by former U.S. Marine Jack Kearney in Provincetown, Mass., at the northernmost tip of Cape Cod, past Chatham and the sand dunes of Newcomb's Hollow. Made from scrap car bumpers and various other auto parts, ingeniously resembling a giraffe. Weighing about 1,200 pounds, roughly the same as a full-grown adult male giraffe.

Who knows how or why, but John Ronald Catena from this area was intrigued, and pur-



Meet Gerry the Giraffe: a 13-foot-tall sculpture purchased years ago by John Ronald "the Cat" Catena, former owner of the Prince of Wales Hotel. It sat outside the hotel in Old Town, but was banished after a mild uproar from some who thought a giraffe made of scrap metal didn't belong in the heritage district. SOURCED

chased Gerry the Giraffe for \$4,300 (in American dollars). The details are difficult to unwind, but suffice to say that "the Cat" had a knack for attracting media attention and causing controversy.

He was unique and creative. Man the torpedoes and full speed ahead. For a short time, Ron owned the Prince of Wales Hotel, Silks Country Kitchen, the Cat's

falo chicken wings in all of Canada. The things you didn't know. To create more seating space for paying customers, the Cat bought an old caboose and had it moved to Glenridge Plaza. He knocked out the south wall of his original restaurant and attached the caboose, but oops — he had forgotten to run the concept past the Toronto based landlord.

Too late, man, and about 40 years later, the Cat's Caboose is still a going concern. There are many reasons why, including proximity to Brock University, ample parking, and professional, hard working employees under the leadership of Scott Hill. Give it a try when you next find yourself peckish and in the Garden City.

When they added the caboose, they had to move Gerry the Giraffe. He still stands proudly on the roof of Hudson Welding and Fabrication, 326 St. Paul St. W, corner of Vansickle Road.

If you have a quirky sense of humour, drive over and have a look.

Now, during every local election campaign, I find myself overwhelmed by the number of candidate signs. So much work, but so effective and part of the game.

This is going to be an election with very close results, so I respectfully encourage NOTLers to study up on the issues and vote.

To ramble dramatically while winding up, on the way back yesterday from family Thanksgiving in Ottawa, I saw literally thousands of signs. Election signs, and other signs of all types.

The sign that made me smile most was right here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. In Virgil, in front of Penner's Home Hardware:

"No pumpkin spice here. But lots of rakes and leaf bags."

And on Niagara Stone Road going towards Old Town through the road construction, in front of the big red church (Niagara United Mennonite Church) the timely and thoughtful and kind sign, "Bless all of the road construction workers."

rossrocket9@gmail.com

Helping seniors find more joy, purpose and connection

Emerging research – and the lived experience of older adults themselves – points to a powerful truth: the later chapters of life are not defined by limitation or preservation, but by possibility.

Join us at The Shaw for a wide variety of Positive Aging programming this fall.

Improv for Nimble Minds

Oct 21
Improve your cognitive agility and stay present in the moment with this fun and engaging class. Participants will explore the art of improvisational theatre and strengthen their brains. \$10 per class.

Zest, Zing & Oomph! A Scene Study

Oct 21, 28 | Nov 4, 11, 18
The scene study experience offers a wonderful opportunity to stay mentally active, connect with others and express oneself, fostering joy, creativity and a sense of fulfilment on the stage and in this stage of life. The workshop will culminate in an invited presentation on November 18. \$160.

Actors' Secrets Revealed

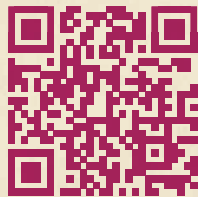
Session 1: Oct 15, 22 | Session 2: Nov 5, 12, 19, 26
Join us for this series where actors reveal how they learn all those lines. Memorization is a healthy way to exercise your brain. Each session takes you through the techniques that actors at The Shaw use in their daily practice to prepare. You'll have friends asking, "How do you learn all those lines?" Strengthen your brain and boost your confidence. Perfect for theatre lovers, lifelong learners and anyone who is aiming to support their cognitive health. \$40 per session.

Confidence Dance!

Oct 16, 23 | Nov 6, 13, 20, 27
This progressive four-week session is a playful intro to the basics of different dance forms that you have seen on the Festival stage. Build physical strength and improve your balance through technique and even a bit of choreography! \$10 per class.

Attend the Inaugural CARE Summit

Nov 7 | 9:30am – 3pm | Shaw Artists' Village – Burton Centre
Free and open to the public
This event, focused on the intersection of the arts and aging, brings together Creativity, Aging, Research and Exploration (CARE) to help people thrive as they age. Older adults and caregivers will have the opportunity to experience the benefits of The Shaw's Positive Aging workshops firsthand, engage with local organizations and resources while hearing presentations on mobility, wellness, creativity and the experience of aging.



Call the Shaw Box Office at 1-800-511-7429 to book your spot. For more info visit shawfest.com/positiveaging or email education@shawfest.com

SHAWFEST.COM | 1-800-511-SHAW





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Editor-In-Chief: Richard Harley
Managing Editor: Zahraa Hmood
Editor Emeritus: Kevin MacLean
Design & Layout: Richard Harley
Advertising: Megan Vanderlee
Contributors: Dr. William Brown, Penny-Lynn Cookson, Patty Garriock, Maddy Gordon, Steve Hardaker, Andrew Hawlitzky, Brian Marshall, NOTL Museum, Ross Robinson, Julia Sacco, Paige Seburn, Kyra Simone, Tim Taylor, Jill Troyer, Garth Turner, Dave Van de Laar, and many more members of the NOTL community.

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



Your Lake Report is the proud winner of 192 national and provincial awards for journalism and advertising excellence.



#97: Leave a kind message in sidewalk chalk where people will see it.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock

“It’s such a lucky accident, having been born, that we’re almost obligated to pay attention.”
- Mark Strand

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

Email:
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Story Ideas: editor@niagaranow.com
Advertising: advertising@niagaranow.com
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Have a lead on a story?

Call 905.359.2270 or send an email to editor@niagaranow.com

Opinion

This is how I’m voting



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

It was my first election campaign. Heavily contested. I needed exposure.

“Would you like to be the celebrity judge for the baby contest?” the fall fair organizer asked.

Stupidly, I agreed. After all, people would be watching me — 30 sets of parents, plus a big audience of relatives. Visibility, just when I needed some. What could go wrong?

Lots. I picked one jolly infant. And pissed off 29 moms. Argh.

Well, this post may be like the baby parade. You might despair I’m not picking your fave candidate. But here goes. This is how I’m voting.

