



Winning an SUV | Page 6

## Provincial election 2025: Who's on the ballot?

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

With an early provincial election just four weeks away, two political parties in NOTL's riding are scrambling to get organized — and find a candidate.

Premier Doug Ford has dissolved the Legislature and voters will go to the polls on Feb. 27, but in the riding of Niagara Falls, which includes Niagara-on-the-Lake, only the New Democrats and the Progressive Conservatives have picked their candidates.

NDP incumbent Wayne Gates was confirmed by the party back in October and the Tories have chosen Ruth-Ann Nieuwesteeg, a Niagara Falls funeral home operator.

The Liberals and the Green Party haven't yet selected anyone.

Gates has represented the riding since winning a by-election in February 2014.

He was most recently nominated by Burt Sisler, a 109-year-old resident of Fort Erie and veteran of the Second World War.

Continued on Page 3

## Sweet wine and cocktails

Final weekend of Icewine Village fest has people out sampling



Mike Dover of Palatine Hills Estate Winery prepares a "Northern Shenanigan" for the icewine cocktail contest on Saturday. The contest was part of the Icewine Village festival that took place the last two weekends in NOTL. **Read the story on Page 4.** DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## Chemerika family 'devastated' by hit-run death of father, court told

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Even into his 80s, Nestor Chemerika prided himself on staying fit and in shape, walking and cycling regularly, his family said in victim impact statements presented in a St. Catharines courtroom on Monday.

Chemerika, 84, a long-time Niagara-on-the-Lake resident, died 12 days after he was struck from behind

along the shoulder of East and West Line while riding his bicycle on July 13, 2023.

Richard Alan Moore, 38, a Niagara Falls-based contractor, has pleaded guilty to a Criminal Code charge of failing to stop at an accident causing death. A lesser charge of careless driving causing death was dropped.

His GMC Sierra pickup truck hit Chemerika near Concession 2 around 8 p.m. on that summer evening,

knocking him into the roadside ditch, where he was found a short time later by a Niagara Regional Police officer on a routine patrol.

His crumpled bike was nearby and debris from the truck was strewn on the road. One of the truck's large external mirrors was found at the scene.

Chemerika was still alive when the police found him, assistant Crown attorney Todd Morris told the court.

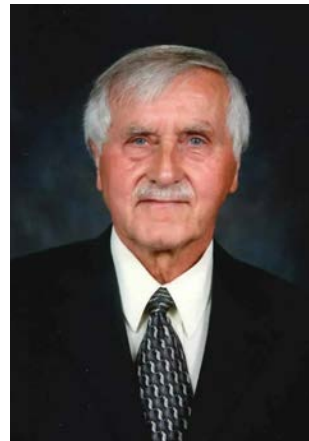
Moore did not stop nor render assistance and he told police he didn't know he had been involved in an accident, court heard.

Nearly two years later, his family is still seeking answers — and closure.

"On July 13, 2023, Richard Alan Moore dramatically changed our lives forever. Seeing my dad in the hospital, so helpless and terrified, broke my heart. There wasn't a

spot in his body that wasn't cut, bruised or broken," his daughter Dennise Falzoi said in a statement read to the court Monday morning by Morris.

"I can't imagine and understand how Richard Alan Moore could just drive away and try and hide what he did and continue on with his life, like nothing happened. It's mind boggling," she wrote.



Continued on Page 7 Nestor Chemerika.



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# Tribunal rejects appeal on Rand Estate decision

Zahraa Hmood  
The Lake Report

Developer Solmar's appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal to reconsider its decision last October on the proposed Rand Estate subdivision has been denied.

In October 2024, the tribunal concluded Solmar needs to re-evaluate its plans Solmar's plans for a 172-unit subdivision on the historic estate as they "do not represent good planning in the public interest."

Solmar quickly filed an appeal, asking the tribunal to review its decision.

During a lengthy trial, the developer went up against the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, resident group Save Our Rand Estate and neighbours to the development, Blair and Brenda McArthur, looking for the tribunal to approve alteration and demolition permits allowing the company to build its subdivision on the estate's two properties, 200 John St. E. and 588 Charlotte St.

The tribunal ruled that the site could be developed to add housing to NOTL, but highlighted issues with the state of Solmar's subdivi-



The Ontario Land Tribunal has rejected an appeal to its decision which forces Solmar to revisit plans for a subdivision on the historic Rand Estate. SUPPLIED

sion plan, advising the developer to revisit the draft and make changes so the plan could be approved.

Solmar filed a request for the tribunal to review four points where the company argues the tribunal made key errors — however, in his Jan. 28 decision on the appeal, Michael Kraljevic, chair of the Ontario Land Tribunal, explained how he disagrees with each point, ultimately dismissing all of the appeal's core arguments.

"Any intervention arising from a request for review is a rare and extraordinary remedy," writes Michael Kraljevic, chair of the Ontario Land Tribunal, in his written decision on the appeal dated Jan. 28.

"I have concluded that this is not an instance in

which the request establishes a convincing and compelling case that there is an error of law that warrants the exercise of my review powers."

Save Our Rand Estate called this latest decision "another complete victory" for the town, the group and its residents, naming prominent developer Benny Marotta, who owns Solmar.

"It was always clear to us that the (tribunal) review request had no merit and was simply a delay tactic by Mr. Marotta," SORE's online statement read.

"It is equally clear to us that the court challenge of the OLT decision is similarly without merit. It will surprise us if Mr. Marotta in fact sees the court challenge through."

SORE urges Marotta to accept the tribunal's decision, "stop fighting the town and SORE at every turn" and start working with them to implement the recommendations from October's ruling.

"Sadly, we are not optimistic," SORE said in its statement.

Solmar argues the tribunal made errors in its application of the legal principles underlying cultural heritage conservation, its endorsement of an expert's recommendation that the company should install a reflecting pool where the estate's old pool exists, its rejection of where Solmar proposed putting a vehicle access point on the property and for denying the removal and relocation of the site's wetlands.

The tribunal ruled that if Solmar decides to move forward with the Rand Estate subdivision, it must do so in consultation with the town, SORE and the McArthurs and make the revisions to the design as per the tribunal's findings on cultural heritage, vehicular access, tree protection and natural heritage.