The context is simple. First, NOTL must hit the brakes for a while, lest we lose the very authenticity of a bucolic, beautiful, peaceful, historic and iconic small town that roots the economy. We need leaders who understand that, can stand up to developers, real estate promoters, the pressures of the GTA and the province. So, time for change. But experience also matters. Just throwing the old bums out is not a good strategy. Some of those bums are okay.

Second, I won’t judge candidates I’ve not spent time with.

Third, if we elect the same people (and most are reoffering) we’ll get the same result. More hotels. More bending over for tourism. More construction. More old buildings razed. More density. More compromise. More loss.

Some of that is inevitable, of course. But first, let’s brake. Absorb what’s al-



They donated heavily to help buy and preserve this historic urban forest in NOTL. Now Vaughn Goettler, with his partner Lauren, believe he should run the place as lord mayor. Columnist Garth Turner agrees. A few council candidates deserve a vote, too.

ready been pushed through. Ensure citizens are heard and that we have enough pipes, wires and resources to handle what’s already coming. The Parliament Oak hotel will be a shock when completed, while the Royal George complex will forever disfigure Queen Street. The Clayfield complex is a blight on that end of town. New threats include the Rand-Ritz, more Glendale towers, potential casinos, airport eruption plus townhouses and a roundabout in St Davids. Enough already.

My choices for council are simple.

Support goes to those brave three who tried to temper the conversion of a wee downtown theatre into a multi-story, 50,000-square-foot industrial complex and, in the process, demolish four old landmark buildings. Gary Burroughs, Andrew Niven and Sandra O’Connor stood up for heritage. If NOTL is not all about preserving the past, it might as well be Mississauga.

Yeah, Burroughs is an old guy now. He’s also wise, with an institutional memory and deep experience. His best-before date has yet to arrive. O’Connor is a caring, responsible woman. Niven is decent and

earnest. They all stepped up when it mattered.

We need new, as well. Steve McGuinness is perhaps the biggest nerd I have encountered in decades. He knows more about the town budget, infrastructure, admin and challenges facing us than the people running the place. If he throws himself into this awful job as he did the campaign, things will not be the same around here.

And to add a true cowboy flavour to council, we need Nick Colaneri at the table. He’s young, controversial, despised by the developer-elite class in town and frequently unbearable. But he has passion and guts. He was David to the Shaw’s Goliath.

And what of the lord mayor’s job? It means running the place while being our sole rep at the region — which will be headed by a Doug Ford pro-growth disciple. Who will be our champion?

Andrea Kaiser, former regional councillor, wine entrepreneur and marketer is also a serial local and federal campaigner. I dissed her in this column for saying she’d be a part-time mayor because the pay sucks and questioned her lack of passion. She responded to me with grace, poise and professionalism.

She has much to offer. But this is not her race or time.

The current deputy mayor, Erwin Wiens, is a big man, which probably helped him be a great cop. He’s rules-based, procedural and pro-development, believing in the system and structures, yet can engage and captivate with boyish charm. He also has a busy life with his farm and seems to harbour federal ambition. A good man. But he is not change.

In contrast to the others, Vaughn Goettler is older, iconoclastic and a whole lot richer. The former entrepreneur and HVAC exec built and sold an empire, has donated millions locally and is ready to devote a frenetic retirement to NOTL.

He’d chill development, corral town staff, be an alpha male cowboy, break some stuff and stand up to the pro-tourism forces.

He’s not a perfect man, of course, with a penchant for silly cars and a tendency to shun socks. With Goettler, we’d also get a twofer — his wife and partner, Lauren, is a force of nature.

He’s change. We need him.

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

garth@garth.ca

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Fall charm on Regent

There's nothing like autumn in a place as charming as Old Town. At 167 Regent St., this home is adorned with all kinds of harvest-time gourds and rustic foliage. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Residents with expert experience should be heard

Dear editor:

One of the shortcomings of our departing Niagara-on-the-Lake town council is the way they abandoned the citizens' advisory committees that helped previous councils look at issues. Smart people know that they don't have all the answers, and that it makes sense to look to others for ideas and recommendations.

In our Oct. 26 municipal election, only one candidate for lord mayor, Vaughn Goettler, has promised to bring back advisory committees. This is forward-looking; I served on the NOTL urban design committee that was attacked (refer to town council meeting of July 25, 2023) and eventually dismantled.

I think our councillors could have made better decisions about design and development if more of them had paid attention to our views instead of stifling us.

The most successful organizations in the world rely on arms-length advisors. Committees don't make the decisions, but their members have skills, expertise and insights that can help



In the lead-up to the decision to approve a hotel at the former Parliament Oak school site, Chrys Kaloudis felt her perspective on the project as a former member of the municipal urban design committee (before the committee was dissolved) wasn't appreciated by the town. FILE

town staff and councillors make better decisions. They add value at minimal or no cost to taxpayers.

This is something candidate Erwin Wiens doesn't appear to understand and Andrea Kaiser only recently acknowledged and said she would look at. They claim to want to listen but give the sense that citizens' opinions just get in the way.

To be fair, those who prefer to ignore or oppose the idea of citizens' advisory committees often say they can rely on the expertise of

lead-up to the decision to allow a massive hotel at the Parliament Oak school site, I was invited to meet with deputy mayor Erwin Wiens.

It was not impressive. Despite committee members being carefully vetted, he deemed me "not an expert" — only staff could provide expertise. He also dismissed my offer to review the urban design committee terms of reference.

I know many canvassers can vouch that I'm not the only NOTL resident who feels that he or she hasn't been listened to by the current town and regional councils.

This needs to change. Of the 28 committees that existed at the time of our last election four years ago, only eight remain. I'm glad Vaughn Goettler has committed to bringing back advisory committees. We have remarkable resident talent from which to draw.

At a time when Niagara-on-the-Lake is under unprecedented pressure for more development and tourism, we need all the advice we can get.

Chrys Kaloudis
NOTL

Correction: In the Oct. 8, 2026 edition of The Lake Report, a letter to the editor written by Gienek Ksiazkiewicz stated there is an ongoing legal dispute between the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Cole Petrie due to Petrie's basement being flooded following this summer's two extreme rainstorms. Cole Petrie has confirmed there is no legal dispute and that he has not sued the municipality.

We welcome your letters

The Lake Report welcomes your letters to the editor. Please, write early and often. Letters ideally should be under 400 words long. Occasionally, longer letters may be published. All letters may be edited for conciseness, accuracy, libel and defamation. Please include your full name, street address and a daytime telephone number so that authorship can be authenticated. Only names and general addresses (eg. Virgil, St. Davids, NOTL) will be published. Send your letters to editor@niagaranow.com or drop them by our office at 496 Mississauga St., NOTL.