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# Liberal and Green parties yet to select candidates

Continued from Front Page

Nieuwesteeg is a member of Niagara Falls city council and owns Patterson Funeral Home with her husband Ed. She could not be reached for comment before deadline despite repeated attempts. Kenneth Gansel, a NOTL resident and president of the Niagara Falls Liberal Association, told The Lake Report the party is having trouble finding someone to run in the riding. “We’re like chickens with our heads cut off,” he said. The Liberals spent about three months attempting to recruit someone and spoke to people from Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake, Gansel said. But the party struck out. “We did not find anyone who was interested in running.” Gansel is meeting with Elections Ontario on Monday evening and hopes to have made headway by then. “It’s my understanding that the Ontario Liberal Party in Toronto will eventually find somebody. They’ve done that before,” he said. Before Ford’s election announcement, there were widespread rumours of an election coming sometime in early April, Gansel said. “Nobody wants to campaign in the winter. I’m not exactly sure what the Conservatives were thinking, but power to them,” he said. Ford is focusing the



New Democratic Wayne Gates (incumbent) and Progressive Conservative Ruth-Ann Nieuwesteeg are two candidates for the Niagara Falls riding in the provincial election on Feb. 27. The Liberal and Green parties still had vacant seats as of press time on Wednesday. No other candidates have registered so far. SOURCED

election campaign on responding to U.S. President Donald Trump’s threatened tariffs on Canadian goods, but that is not the way to go, Gansel said. “I think it’s something the federal government should be taking a lead on,” he said. The biggest problem in Ontario is health care and funding should be spent there instead of on holding an election, he said. Robin McPherson, the Liberal candidate for St. Catharines, also noted the party has had trouble tracking down a representative for Niagara Falls and suggested the election is unnecessary. “It’s a bit of a surprise. I think if you were watching and paying attention to what the premier was saying, you

knew it was coming. I don’t think any of us expected it this early,” McPherson said in an interview. The election is a waste of money, McPherson said. “We could have easily waited.” When Gates was reached Wednesday evening he was already out on the campaign trail. “I’ve been knocking on doors since around 9:30 this morning,” Gates said. He and members of the NDP have been preparing for a while now in anticipation of an early election, he said. He expected the early election, not because of the possibility of tariffs but because Ford wants to get ahead of the next federal election.

The Tories want “to protect themselves” from any fallout related to the federal vote, he said. The provincial election is estimated to cost \$175 million or more, tax money that could pay for more than 2,500 registered nurses or 420 affordable housing units, Gates said. “That money could be spent in a lot of better places than an unnecessary election,” he said. Gates won the riding in 2022, attracting 48 per cent of the vote. He was followed by Progressive Conservative candidate Bob Gale with 36.5 per cent and Liberal Ashley Waters with 8.4 per cent. [juliasacco@niagaranow.com](mailto:juliasacco@niagaranow.com)

# Burroughs concerned Glendale plan is ‘rushed’

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

With council approving the official plan amendment to make way for a new Glendale Secondary Plan on Tuesday, building heights are still a primary concern for coun. Gary Burroughs. Part of Glendale is under federal airport zoning regulations for the nearby Niagara District Airport, which means restrictions on how tall buildings can be. Burroughs voiced concerns about the building heights interfering with flight paths at a committee of the whole meeting in June 2024. Concerns about building heights in Glendale were again raised during a committee of the whole meeting in October. When Burroughs questioned planner Stephen Bedford on height requirements, Bedford said they



It’s not certain whether Transport Canada will make an exception to building heights in Glendale to allow for the construction of highrise apartments at White Oaks. FILE may not have a final answer from Transport Canada by mid-November, but they will have direction. No final answer has been given yet. During a question period on Tuesday, Burroughs confirmed with Kirsten McCauley, the town’s director of community and development services, that staff met with Transport Canada in October to discuss the heights. Burroughs requested the meeting last year, to con-

above height guidelines, Burroughs told The Lake Report. “I’d like to make sure both developers and residents know what the current situation is and what the plan is to do something about it,” he said. The secondary plan outlines Glendale as a “strategic growth area,” in that it can tolerate higher densities, McCauley said. “If and when there is an amendment to those airport zoning regulations or there is a request for an exemption, it does recognize there are some areas that can accommodate those taller buildings,” she said. Burroughs made clear that he will not support the amendment because he thinks council is rushing. “We haven’t even had a meeting with the rest of council to discuss what happened at that meeting (with Transport Canada),” Burroughs said.



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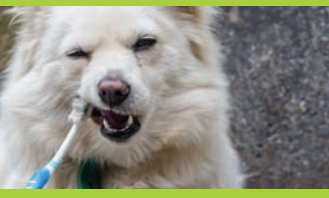
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# Icewine Village festival makes **sampling a breeze**

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

For many tourists and wine connoisseurs, Niagara-on-the-Lake’s annual Icewine Village is a prime opportunity to sample as much icewine as they can in one go — and experience icewine at a more accessible price point.

Anja and Stefan Kruber come to NOTL from Oakville every year for the festival, which runs two weekends.

The red icewines are a personal favourite, Anja Kruber said.

“They are darn expensive by the bottle, so it’s great to come here and try what you like,” she said.

Katie MacCabe, Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s marketing manager, said the Krubers aren’t alone in their love of taste-testing.

“What keeps bringing people out is the ability to try a bunch of different icewines in one location — that sampling atmosphere where you can try the best of Canada’s icewine all together,” she said.



Left: Chrismy Chandrathees, a server at Queenston Mile Vineyard, pours a glass of red ice wine. Right: Misch Mather, Michelle Reynolds and Russ Kustra celebrate near the clock tower cenotaph with glowing lights and funky outfits during Saturday’s IceHaus Cocktail Competition. JULIA SACCO



Entrance to NOTL’s Icewine Village is free, with individual icewine samples available for \$6, or a VIP experience pass, which offers multiple tastings and other bonuses, starting at \$75.

“A bottle of icewine can be upwards of \$100, so this is really the best way to figure out what you like about it,” MacCabe said.

Many of the vendors sold

full bottles of the available samples as well, so tasters could purchase a bottle without “blind-buying,” she said.

Food vendors are a big draw for guests, too.

Ashley and Calvin Eidt from Niagara Falls have been coming to the village every year for more than a decade.