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

This Supreme Court justice and equal rights advocate used her left hand to make her mark in lead opinions like U.S. v. Virginia.

Last issue category: PAGE BOYS
Clue: This Golden Ticket holder takes Grandpa Joe with him to the chocolate factory.
Answer: Who is Charlie Bucket?
Answered first by: Margie Enns
Also answered correctly (in order) by: Lynda Collet, Sue Rautenberg, Bob Wheatley, Jane Morris, Donna Pearce, Marla Percy, Jeff Lake, Hedy Wiebe, Jim Dandy, Nancy Rocca, Katie Reimer, Wade Durling, Hugh Lundy, Samantha Pockele, Emma Balsas, Sheila Meloche
Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)
***REMEMBER TO PUT "WHAT IS" FOR JEOPARDY QUESTIONS!**

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Get ready for fewer seats at the regional table under Ford



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall
Columnist

In business life, I would always tell my teams: “Plan for the worst and work to realize the best.”

This simple strategy was predicated on my belief that if planning was based on the worst case scenario, then we would have a rock-solid foundation upon which to leverage new opportunities and potentially achieve maximum returns. And it was a guiding philosophy that resulted in multiple start-up successes.

But, sometimes I really hate when the worst case predictions hatched in my cynical old brain are proven to be right.

As those who read this column regularly may recall, I have strongly asserted that there is no longer any real motivation for the provincial government to amalgamate Niagara Region.

Why?

Allow me to explain some of the rationale underwriting my position.

Quite simply, amalgamation was never about saving money – because, despite Premier Ford’s claim that he had “never seen” it, there is uncontestable proof (“Arch-i-text: Amalgamation costs less? Some researchers disagree,” Feb. 26) that amalgamated jurisdictions show increased costs rather than decreases (something that I’m sure the “bright sparks” in his office were completely aware of).

Nope, cost savings and efficiencies certainly didn’t drive the Ford government’s penchant for amalgamation, rather I’d opine that it was a mechanism to vest centralized control of policy and decision-making down to the regional level into the hands of the provincial ministers and, ultimately the premier, sitting in their palatial Queen’s Park offices.

Apparently Mr. Ford continues to voice the belief that he can do better — in spite of having mismanaged Ontario into the dubious distinction of being perhaps the most indebted sub-national jurisdiction in the entire world with a projected 2026-2027 debt of \$485 billion (notably more than 146 global nation states including New Zealand);



Based on a proposal for a weighted voting system the province of Ontario put out last week, NOTL’s likely to lose a lot of its power at the region. FILE

driving up that debt by nearly 44 per cent since taking power in 2018.

Or, perhaps like the orange man south of our national border, he lives a fictional narrative that, if repeated enough times, becomes reality; provided, of course, his invested stakeholders are satiated by government largess to the point of agreeing to maintain the fairy tale.

It is true that centralized provincial control of regional policy and decision-making would facilitate the Ford government’s agenda.

And, driven by that arguably warped perspective, as apparently viewed through the rose-coloured glasses that everyone in the premier’s office wears, I can imagine one of the “bright sparks” on his staff explaining to the premier that the government’s “control” objective could be effectively accomplished by abandoning the amalgamation option in favour of a provincially reimagined regional governance model.

Continuing on this conjectural theme, it is not a stretch to envision the “bright spark” advising we would effectively achieve our desired centralized control objective with much less political blowback from the public by completing the following:

Restructuring regional councils to eliminate democratically elected representatives (since they are potentially an unknown and difficult to manage variable that may actually feel a responsibility to represent their voters);

Vesting the remaining regional council seats to

only the municipally elected mayors augmented by the installation of a carefully selected appointed council chair (a Ford employee in all but name) gifted with the equivalent of “strong mayor powers”;

And, finally, establishing a rep-by-pop weighted voting system on this reformed council such that the three mayors of Niagara’s largest municipalities plus the chair could effectively carry all important decisions that came before said council.

After all, simply providing enhanced access to provincial decision-makers (and potential preferred funding that flows from those offices) should keep these “big-city” mayors aligned. And, if it doesn’t work, we can always return to amalgamation.

Now, this backroom conversation is purely an invention. However, within the past few short months, the Ford government has enacted legislation to restructure regional governance along these exact lines.

Last week, the province introduced a proposed weighted voting system for the restructured Niagara regional council. The representation by population calculation that has been suggested is based on one vote per each 20,000 citizens rounded to the nearest whole number (that is 20,000, 40,000, 60,000 and so on).

Under this system, the mayors of St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland will have an aggregate total of 15 votes (seven, five and three respectively) while the combined votes of all the other municipal mayors will equal 10.

The appointed chair also has one vote, but also has veto power over budgets and bylaws that can only be over-ridden by a two-thirds majority (17-plus votes) of council — a majority that cannot be achieved without the support of either St. Catharines or, Niagara Falls and Welland or, some combination thereof to equal or exceed the required 17-plus vote threshold.

If you are one of the approximately 191,000 Niagara residents that live outside the boundaries of the three large cities, you have just been marginalized as a perpetual member of the minority.

There are far better solutions than this proposal, but I doubt the Ford government is listening.

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



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Don't paint rookie politicians with a **broad brush**

Dear editor:

Two letters to The Lake Report published on Sept. 24 merit a response: "A few rookie politicians are fine — but not a lot" and "Rookie politicians have their work cut out for them."

First, while the term "rookie politician" is commonly used, it does little justice to the candidates seeking office in Niagara-on-the-Lake this year.

A look at the campaign materials of first-time candidates such as Weston Miller and Steve McGuinness, for example, reveals professional experience, volunteer involvement and strong community credentials. Although they would be new to elected office, these candidates and others bring valuable skills and perspectives that could serve our town well. The label "rookie" risks understating their capacity to contribute.

Second, both letters make broad claims that deserve closer examination. One suggests that major change would be "an unmitigated disaster," while the other argues that "the only winners in a rookie council is [sic] the bureaucracy."

Perhaps the authors can point to past examples that support their concerns. However, there are also



Robin Cardozo says calling a candidate running for public office a "rookie" doesn't seem to do justice to what they can offer the town, highlighting council candidates Weston Miller, right, and Steve McGuinness as individuals who have professional experience, volunteer involvement and strong community credentials. FILE PHOTOS

examples of new leadership bringing fresh perspectives, establishing different priorities and achieving positive results.

Neither outcome is inevitable; much depends on the individuals involved and their willingness to work constructively together.

Third, both letters draw comparisons with the corporate world, where seasoned professionals and effective mentoring are rightly valued. While there are lessons to be learned from that environment, municipal government operates differently.

Town council does not report to a CEO and a board of directors; councillors must respond to a diverse range of residents, community groups and other



stakeholders, often with competing interests.

Mentoring new councillors may be valuable, but it should not be confused with expecting them simply to follow established practices. They will undoubtedly face a learning curve, but — as several candidates have pointed out — listening to residents, asking questions and bringing fresh perspectives are equally important parts of effective representation.

At the federal and provincial levels, voters regularly elect new governments, with entirely new cabinets and leaders. These governments must learn to work with the public service while advancing their policy priorities. Experience and institutional knowl-

edge matter, but so do new ideas, clear direction and a willingness to challenge established approaches.

Finally, voting for change should not automatically be interpreted as a desire to "throw the bums out." Perhaps we would all be better served by leaving that dismissive expression out of this election. Choosing new councillors may simply reflect a desire for new priorities, or a new culture at town hall.

I believe many of this year's first-time candidates bring the experience, judgement, skills and determination to contribute meaningfully to municipal government. They deserve to be assessed on their individual merits, their ideas and their commitment to the community, rather than on their lack of previous experience in elected office.

Ultimately, the question is not whether a council has enough first-term councillors or veterans. It is whether its members can listen, learn, work together and make thoughtful decisions in the best interests of Niagara-on-the-Lake. That is the standard by which all candidates, new and experienced alike, should be judged.

Robin Cardozo
NOTL

With amalgamation, other considerations **become pointless**

Dear editor:

Emotions run high during this election cycle and recent letters in The Lake Report call for change, leaders who can control development, a reduction in commercialization and leadership that embraces opportunity. All fair points depending on one's perspective — and all missing the most important point, namely the greatest existential threat to Niagara-on-the-Lake in electoral history, the very real threat of amalgamation.

If amalgamated, all other concerns are moot because the forces that want to consume our unique character and resources will have control and Niagara Falls and its municipal allies will outvote us at every turn on the region.

We will have no voice. We will be the poor neighbours

in the conglomerate of the Niagara Region. This is the most important single item for consideration when deciding who the next mayor shall be.

To fight amalgamation we need a mayor that is experienced in dealing with all levels of government and their bureaucratic administrations. A mayor that has cultivated these governmental relationships, is strong and will face up to the region, the Province and the federal government.

We must elect a mayor who will bring their own style of leadership, building on what the current council has achieved, protect our beloved town from amalgamation and position us for the future. That mayor is Erwin Wiens.

Vote wisely.

Peter Warrack
NOTL

We need a clear plan for **accountability**

Dear editor:

Throughout this election, residents have asked about taxes, tourism, developers, flooding, roundabouts and many other community concerns. Collectively, these concerns raise something fundamental: trust in the people we elect to council.

While following the candidates forums, I have been hoping to hear about what specific accountability measures the candidates will commit to personally undertaking, and publicly sharing throughout their term, in order to prove to residents that they are consistently placing citizens first.

I am less interested in hearing about "why" candidates believe we should trust them, which is usually more about assurances (something along the lines of "trust me I'm trustworthy," and "I'll also listen and be transparent").

Instead, I am much more interested in what candidates have said about "how" they will prove to the community they are trustworthy through specific publicly verifiable actions.

It all boils down to who do we trust the most — and least.

Geoffrey Fisher
St. Davids

Costs are going up. We **need change** to help keep up

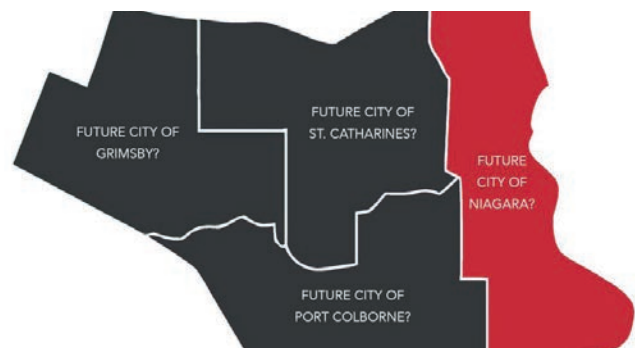
Dear editor:

Over the last 56 years, NOTL has operated in the same way. Based on what we are hearing, looks like we are facing another four years of the same old, same old.

Candidates keep blaming upper levels of government (the region and province) for the high-cost burden on our residents. The property taxes in NOTL and in other municipalities in Niagara, have risen over 30 per cent over the last four years. That's three times higher than inflation and higher than grocery costs.

This massive increase was just to keep the lights on and has not addressed emerging issues like mitigating flooding, replacing aging infrastructure, addressing homelessness, poverty and food insecurity amongst our Niagara population.

Perhaps our candidates are living in a bubble and are so narrowly focused on very micro concerns. It appears they are not looking at the big picture.



Letter writer Harry Schlange hopes for amalgamation.

Canada is facing increased economic uncertainty, slow growth and job losses. There is a cost of living and affordability crisis that has been impacting Niagara, greater than many other regions in the province.

Mayoral candidates using gimmicks such as, taking a \$1-dollar annual salary and suggesting NOTL pay less for police servicing costs (which would mean the other 11 lower-tier municipalities will have to pay more will never happen) are not viable solutions.

We need a very bold transformation, not incremental tweaks. Amalgamation will conservatively

free up over \$50 million annually to address emerging needs and keep tax increases at the current inflation rate.

If not amalgamation, then there needs to be quantum leap cuts in services, which our residents will not accept.

There may be other options to reduce the cost of current base services significantly in collaboration with the other 12 municipalities, since over \$1.2 billion of the \$2 billion of costs are of similar services.

They will need to be leading-edge solutions on how and who provides the services to produce cost reductions for the same level

of service. This will require a very progressive lord mayor who represents NOTL on the Niagara Region council. This transformation needs to be proposed and actioned swiftly early in the new term, no later than the end of 2028.

Unfortunately, with only 30 to 40 per cent voter participation in Niagara, we are not hearing the voices of the silent majority, many of whom are suffering to make ends meet.

When we vote for our next lord mayor or local councillors, consider who will have the courage to make the bold quantum leap changes needed to address the affordability crisis.

If not, in 2030 we will see another 25 to 30 per cent increase in our property taxes. This will not move the needle on addressing the emerging crisis facing Niagara residents.