“This year is perfect weather, sunny — but it’s

cold enough that all the ice sculptures stay sculptures,” Ashley Eidt said.

Calvin Eidt chowed down on a pulled pork parfait from PigOut catering and said he was a fan.

“We come and try some of our favourite (food and wine) — if we haven’t heard of one, we will try it,” Ashley Eidt said.

Roy Sampson and Lita Clavier are NOTL Ambassadors, volunteers responsible for welcoming and guiding NOTL visitors on the streets of Old Town, and helped out throughout the festival.

Clavier’s favourite part of it all is meeting people from around the world, she said.

“That’s why we’re ambassadors,” she said.

Jessica Ellis, Niagara College’s event coordinator, shared a similar sentiment.

“We just love to see how many people come from all over the world to come to this festival specifically. I just met a couple who come every single year,” she said.

“It’s wonderful to see people not just from Niagara-on-the-Lake but all of Ontario, Canada, the states, come to enjoy our winemakers.”

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# St. Davids company gives out Buick SUV

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Rojin Kunjachan, a process machine operator in Niagara-on-the-Lake, is going to be driving to work in style from now on.

St. Davids food manufacturer SunOpta awarded a lucky employee a vehicle of choice as part of their Driving Success Sweepstakes.

SunOpta employs more than 120 people at its Niagara manufacturing plant where employees manufacture natural and organic fruit snacks.

Kunjachan was named winner of the NOTL location's sweepstakes last Tuesday, taking home a Black Buick Enclave from Niagara Motors.

The 2024 Enclave has an estimated value of more than \$53,000, Kunjachan's wife Teena Thomas told The Lake Report.

Kunchujan and family were shocked and surprised to pick up their new ride.



The Kunjachan family picks up their new Buick Enclave from Niagara Motors last Thursday. Father Rojin was given the new vehicle from his employer SunOpta as part of its "Success Sweepstakes" — an employee incentive program. From left, Molly Thomas, Teena Thomas, Nathanya, Nehemiah and Rojin Kunjachan, JULIA SACCO

"We are so happy," Thomas said.

"We didn't expect it at all," she said.

Thomas and her husband currently have a Toyota Corolla used to get from place-to-place, but two cars will make things easier with two

young children, she said.

Kunjachan and his family live in St. Catharines, where he commutes to work from. Thomas is employed as a Registered Nurse.

Greg Dunk, the plant director at SunOpta's Niagara location said the initiative

recognizes employees as a "driving" force behind the company's success in the past year.

With the grand prize being cars, SunOpta was happy to support Niagara Motors with its sweepstakes.

"As part of this program, we wanted to support a local business," Dunk said in an email.

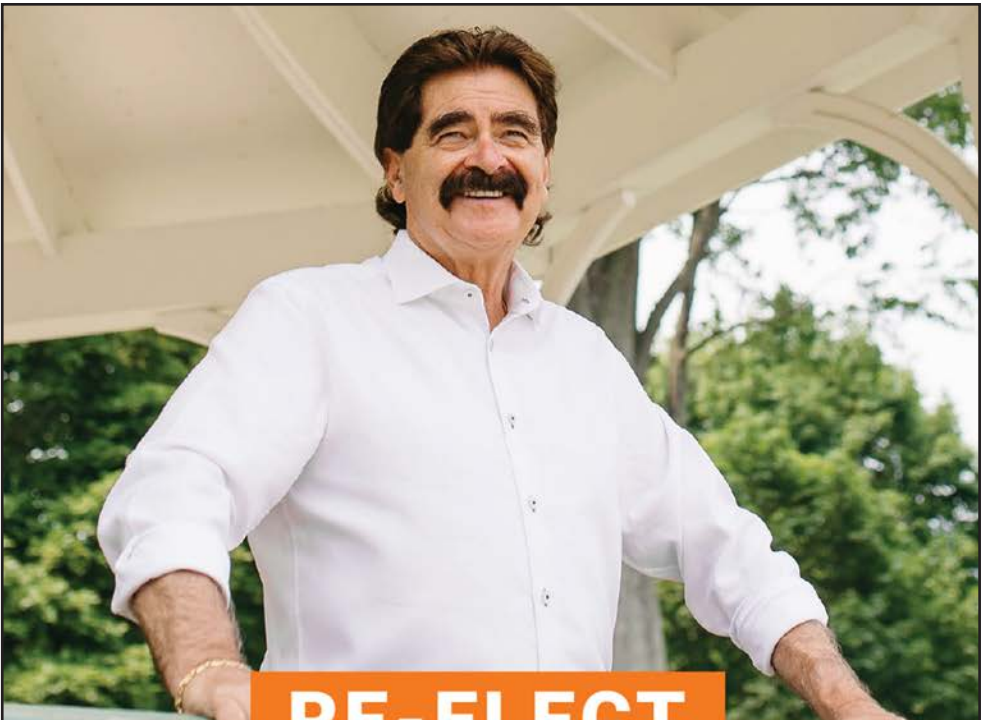
"The Niagara Motors dealership, located right around the corner from SunOpta, was the perfect local partner for this initiative."

The NOTL location hosted one of five sweepstakes draws at different SunOpta branches..

After the final winner is announced at the end of the month SunOpta will decide if the program will return next year.

"It was wonderful to see our employees so excited about this program, and everyone is truly so happy for Rojin and his family to receive this new vehicle from SunOpta," Dunk said.


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### Temporary Extension of Restaurant and Bar Patios

The Council for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake approved an extension to the existing Temporary Use By-law and passed Temporary Use By-law 4316EG(3)-25 on January 28, 2025, under Section 34 and Section 39 of the *Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990, as amended.

By-law 4316EG(3)-25 permits the extension of restaurant and bar patios onto public and private lands, subject to the Town's Temporary Patio Program requirements, for a period of up to eight (8) months without application of any provisions of Zoning By-law 4316-09, as amended (urban areas).

The Temporary Use By-law expires on December 31, 2025. A copy of the By-law is available on the Town website at [www.notl.com/business-development/public-planning-notices](http://www.notl.com/business-development/public-planning-notices) or at Town Hall.

The Temporary Use By-law applies to all lands within the urban area boundaries of the Town (Old Town, Virgil, St. Davids, Queenston, and Glendale).

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, January 30, 2025  
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# Crown seeks 12-month jail sentence for driver

Continued from Front Page

She, her brother Nestor Jr. and her father's brother Walter said Chemerika was passionate about staying in top physical condition, going for daily walks, jogs and bike rides.

"Our father endured so much pain and suffering while in the hospital as a result of his injury. His body was so broken and damaged," the family's victim impact statements said.

"It was absolute torture and emotionally crippling watching him slowly slip away ... the fear and sorrow in his eyes, not being able to communicate during the last days and hours" as he lay in hospital in Hamilton.

"This whole ordeal is incredibly horrific and devastating for all of our family members and the community," they added.

"Our father had plenty of years left to live, as his brothers and sisters all lived well into their 90s. This truly devastated everyone,



Nestor Chemerika's badly damaged after he was stuck by Richard Alan Moore's pickup truck. NRPS PHOTO

especially his three children and all his grandchildren."

"Our father was a pillar of the NOTL community, where he lived for over 55 years," they added.

After the tragedy, friends and neighbours came to Chemerika's house "literally in tears, hugging us children, telling us of their devastation" over his death.

"We all continue to experience great sorrow, anger, confusion, devastation,

PTSD, scarred for life, for this senseless, preventable loss of life."

"There's not a day that goes by that I don't talk or think about my dad. I have a hole in my heart that can never be filled."

In the aftermath of the crash, investigators told The Lake Report that the vehicle headed south down Concession 2 to York Road, where it turned west toward St. Davids.

Once in St. Davids, the pickup turned down Four Mile Creek Road and headed to Niagara Falls.

Police seized a pewter-coloured 1999 Sierra pickup in Niagara Falls six days later.

A police statement about the seized vehicle said at the time, "Detectives noted that the damaged areas had recently undergone repair."

The truck was repaired with used GMC auto parts, including a used grill, passenger-side headlights and a passenger-side mirror, police said.

After it was seized, the pickup truck was sent to the Centre of Forensic Sciences in Toronto for a detailed forensic examination.

Three months later, in October 2023, Moore was charged by police.

The sentencing hearing will resume May 1 at 10 a.m. in person before Superior Court Justice Michael Gibson.

The Crown is seeking a 12-month jail sentence and a five-year driving ban.

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# Winter lecture series returns to museum

Barbara Worthy  
Special to The Lake Report

Lecture programming is one of the most popular offerings at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, both virtual and in-person. This year’s virtual lectures will be held, via Zoom, on Feb. 5, 12, 19 and 26.

In keeping with the NOTL Museum’s current exhibit “The Prettiest Town: Beyond the Bricks and Mortar,” the lectures will shine a light on some of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s most prized — and often controversial — homesteads.

**Feb. 5: Glencairn Hall, Queenston**

Linda Fritz, a Queenston resident for more than 15 years, brings her years of research and library skills as a University of Saskatchewan librarian emerita, to uncover the mystery and charisma of Glencairn Hall, a well-known, but rarely seen stately home in Queenston.

The original 2,500 square-foot home was designed by John Latshaw in 1832 and built for John Hamilton, founder of the Queenston Steamboat Company, and heir to one

of Upper Canada’s most powerful merchants, Robert Hamilton.

**Feb. 12: The Rand Estate**

David Hemmings is the author of eight books and more than 50 documents on local history, with a strong focus on family origins and ancestry. He brings his unique research skills to the colourful history of the property also known as Randwood.

A treasure among Canada’s historic estates, this magnificent property was the summer home of the Rand family over multiple generations between 1910 and 2016.

Recently, it has been the focus of media attention and community interest.

**Feb. 19: “Living, Dying and Gone”: The Plumb House & the Peter Secord and David Secord Houses**

Brian Marshall, well-known columnist, author and consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage, will compare the “living” built heritage of carefully preserved homes — Peter Secord’s 1782 historic landmark — with the gradually “dying” heritage of the 1799 David Secord



The Plumb House, depicted in this painting by Owen Staples, dates back to 1865 and boasted eight bedrooms, several “modern” bathrooms and a large ballroom. SUPPLIED

House, both in St. Davids, and the ultimate loss of the magnificent Josiah Plumb House in the 1940s.

Dating back to 1865, the Plumb House boasted eight bedrooms, several “modern” bathrooms, and entertainment spaces that included a billiard room measuring 20 by 30 feet and a 608-square-foot ballroom.

Unpaid taxes and the depression eventually led to this beauty being razed, making way for the Parliament Oak School.

**Feb. 26: The Wilderness**

Richard D. Merritt has had a life-long passion for Niagara’s history. A retired ophthalmologist, he has authored several books on the subject and was named a Living Landmark by The

Niagara Foundation for his documentation and preservation of Niagara’s heritage.

The Wilderness is a local landmark, partially hidden behind overgrown land and streetscapes, on both King and Regent streets.

Merritt will reveal the remarkable saga of this extraordinary remnant of natural and built heritage, with its various residents from more than 200 years of occupation, including updates on the status of this extraordinary property.

All lectures start at 11 a.m. Participants must register with the museum to receive a Zoom link: [notlmuseum.ca](http://notlmuseum.ca)

For help signing up, call the NOTL Museum at 905-468-3912.

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# Industry advocates rally for regional film office

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A Canadian film industry adept says Niagara has lost out on upwards of a million dollars in film production opportunities because there's no centralized film office in the region.

A film office is a hub that supports and promotes film production in a specific area by assisting with permits, locations and resources.

Location scout and production manager Peter Donato, along with television producer and scriptwriter Nigel Napier-Andrews recognized the need to take action when they reflected on Donato's experience working on "The Amazing Race Canada" in Niagara.

The push for a film office is a volunteer initiative, which Donato and Napier-Andrews kind of hatched up by fluke, said Donato.

"We both had a love for film and such, and I would joke with him about the fact that when I worked on the Amazing Race Canada on two different episodes in Niagara, it was a lot of work to jump through hoops," he said.

Film offices can be run by local governments or privately by experts in the industry, often with government funding.

Usually functioning as a component of local government, municipal film offices, such as the ones operating



Over the years, many film and television productions have shot on location in Niagara-on-the-Lake, making use of the town's historical buildings and scenic views. Seen here is a production crew filming the Christmas movie "Holiday Calendar" in 2018. FILE/RICHARD HARLEY

in Toronto and Vancouver, concentrate on attracting foreign producers to the area, optimizing logistics and arranging permissions and resources.