We do not want to be in position after this four-year term to say "after 60 years it is the same old, same old."

Harry Schlange
NOTL



We welcome your letters

The Lake Report welcomes your letters to the editor. Please, write early and often. Letters ideally should be under 400 words long. Occasionally, longer letters may be published. All letters may be edited for conciseness, accuracy, libel and defamation. Please include your full name, street address and a daytime telephone number so that authorship can be authenticated. Only names and general addresses (eg. Virgil, St. Davids, NOTL) will be published. Send your letters to editor@niagaranow.com.



Tell the province we don't want **weighted voting**

Dear editor:

A standard mathematical formula treats every municipality as an interchangeable modern suburb. Niagara-on-the-Lake is fundamentally different.

As the first capital of Upper Canada, NOTL is a living national historic asset and a vital provincial cultural trust. Decisions regarding regional land use, infrastructure, and environmental protections directly impact heritage conservation that belongs to all Ontarians.

Reducing NOTL's voice to a baseline one-vote minimum allows larger urban centers to outvote and override local heritage guidelines, effectively placing a provincial cultural jewel under external control.

Furthermore, while NOTL has a permanent residential population of roughly 19,000, its economic footprint is massive. Through its world-class wine industry, agricultural preservation, and global



Niagara-on-the-Lake's not just any small town, and reducing it to one vote at regional council would be a mistake, writes Judith Barnes. FILE PHOTO

tourism, NOTL serves as a primary economic engine and tax revenue generator for the entire Niagara Region.

A framework that calculates political representation strictly by residential headcount entirely ignores a municipality's financial and commercial contributions to the regional tax pool. It is fundamentally undemocratic to expect NOTL to fuel regional prosperity while silencing its voice on how those

regional funds are spent.

To understand why this is an immediate threat, we have to look at the Province of Ontario's newly released "Weighted Voting Framework for Niagara" (Proposal 55235), which is currently open for public comment.

Under the Better Regional Governance Act, the Niagara Regional Council is being downsized to just 13 members. The new council — taking office this November — will consist

of the 12 local mayors plus a provincially appointed regional chair.

To account for this shrinkage, the province is introducing a population-weighted voting system. Their formula divides a town's population by 20,000 and rounds to the nearest whole number to determine its council votes.

Because of this math, St. Catharines will wield seven votes and Niagara Falls will hold five votes. Meanwhile, because NOTL falls just under the 20,000 threshold, we are relegated to a single, solitary one vote baseline.

Worse yet, the province's release notes that "rules determining which matters weighted voting could apply to would be a local matter, determined by the region." This means our lone vote will be left at the mercy of the larger urban majorities, who will have the voting power to decide exactly when to activate their heavy population-weighted advantage.

To avoid pitting municipalities against one another, the province should abandon this straight population-weighted model. Instead, Ontario should implement a double majority framework for critical regional decisions — a solution being championed by our local leaders.

Under a double majority system, each mayor would receive one equal vote for standard business, but major regional or legacy financial decisions would require support from at least six of the 12 local municipalities and those supporting towns must represent at least 50 per cent of Niagara's total population.

This balanced approach respects population equity for larger cities while ensuring historically and economically distinct communities like ours retain a meaningful voice.

Our community cannot afford to stay silent. The province has opened a brief window for public feedback, and we must make

our voices heard before the deadline.

How to submit your comments and fight back:

Online registry: Visit the official Ontario Regulatory Registry and search for Proposal 55235, or go directly to the Niagara Weighted Voting Framework Proposal Page. The deadline to submit public comments is Nov. 6.

Contact Your local MPP: In addition to the registry, I urge residents to contact the office of our local representative, Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates, to demand he take our opposition directly to the floor at Queen's Park. You can email his constituency office at wgates-co@ndp.on.ca or call his office directly at 905-357-0681 to voice your concerns.

Let's ensure the province hears loud and clear that Niagara-on-the-Lake's history, economy and future cannot be reduced to a rounding error.

Judith Barnes
NOTL

A **critical look** at Wiens' decisions these past four years on council

Dear editor:

Erwin Wiens has consistently been supportive of most development proposals in all areas of town and who, in direct conversation with myself, once explained what a vital role developers, like his first cousin Rainer Hummel, play in unlocking the potential of under or undeveloped property, stating the developer spends thousands of dollars to get the property rezoned into a subdivision or commercial use.

But what he neglects to mention is the developer makes millions of dollars in doing so, which adds to the cost of the homes or businesses constructed simply by gaining exceptions to our official plan and zoning by-laws (and I won't even opine about the relationships between municipal politicians and developers).

It is really too bad the lord mayor debate forum didn't include a question about the community planning permit system, which has been included in our new official plan to elicit the position of our lord mayor candidates.

I note that when a motion came before council on May 26 to direct staff to provide an information report on the feasibility, staff capacity and cost of advancing a community planning permit



Erwin Wiens with Premier Doug Ford in NOTL.

system and Chautauqua neighbourhood review, our current deputy lord mayor Wiens voted against it.

Wiens has consistently portrayed himself as the best friend and supporter of the Niagara-on-the-Lake agriculture community and yet, according to his statement at the mayoral forum, the ditches were last "brushed" rather than cleared in 2014-2015, although historically, municipal drains and ditches have been brushed on average every seven years and, with invasive phragmites, are suggested every three years.

Wouldn't that have suggested that drain clearing should have been top of the agenda for Wiens when he took office in 2022? Instead, we had historic flooding in 2026.

Wiens is sandwiched between Glendale and the

Niagara District Airport since, as a commissioner, he can hardly deny his role in the expansion plans to extend the existing 5,000-foot main runway by 2,500 feet to enable safe operations for larger North American commercial aircraft and at the same time support the height of the White Oaks development, which seems to fly in the face of Transport Canada restrictions.

Wiens says absolute no to amalgamation, but two years ago, there he was at the airport and then the next day at cousin Rainer's house by the NOTL golf course, feting and supporting Doug Ford's election, who, it turns out, is hell-bent on dismantling NOTL government in favour of amalgamating us into a megalopolis.

Only Vaughan Goetler has pledged to not use strong-mayor powers to veto the democratic majority rule of council. Erwin says it saves huge money in the budget process, but what is to preclude Vaughan from simply getting the majority approval of council to follow the same process instead of simply dictating he will use strong-mayor powers to do so?