Privately operated film offices are administered by professionals in the field who use their knowledge to draw in productions.

Although Donato and Napier-Andrews are passionate champions of the film office proposal, they are calling on the regional government to fund and establish the office and work with unions and guilds to include the Niagara region in official work zones.

As a location scout, Donato's responsibility is not only to gather permits and documents but also to scout the perfect place to film as well.

"When you're a location

person, you're given a task to find a suitable town, city or area to shoot the whole film, or parts of the film," he said.

In one episode of "The Amazing Race Canada," Donato said they did four or five communities, including St. Catharines, Pelham and Welland, and each time he had to deal with different limitations.

"Nigel and I then thought, 'Why is there not a film office in Niagara?'"

In Niagara, helping hands, film staff, proper forms and permits, and organized guidelines are all quite limited, he said.

Donato said once productions get greenlit and the funds and grants come through, they've got to act fast — fast enough to find a place to shoot in time for production.

Everybody who's in the industry knows southern Ontario has a lot of amazing places to shoot film and television, he said.

"But, there's no film office here — and that's going to discourage anybody from even looking," he said.

"More importantly, without cohesion, without a central office and a team that can act fast, it's going to be a long shot to secure these projects and these productions."

Donato knew of a production interested in filming in Niagara, but they encountered problems navigating the Niagara Region and finding someone to schedule a meeting to help with permits and permissions.

Without that cohesion, without a central office and a team that could have acted fast, Donato said it would have been a long shot to secure that million-dollar production.

"Let's say you were somebody from outside Niagara: Where would you go? Where would you start? You'd look up at a map, you'd see 12 cities, you'd be like, 'What the heck?'" he said.

"Even people that live in Niagara don't really know how Niagara works; it's complicated," said Donato.

"They were basically chased away."

Eventually, the production went to Cambridge, Ont. A million-dollar production

was essentially turned down by Niagara due to their lack of a film office, he said.

Another thing driving their push is that Toronto has become increasingly unworkable for many in the industry — with rising costs, heavy traffic and a loss of key studios and warehouses due to development.

As a result, production activity is spreading beyond Toronto.

Hamilton has wisely capitalized on this shift and is thriving, said Donato, and London, Kingston and Mississauga have established film offices of their own, too — all the more reason for Niagara to establish one.

"It makes a lot of sense, but it needs to be driven by the politicians," he said.

They soon found something that could help accelerate the speed of their mission: A study Deloitte was commissioned to do on behalf of Niagara Economic Development, which identified six key areas Niagara should focus on.

"One of those is film," he said.

"So, it was kind of like, we had this idea, but we didn't realize the idea actually had some solid, some statistical merit," he said.

They've been pursuing the film office idea ever since. On July 12, 2023, they formally proposed the idea to the Niagara Region.

Film production is already on the regional government's list of strategic pri-

orities for growth over the next decade, so Donato said all they want is for them to pull the trigger and fund the office.

It would require bringing at least 13 government entities into alignment.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa is in support of this call to action.

"I am writing to you in support of a proposal by Peter Donato and Nigel Napier-Andrews to the Niagara Region Planning and Economic Development Committee on July 12, 2023, regarding a proposed Niagara Film Office," wrote Zalepa in his letter of support of the Niagara Film Office Proposal.

What's next for Donato and Napier-Andrews? A very public, high-profile spring fundraiser, which Donato describes as a networking fundraiser, to bring people together.

"It's another opportunity for politicians and the tourism folks to meet us and learn more about our plans," he said.

Donato said he and Napier-Andrews are already looking forward to the next press release which will announce the date and time of the fundraiser.

"We want to put a value on the industry today," he said. "And then, where we see that value going exponentially in the future."

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# Request for winery zoning change raises questions and confusion

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Ferox by Fabian Reis winery wants to become an estate winery with secondary uses, but with only 4.27 hectares and a second property in play, the plan is facing hurdles from the town.

In 2018, owners Fabian and Stephanie Reis and Coun. Erwin Wiens acquired Rancourt Winery (now Ferox) and Harvest Barn (now Alitura Fine Foods and Market) at 1829 Concession Rd., the corner of East and West Line.

By 2021, the town approved the farm winery to sell on-site wine from its 18.5-square-metre retail store. Wiens no longer has an ownership in any of the properties.

The town's minimum lot



Ferox by Fabian Reis winery is requesting estate winery zoning, despite that it doesn't meet the size requirements for an estate winery. The situation is complicated by a second property, which already has estate winery status.

size for an estate winery is eight hectares, while Ferox is a little more than half that size, with a retail barn for sales and tastings and a barn for producing wine.

The planned expansion would include a 43-square-metre hospitality room in the production building, a 133-square-metre out-

door hospitality patio and a 26-square-metre commercial kitchen, said senior town planner Victoria Nikoltcheva.

Turning Ferox into an estate winery would let the Reises add food service in hospitality spaces and use commercial cooking equipment, which "aligns with

practices at other approved Niagara-on-the-Lake wineries," said Robert Smit, a planner with NPG Planning Solutions, who was hired by Ferox.

Smit said the winery is compliant with estate winery regulations, using mostly local grapes, keeping the rural look and handling crushing, fermenting and bottling on-site. It also has direct road access and off-street parking.

He said the increase in the hospitality room's size is insignificant and the existing septic system works well.

The proposal complies with the Greenbelt Plan, the Planning Act, the Provincial Planning Statement, agriculture ministry guidelines and regional/town planning documents, Smit said.

He said an estate winery designation would boost agri-tourism near Old Town

and improve economic viability.

There was confusion over whether the winery is currently operating as an estate winery with its current farm winery zoning.

Reis owning the property at 1822 Niagara Stone Rd. (formerly Harvest Barn) across the street makes things more complicated, as was revealed in a public meeting on Jan. 14.

"Two properties were combined in order to allow for the total acreage that is required to have an estate winery and now we are going to sever the two properties?" asked Coun. Maria Mavridis.

However, "this proposal does not deal with the Harvest Barn site," noted Jesse Auspitz, principal planner with NPG Planning Solutions.

Coun. Andrew Niven

clarified that Ferox wants to split the properties and create an estate winery at the Ferox site. The company is asking the town for a resolution because there's not have enough land without combining the two properties.

But if Ferox becomes an estate winery and 1822 Niagara Stone Rd. is already zoned as one, the town's regulations won't allow two estate wineries.

When asked about other wineries in NOTL not meeting the size requirement, Nikoltcheva said she expects to be able to provide more details in the upcoming staff report after further review.

Next up for Ferox is providing a recommendation report to council, submitting a site plan amendment, and finally, meeting the conditions for site plan approval, she said.

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**BKind Grateful** #13: Take a moment to thank any veterans you encounter for their service and the freedoms they helped protect.

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



**Contributed by Patty Garriock**  
“The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra.”  
- Jimmy Johnson

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Niagara College brewmasters win big in provincial awards

Niagara College is celebrating the success of two of its most popular student-made brews after they picked up two medals at the Ontario Brewing Awards this January. The college’s Beer 101 Strong earned silver in the Strong British Ale category while Beer 101 Bitter got bronze in the British Bitter category at the competition’s award ceremony, held on Jan. 17 at the college’s Niagara-on-the-Lake campus. From left, Ian Morrison, head brewer, Jon Downing, brewmaster professor, Adam Marshall, assistant brewer, and Steve Gill, general manager of Niagara College’s learning enterprises.



Editorial

An unnecessary provincial election

Kevin MacLean  
Editor Emeritus

Somehow Premier Doug Ford, his anointed PC candidates and members of his re-election team can keep a straight face when they repeatedly tell us we “need” a provincial election “right now” to give him a “strong mandate” to deal with possible U.S. trade protectionism and any other political storm that arises. Respectfully, that is baloney.

It is solely a political calculation, designed to try to distract from his shortcomings as premier and, he hopes, extend his party’s dominant rule in Ontario. And he probably will succeed because the folksy Ford schtick seems to resonate with people. Ultimately, you — the voter — will decide his government’s future.

But please, let’s not simply drink the Kool-Aid. Look beyond his rah-rah Captain Canada rhetoric and instead assess his track record over seven years as Ontario’s top dog, while weighing his government’s numerous missteps, scandals and unkept promises. That’s not easy when your populist premier is Ontario’s equivalent of the late Ralph Klein, Alberta’s 1990s-era everyman. (Nice “not-made-in-Canada” ball cap, by the way, Mr. Premier. Ralph woulda loved the idea.) While Ford is a great talker and keeps telling us



Kevin MacLean says Ontario Premier Doug Ford is playing politics by calling an unnecessary election. FILE

how he’ll fight for Canada if Donald Trump imposes tariffs or other protectionist measures, respectfully, that’s not really the premier’s job. Of course, he can and should speak up for both the province and the country, but when it comes down to negotiating with the United States or pushing back with our own made-in-Canada solutions, it will largely be up to the federal government to decide what happens. It’s unlikely the premiers will even be at the table.

The feds will consult with the provinces (and might even listen to the premiers’ ideas), but ultimately this is an area of federal responsibility. (By the way, what does Ford really mean when he suggests Liberal leader Bonnie Crombie or the NDP’s Marit Stiles would be a “disaster” if they were the ones dealing with Trump? Surely he’s not suggesting the longtime former

mayor of one of Canada’s largest cities and the New Democrats’ equally capable leader would be unable to handle the job just because they’re women. Such politicking can be an age-old dog-whistle to the ingrained sexist attitudes some voters still hold and Ford should avoid it.) His Tories control almost two-thirds of the seats in the Ontario Legislature heading into the Feb. 27 election, which he made official on Tuesday by asking the lieutenant-governor to dissolve the Legislature. If his “I need a strong mandate” snow job were true, what does he call having a governing majority that already controls the legislative agenda? Plus his opponents have said they will support any stimulus packages or spending that Ford invokes should Trump follow through on his tariff musings. No, spending an estimated \$175 million on a provincial election two years

early is simply an attempt to solidify power and bury all the errors and questionable decisions Ford’s government has implemented since 2018. It is definitely not about “serving” the people of Ontario. So, please let’s spend the next month of this unnecessary campaign with our eyes wide open. Besides whatever he promises to do if he wins a “strong mandate,” as voters let’s weigh the scandals and expensive boondoggles Ontario’s Progressive Conservatives have overseen and decide if Ford deserves to remain in charge. A partial list to consider: We love Ontario’s health care and education systems, but both remain underfunded and face major problems under Ford’s watch (and he has been increasing private health care); the costly decision of cancelling green energy contracts; ending the Beer Store monopoly in order to bring booze to corner stores; the destruction of Ontario Place to make way for a fancy European spa; and the billions in profits developers will earn thanks to changes to the Greenbelt, a controversy that remains under investigation by the RCMP. Once the votes are counted on Feb. 27, Doug Ford might still be premier of Ontario. However, it falls to each of us to make sure he earns that trust and is made accountable for his past actions and future promises.

kevin@niagaranow.com



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## LETTER OF THE WEEK

# NOTL needs to curb wasteful spending

Dear editor:

It is mind-blowing that there may be a nine to 13 per cent increase in our taxes.

Any businessperson should be aware that you do not spend more than you earn. If you do, you go to your bank, get a loan and pay it off at the end of what you hope will be a better year.

If not and this situation continues year after year, you either sell your business and a new owner

takes over who knows how to budget and make the business viable, or you have a professional review your income versus your expenses.

I believe our town does not know how to budget, does not know how to look at where wasteful spending is taking place and does not seem to hire based on merit. And every year, it gets worse.

I believe, like our federal government, much of the staff does not know what

it means to put on a long, hard-working day in order to accomplish the type of work that their predecessors were able to do 20 years ago.

Yes, yes, I know times are different, but that is only because we have allowed it to be so.

I'm sure many of us could give the town a big list of questions to answer, but unfortunately, the town would not be willing to divulge many of these answers.

And why is our town

spending numbers so much higher as compared to other towns when considering taxes versus spending?

If you run with a crowd who buys \$400 shoes and you cannot afford it, you buy the \$100 shoes and manage your affairs so that possibly, one day, you can afford to splurge.

How can we as taxpayers in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake help this dismal situation?