Bob Bader
NOTL

Thanks for the reminder of what Niagara-on-the-Lake has lost

Dear editor:

It is autumn in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and this past Thanksgiving weekend gave us pause to give thanks to our families, friends and neighbours. We give thanks for the harvest and for safe passage in our journey through life. It is also time to give thanks for the memories of what was and what we have lost.

With this in mind, after we have lost so much of the character of our town during the last administration, are we in the mood for giving thanks?

To be sure, I am grateful that we only had a part-time lord mayor — imagine what more damage could have been wrought if he had been full-time.

I am grateful for the awesome memories I have of Parliament Oak School, where our kids went — now made all the more poignant by the fact that it is so completely gone, replaced by concrete and commerce. I am lucky to have my memories because that's all that's left. So for this, I expect that I owe thanks to our lord mayor, deputy mayor and the three councillors who voted for the new development (see Steve McGuinness's website).



Victor Tarnoy expresses his gratitude for the Niagara-on-the-Lake he grew up in — much of which is now gone, he laments. He's hopeful for a change. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

I am deeply thankful to have lived in Niagara-on-the-Lake for decades and for what had been a small town and community balanced with an international reputation — thankful for the heritage buildings and the towering trees. So many memories of what has been lost in just a handful of years.

I am grateful that I lived and worked in a town where anyone would have scoffed at the suggestion that a tower crane would cast its shadow over our houses and trees in the heart of a national heritage district. I

suppose I should extend my thanks to Solmar Construction and Two Sisters, and of course our part-time lord mayor, deputy mayor and a few councillors, for reminding me that I have lost something.

Thanks for the memories.

I am truly grateful that there is a possibility that this could change. The upcoming election is a time to look forward, but also to remember what has been lost. For Niagara-on-the-Lake, this is a consequential moment.

Victor Tarnoy
NOTL



Voters deserve answers on development

Dear editor:
Municipal election time has come around again and I find myself struggling to decide who to vote for. In the last cycle, I thought we had elected a council that shared my concerns for preserving the things that make Niagara-on-the-Lake special, especially its heritage district, and taking a balanced, considered approach to growth and development. I have been bitterly disappointed.

I live in Old Town. Like my neighbours, I choose to live here because of the wonderful ambience: tree-lined streets, quaint historic homes and the occasional horse-drawn carriage passing by. Yes, NOTL attracts a lot of tourists, but frankly their comings and goings have not detracted from my quality of life here. In fact, I am grateful that NOTL's vibrant tourism industry allows us to enjoy the theatre, shops and restaurants that are here only because of the revenue tourists provide.

Last election cycle, I made a point of having one-on-one discussions with the main mayoral candidates



and a number of those running for council. I voted believing that the people I voted for shared my priorities and concerns. However, this council has shown itself to be far more pro-development than my worst fears, at the expense of heritage preservation.

The most obvious (and disappointing) example is the approval of the Parliament Oak hotel development. Now, admittedly, the history of the Parliament Oak site over the last decade or so has been the story of one bad move after another, but council's decision to allow a massive hotel (the single biggest structure in Old Town) in a residential neighbourhood demonstrates incredibly poor judgment and a complete disregard for the concerns of those who live

nearby (including me). We could talk all day about the various elements of the Parliament Oak proposal (Why does it have to be so big? Why didn't council push for a smaller boutique hotel instead?), but the bottom line is that, as a voter, I feel betrayed.

Now I am faced with the prospect of voting again. I am struggling to see through the words that the candidates publish in their campaign materials ("responsible development," "resident-first government," "heritage preservation") to determine how they will vote on the critical issues that will come before council over the next four years.

The candidates who voted in favour of the Parliament Oak development (Wiens, Mavridis, Cater Vizzari) have demonstrated to me that I cannot trust their actions to align with my priorities. Those who voted against Parliament Oak (Burroughs, Balasiuk, O'Connor) have more credibility with me.

The Parliament Oak decision is in the past now, but

there are critical issues still to come before council, such as the development of the old hospital site and the Rand estate. Another issue that concerns me greatly as a resident in Old Town is the issue of infilling. In the past few years, a number of smaller, older houses in Old Town have been knocked down and replaced by overly large modern structures that somehow got approval to exceed the allowed lot coverage (see examples on Gate, Victoria and other streets). I fear that a continuation of this trend will greatly reduce the charm of Old Town (killing the golden goose).

As I prepare to vote Oct. 26, I call upon the candidates to make their positions on development and heritage protection clear and specific, so that we all can cast informed votes and hold our newly elected council accountable for subsequent actions. Having been "once bitten" by the last council, I am determined to be especially demanding of the next one.

John Foreman
Old Town



NOTL's home to more than a few ghost stories. Why not take advantage of them every year on Halloween?

Let's embrace spooky season in Old Town

Dear editor:

Niagara-on-the-Lake already knows how to celebrate Halloween. Could Old Town make a little more of it?

Think about what we already have. NOTL is often described as one of Ontario's most haunted towns. We have buildings with ghost stories attached to them — the Apothecary, the Olde Angel Inn and even a certain room in the Prince of Wales Hotel.

And we already have Ghost Walks, a Queen Street business that takes visitors on guided tours of haunted places and shares the stories associated with them. The interest in our town's ghost stories is already established.

We don't have to invent the atmosphere. It's already here.

Our town's history and folklore offer plenty of inspiration for a Halloween celebration that is entertaining, imaginative and respectful of the past.

So why not make a bigger deal of Halloween in Old Town?

What if participating restaurants offered a

Halloween-inspired dish or dessert? What if servers dressed up, or simply added some theatrical makeup? What if shops decorated their windows and businesses got creative with pumpkins, ghosts, witches and whatever else their imaginations could come up with?

And what if participating businesses offered a Halloween passport? Visitors could explore Old Town, collect stamps at participating establishments and enter a draw for a prize.

By the time Halloween arrives, Niagara-on-the-Lake's busiest tourist season is winding down. A co-ordinated Halloween celebration could give visitors another reason to come to Old Town, encourage them to explore more businesses and give local merchants a shared opportunity to attract customers.

We have the history. We have the architecture. We have the ghost stories. We have the restaurants, wineries, shops and hotels.

And, apparently, we have the ghosts.

Debra Rowe
Old Town

Has this council been accountable to you?

Dear editor:

As Niagara-on-the-Lake heads toward another municipal election, I believe residents should ask themselves a very simple question: Are you better served by your Town government today than you were four years ago?

Forget campaign slogans for a moment. Look at the record.

Do you believe Council has listened to residents? Has decision-making become clearer and more accountable? Are your tax dollars being spent in ways that reflect your priorities? Do you have greater confidence in Town Hall today than you did at the beginning of this term?

Those are questions every incumbent should be prepared to answer.

The patio issue provides one example worth considering.

The Town undertook extensive public consulta-

tion on its Temporary Patio Program. According to the Town's own staff report, 394 people completed the survey — significantly higher participation than the Town typically received for its surveys — and 93 per cent supported the Temporary Patio Program.

Despite that level of support, Council ultimately directed that the program be discontinued.

Council is not legally required to follow an opinion poll. Elected representatives sometimes have legitimate reasons for making decisions that differ from public sentiment. But when they do, residents are entitled to ask why.

What is the purpose of public consultation if overwhelming feedback can be set aside? What evidence outweighed that feedback? Was the reasoning communicated clearly enough to the people who participated?

The same standard should

apply to accountability and conflicts of interest.

Residents should review the public record for themselves. Look at Council minutes. Look at declarations of pecuniary interest. Look at Integrity Commissioner reports and decisions. Look at occasions when councillors participated in discussions and occasions when they removed themselves.

Then make your own judgment about the standards you expect from the people entrusted with making decisions on your behalf.

A declared conflict does not, by itself, mean somebody has done something wrong. Nor does an allegation establish misconduct. But transparency matters. Public confidence depends on residents believing that municipal decisions are being made in the public interest and that elected officials are taking appropriate steps when private, family or business interests

intersect with matters before Council.

This election should not simply be about who has the best signs, the largest social-media presence or the most familiar name.

It should be an assessment of the last four years.

Ask what was promised. Ask what was accomplished. Ask how Council responded when residents spoke. Ask how individual councillors voted on the issues that mattered to you. Ask who demonstrated transparency, accountability and respect for public participation.

Most importantly, don't take anyone else's word for it — including mine.

Look at the record.

Then vote according to what that record tells you about the kind of municipal government you want for Niagara-on-the-Lake over the next four years.

Scott Gauld
NOTL

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Have some fun

- Across
9. Hair cleaner (7)

10. German measles (7)

11. Chatter (7)

12. Anxious (7)

13. Emphasize (9)

15. Astonish (5)

16. Decent (11)

20. First prime minister of India (5)

22. Chinese revolutionary leader (3,3-3)

24. Type of chair (7)

26. Poorly matched (7)

27. Demolish (7)

28. Cooking vessel (7)
- Down
1. Sterile (7)

2. Largest desert (6)

3. On an upper floor (8)

4. Depression from lack of company (10)

5. Make beer or ale (4)

6. Spain and Portugal (6)

7. Last (8)

8. Walked like a duck (7)

14. Put out (10)

16. Practise (8)

17. Wrist band (8)

18. Indefinite person (7)

19. Fishermen (7)

21. Yet to arrive (6)

23. Squalid (6)

25. Supporting ropes (4)

Crossword Puzzle

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
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24						25		26						
27								28						

Last issue's answers

1	I	S	L	E	S		4	N		5	T	R	A	S	H
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	E	C				12	L	Y	R	I	C		I	N	
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25	L	A	T	H	E	S			27	I	R	O	N	E	D
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			5				2

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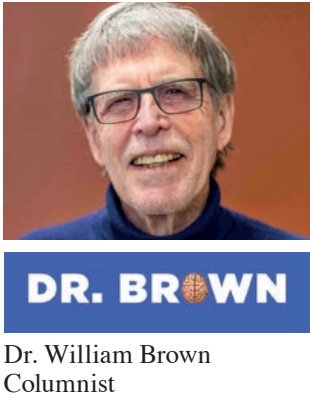
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Florence Hutchison

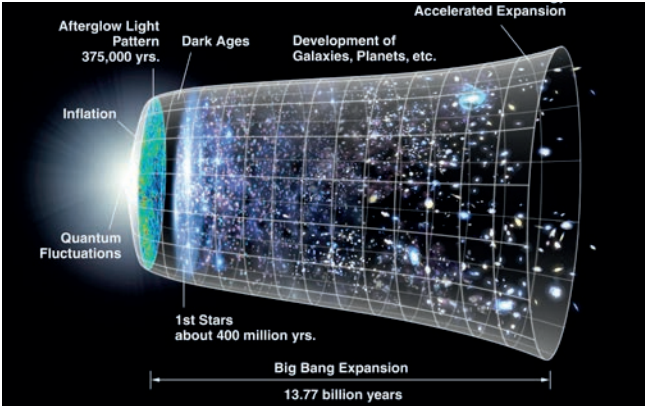
Florence was born and raised in St. Davids and when she married Lawrence Hutchison and they farmed their property on Progressive (Concession 2) Avenue. The Hutchisons later purchased Nelson William Stevens’ store in Virgil and turned it into a butcher shop. Florence became a familiar and much-loved figure in Virgil when she turned their store into a grocery and candy shop follow the death of her husband. Known to locals as “Floss,” Florence’s store became a fixture in the village. Parents came for groceries, while children came for the candy and treats that she was always happy to provide. Florence also boarded schoolteachers above the store, which was convenient because it was just a short walk to Virgil Public School. The store and remained at 1503 Niagara Stone Road as Virgil grew through the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. She was also active in both Virgil Methodist/United and Grace United Churches, the Women’s Institute, the Golden Age Club and the Home and School Association.

What kicked off the start of our universe?



Creation stories have been a feature of most human societies, and most have a beginning. So also with science although Isaac Newton’s universe had no beginning or end and was true for cosmology for the early 20th century. However, theoretical physics, especially Albert Einstein’s general theory of relativity published in 1916, and observations that galaxies were speeding away from each other, and faster the further they were away, strongly suggested the universe was expanding and if so, must have had a beginning — which, today, we call the Big Bang. The title was Big Bang was coined by Frank Hoyle, a well-respected physicist in his day who famously derided the whole idea of on BBC television. In 2019, James Peebles, a theoretical physicist, won

the Nobel Prize in 2019 for his “decisive discoveries about the universe’s origin and evolution,” a foundation which would shift the evolution of the universe “from speculation and religion to science” according to the Nobel committee. Peebles was a thorough, imaginative scientist (and a Canadian by birth) who with others, suggested that if the universe began with something incredibly hot and energetic, later expansion of that universe would be accompanied by cooling, which once the temperature dropped to a few thousand degrees Celsius, would free photons of energy whose wavelengths would be stretched into the microwave range by continued expansion of the universe. If the theoretical speculations of Peebles and his colleagues were right, traces of that microwave energy coming from all directions of the universe should be detectable to this day. The group also speculated that quantal variations in energy at the moment of the Big Bang would be reflected in variations in temperature and especially mass, the latter of which would be essential for gravity to shape mass into stars and galaxies and eventually life and us.