**Susan Pohorly**  
**NOTL**

## Organizing the unhappy flock in NOTL



Garth Turner  
Columnist

How do you wrestle an opinion out of someone? Simple. Insult them. Or at least try. Eben knows that.

"Why so sheepish man?" he asked after reading last week's pathetic posting (mostly about the toxicity of short-term rentals).

"Wouldn't it make more sense to use the space and ink to make the case for your position? Or maybe you don't really have a position, or the insight that someone might use to decide to take one up, and you are really good at filling up space and spilling ink? I'm so confused! Please enlighten me."

Well, Eben, my experience has proven politicians are influenced more by facts and consensus opinion than by beating them to a pulp. Or savaging them as they walk into a meeting. It's all about human nature. Besides, sheep are survivors. Rams end up in the freezer.

This brings us to Stuart McCormack, who may stealthily topple NOTL's current pro-build-anything leadership.



Former councillor Stuart McCormack is forging one resident group to rule them all, connecting existing groups together to have a shared voice on issues affecting NOTL. FILE

"My kids say I sound too much like a lawyer," the retired lawyer said when we met. The kids are right. But the former councillor — who quit in a fog of mystery during COVID — has surfaced five years later to sow the seeds of bloodless revolution.

You may have heard that local leaders just approved more hiring. So the tax increase this year ticks up a little more. It's 9 per cent now. Add in last year's almost-7 per cent and property taxes are running four times inflation.

That makes folks unhappy. It seems irresponsible.

Meanwhile, the former Parliament Oak school is now a snowy hole in the ground. Later it will be a significant hotel in the middle of a residential 'hood.

At the same time another honking big new hotel is rising out by the drugstore, along with more than 40 vacation rentals jammed by the medical clinic. "We have no idea where any-

one is going to park," the LifeLabs ladies were saying this week. "Who approved this?"

More unhappiness.

The iconic Queen Street heritage property developer Rainer Hummel owns is going to be carved up now. After 203 years.

Condos will soon shadow houses on Mary Street. And one in every three — maybe two — houses in the Old Town is a short-term rental. Many unhosted. So, real estate is commercialized, long-term rentals disappear, prices rise, families fade away. Like the school. The hospital. Now the seniors place, which the Shaw is taking over.

This makes people unhappy, too. Toronto tossed rampant Airbnb exposure. So did Vancouver and Kelowna and Burlington. Most places, in fact. What was once a neat idea (rent out your spare room) has financialized homes — especially in a wee place that sees three million tourists a year.

Well, you get it. So does McCormack. He's the guy behind a new residents association, trying hard, quietly, to thread together existing groups and folks in Virgil, St. Davids, Garrison Village, the Old Town and Chautauqua.

They've had meetings, adopted a mission statement and hope more bodies show up in a few days at the community centre. Then an open public forum.

It's a movement in the making. The town, he says, "needs to make decisions that are appropriate," especially regarding planning, budgets and transparency. "There is a high level of discontent," he says. "That's obvious. Witness the protest at town hall."

He attended. But he's a lawyer. "I did not swear. I did not raise my voice. I did not assault or behave in any untoward manner."

"I call this death by a thousand cuts," says the former politician. "You put up a hotel here and put up one there. You tear this building down. And suddenly you're not living in Niagara-on-the-Lake any more."

Next?

Mobilization. Organization. A slate of candidates. Then revolution.

All now hidden in sheep's clothing.

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

**garth@garth.ca**



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

**Once banned, kakiniit are traditional tattoos of the women of this group of northern North America.**

Last issue: DOG TALES

Clue: In a story set in the 19th century, a mad wolf with rabies is the last fight this faithful title canine has — and now I'm crying.

Answer: What is Old Yeller?

Answered first by: Susan Hamilton

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Bob Wheatley, Jane Morris, Sue Rautenberg, Lynda Collet, Catherine Clarke, Jeff Lake, Carol Durling, Lynda Hosty, Nancy Rocca, Jim Dandy, Karen Brown, Sheryl Christensen, Edna Groff, David Spencer, Sheila Meloche, Hedy Wiebe

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

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# Yes, enforcing property standards can be done



Brian Marshall  
Columnist

For the last two weeks, we have been considering property standards bylaws — what they are, how they are enforced and the potential fines for non-compliance with a binding property standards order issued by the municipality.

However, the question of what happens when a property owner is either unwilling (unlikely in the face of the potential fines) or unable, financially or otherwise, to comply with the order remains to be addressed.

The answer is quite simple — the municipality may directly intervene to bring the property into compliance with the order.

The authority to do so is conveyed by the province

to the municipality in the Building Code Act. Under “Property Standards,” in section 15.4, the act provides:

The “power of municipality if order not complied with” is for the municipality to cause the property “to be repaired or demolished accordingly.”

This encompasses “warrantless entry,” in which employees or agents of the municipality can enter the property “at any reasonable time” without a warrant to execute the repair or demolition, and ensures no liability of the municipality to compensate the owner, occupant or any other person for anything the municipality does “in the reasonable exercise of its powers” under subsection 1.

In short, the municipality has the right to “repair or demolish” a property to bring it into compliance with a binding order.

And, its employees or agents may access the property at any “reasonable” time to effect the required actions/work.

Further, neither the municipality nor its agents have any liability concerning the



Another home of heritage and architectural significance, which columnist Brian Marshall says is being left to deteriorate. The boarded-up home is an Arts & Crafts cottage circa 1920, located on East & West Line. BRIAN MARSHALL

necessary actions undertaken to bring the property into compliance with the order.

The act then broadens municipal authority in cases wherein the condition of the property “pose(s) an immediate danger to the health or safety of any person” or the building is deemed to be “unsafe.”

“Well,” you say, “even if the municipality has the authority to have the corrective work carried out, it would cost the taxpayers a bloody fortune.”

Actually, this is not the case.

Section 15.4.4 of the act specifies that the municipality “shall have a lien on the land for the amount spent on the repair or demolition” and “the amount shall have priority lien status.”

So, what does the Municipal Act have to say about a “priority lien”?

Section 2 of this act states the amount spent on repair or demolition if given priority lien status, may be added to the tax roll against the

property, concerning which amount was imposed or against any other property, “in respect of which the amount was authorized to be added by this or any other act.”