What exactly set off the nuclear reactions that made up the Big Bang? No one knows for sure. But Dr. William Brown speculates it may have been the terminal collapse of all the energy and matter of an earlier universe to provide the energy and mass for our universe. WIKIMEDIA Enter Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson, two physicists working for Bell laboratories, who were puzzled by microwave radiation seemingly coming from every direction, for which they were unable to any identifiable cause, including their own equipment. Frustrated, they were directed by colleagues to Peebles and others with the happy result that Penzias and Wilson won a Nobel Prize in 1978 for their discovery of cosmic microwave background radiation. Evidence gathered with satellites confirmed the cosmic origin for that microwave radiation and led to another Nobel Prize, this one shared by John Mather and George Smoot in 2006, their discovery of the black-body form and anisotropy of the cosmic background radiation. This was followed by later evidence for dark matter and dark energy in the universe. The former is five times more common than ordinary matter and thought to play a huge role in the gravitational shaping of stars, galaxies and black holes. Dark energy is thought to play a key role in the accelerated expansion of the universe. Both are “dark” because they do not interact with the electromagnetic spectrum. The collective studies were a masterpiece and led to the creation of a “standard” model for the universe’s origins which

is probably incomplete but serves as a useful model for directing and interpreting observational studies gathered with telescopes such as the James Webb telescope and the recently commissioned Vera Rubin telescope. All of which work invites unresolved questions: What is dark matter? We don’t know and not for lack of trying. The same might be said for dark energy and given that taken together, dark matter plus dark energy make up 95 per cent of the universe, that’s a gaping hole in the standard model and our understanding of the universe. What was present before the Big Bang? One of the best books on the Big Bang, “The First Three Minutes” was written by Steven Weinberg, a Nobel laureate (1975) for his work on the standard model for particle physics. The numbers are staggering. Quoting Weinberg, “At about 100th of a second after the Big Bang, the earliest time about which we have any confidence, the temperature of the universe was about 100,000 million (1011) degrees Centigrade, and the density of this cosmic soup was about 4,000 million (4x109) times that of

water.” Given that the temperature and density would have been exponentially much greater at time zero, it’s impossible for me to believe that anything so incredibly energetic and dense could be stable, even for a second. And if that’s true, the Big Bang must have started with the terminal collapse of all the energy and matter of an earlier universe to provide the energy and mass for our universe. My speculation of course, but consistent with the speculations of physicists like Roger Penrose who won a Nobel Prize in 2020. Finally, among several reasons why I so enjoy Weinberg is that he, like Richard Feynman, another famous theoretical physicist, felt that the best way to learn something was to teach it and that’s precisely what both men did repeatedly with success throughout their careers and we in our way, try to convey through The Lake Report and various science series at the NOTL Public Library. Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.

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Obituary

John Visser



VISSER, John —
With sadness we share that John Visser crossed the finish line for the final time on Oct. 9, 2026, at age 75. (Philippians 3:12).
John was passionate about cycling and speedskating. Born in the Netherlands, John immigrated to Canada at age 22 after completing an

agriculture degree. The last 20 years of his working life, he was employed in sales for Paul Boers / Prins Greenhouses. John often commented how fortunate he was to travel the countryside and enjoy the scenery, all while working.
John and his wife Nelly were married for 49 years. They also lived in the same home in Virgil all those years.
John and Nelly had three sons:
Richard and Brittany (Anderson)
Benjamin (5), Wesley (4)
Mark and Rachelle (Demetriades)
Sebastian (9), Adeline (8)
Ron and Robin (Enns)
Isla (11), Gemma (9)
John will also be missed by his brother in Holland, Romke Visser, sister-in-law Margot, and their children, Imme and Sjoerd (Anniek).
A memorial was held at Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines on Oct. 14.
Online condolences at www.tallmanfuneralhomes.ca.



NOTL in photos

Fire chief in training



Two-year-old Rya Willis was one of many who got up close and personal with those big, red trucks that speed through town to help save the day at NOTL Fire & Emergency Services’ open house on Oct. 3, held at the St. Davids fire station. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

A Man a Mile



This past long weekend was a big one for runners with big energy — as evidenced by our page 12 story and the run pictured here. The Man-a-Mile Race on Oct. 12 saw participants set off toward Oakes Park Stadium in Niagara Falls from the Fort George National Historic Site in Niagara-on-the-Lake, running along the Niagara River in a relay race with multiple teams. Here, nine-year-old Winston Wiley kicks off his mile with a smile. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Alone in Cape Breton, portrait painter discovers the forest

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

For six weeks, Sherry Park lived by herself in a ranger’s house in Cape Breton Highlands National Park and hiked four to six kilometres of trail every day.
“It was such a beautiful place,” she said. “At the same time, I was so terrified — really, really scared.”
Park, a Brampton-based artist, had mainly practiced portraits and had never painted a landscape scene. When she got home, she started.
“When I started painting,

it just flowed right out,” she said. “It just was natural.”
Paintings from that trip now hang in the Joyner Gallery at the Niagara Pump-house Arts Centre, which opened Park’s “Contemplation in Nature” exhibition with a reception on Oct. 4.
She was born in Korea and moved to Canada at age 10. She studied drawing and painting at OCAD University, known as the Ontario College of Art when she attended, and spent her final year in Florence, Italy.
After graduating, she worked as a pharmacy technician for about 15 years, creating no art.

Around 2013, she started again with portraits and drawings and joined artist groups, including the Ontario Society of Artists. After about five years, she was confident enough to rent a cubicle-sized studio in Brampton. She now paints in a studio at the Alton Mill Arts Centre in Caledon.
Park told The Lake Report she took on the residency in Cape Breton, N.B. to push herself, because challenging herself is the only way she can keep developing.
“I forced myself to go,” she said. “I wanted to see if I could develop as a landscape artist.”

Most days she hiked to see as much of the mountains and ocean trails as she could, photographing scenes from several angles and in different light. Her large canvases take two or three months each.
“When you look at the forest, it’s like there’s so much, and sometimes it’s overwhelming,” she said.
She plans to keep painting both landscapes and figures, and she hopes the show encourages people to appreciate and protect nature.
Park said she wants to paint cityscapes and urban scenes next, to see where that work leads.
andrew@niagaranow.com



Sherry Park had never painted a landscape before six weeks alone in Cape Breton Highlands National Park in 2019. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

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