It defines the “priority lien status” as such: If an amount is added to the tax roll for a property, that amount (including interest), may be collected the same way the property’s taxes are, may be recovered from the property owner as a debt owed to

the municipality, is a special lien on the property the same way taxes are under subsection 349 (3) of the Municipal Act and can be included in the cancellation price the same way as taxes on the property.

In reality, every municipality in Ontario has the authority and implied responsibility to ensure a property is brought into compliance with a binding property standards order — at no expense to the taxpayers.

I’m not suggesting this should be the first tool reached for but, if push comes to shove, the municipality can get it done.

If you’d like to read the legislation yourself, the Building Code Act can be found at [www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/92b23#BK25](http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/92b23#BK25) — just scroll down to Section 15 “Property Standards” and reference 15.4, 15.7 & 15.9. The Municipal Act can be accessed at [www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/01m25](http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/01m25). The relevant information is in Part 1, Sections 2 and 3.

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

# Triumphs for Google in new weather-predicting technology



Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

Google has done it again.

In 2024, John Jumper and Demis Hassabis of Google Mind in London shared the Nobel Prize in chemistry with David Baker for, as the Nobel committee put it, succeeding “with the almost impossible feat of building entirely novel proteins,” and more to the point of this essay, “developing an AI model to solve a 50-year-old problem: Predicting protein’s complex structures.”

To meet the challenge, Jumper and Hassabis developed AlphaFold 2, a machine language model designed to figure out the 3D structure of proteins based on the sequence of the protein’s amino acids.

Google used data from over 200,000 proteins whose 3D structures were discovered using X-ray crys-

tallography, nuclear spectroscopy, and more recently cryo-electron microscopy.

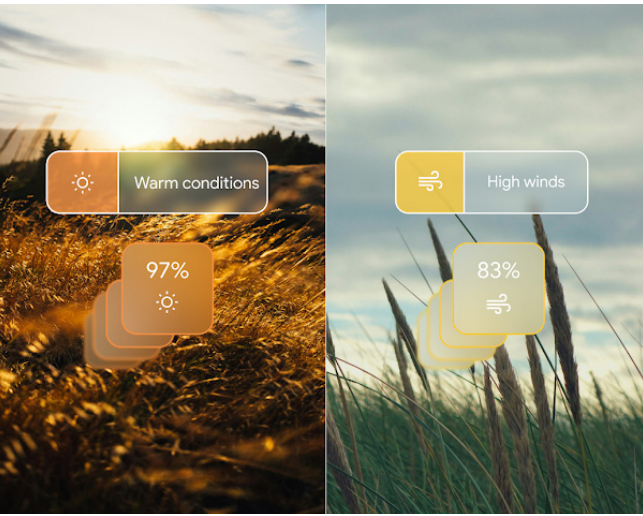
That database and the known 3D structures of evolutionarily closely related proteins, coupled with an iterative process in which protein models were progressively refined by running them through the program repeatedly until they reached near atom-level precision, paid off.

Just as impressive, they solved the puzzle quickly with near-perfect precision.

Now Google has developed a similar program, GenCast, designed to accurately predict weather forecasts for 15 days — a far more difficult task than 10 days.

GenCast ran circles around a 2023 version of the program as well as a program, called Ensemble Prediction System, designed by the highly respected European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts — hitherto the world leader in medium-range weather prediction.

Like AlphaFold 2, GenCast uses hard data — in this case, weather data



collected over a 40-year period with known weather outcomes, rather than depending on, as the European program does, masses of now-time weather to predict what will happen over the next 15 days in the weather.

Extending precise predictions out to 15 days is difficult for programs based on real-time weather because so many factors are at play with weather.

Like AlphaFold 2, Google’s GenCast depends on knowns — known 3D structures for proteins in the case of AlphaFold 2 and documented past weather supplemented by recent

data in the case of 15-day weather forecasts.

Like AlphaFold 2, Google published their key paper in what is the best general science journal in the world, Nature, and shared its data with others including the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts from whom they received most of their high-quality past weather information about past weather.

What’s surprising about AlphaFold 2 and GenCast is how quickly they were developed and improved dramatically, the speed with which they can analyze data and the similarities in approach.

It suggests to me that what we are about to see will be applications of similar programs to solving other challenging problems in science and possibly long-term weather (climate) and other applications that I can’t begin to imagine now tackled.

And not just Google is involved in AI. There are other western and eastern countries working on similar AI programs.

If that is not enough, faster chips, larger memories and better problem-solving algorithms are in development.

However, if there is a giant in the room right now, it’s quantum computing.

It took 50 years to get to where we are now with silicon chip-based computers. Marvellous as they are, they will be superseded by quantum computers within the next few decades and possibly much earlier. The basic building block of the silicon chip computer is on or off or put another way, one or zero.

However, quantum computers can consider all possible values — not

just two possibilities. That innate capability cuts two ways. Quantum computers can simultaneously handle much more data.

The downside, so far, is that quantum computers are unstable and make frequent errors.

That error rate is coming down and as it does, quantum computers will reach a level when they are as error-free as digital computers but much, much faster and capable of handling far more data simultaneously. That is the promise.

But they are not there yet even though Google recently announced that they have reduced errors significantly and their experimental quantum computers can handle far more complex problems, much more quickly than silicon computers can now or are ever likely to be able to achieve.

Welcome to 2025.

*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.*



# Should ‘manifest destiny’ worry us in NOTL?

Dear editor:

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, we can see the former American Fort Niagara right across the river. Some Niagara residents nip over the border to shop.

“Manifest destiny.” It is a phrase used in the Jan. 20 inaugural speech of the newly-elected president of the country to our south.

Canada and other apparent “enemies” are threatened with economy-killing tariffs and other “punishments.” Boastful retaliation possibilities via Canadian supply of energy, power, oil and gas has to stop immediately. Rethink, rephrase and reread your history, immediately.

Manifest destiny is the American doctrine from the 1800s resurrected, on Jan. 20 this year. Star columnist Rick Salutin raised this issue in his prescient column several weeks ago.

Britannica’s definition: “Manifest destiny was the belief that the United States had the divine right to expand westward — and

that all such exploration and expansion was God-ordained.”

Oxford notes that the expansion of the U.S. throughout the American continents was both justified and inevitable.

The other critical phrase in U.S. jurisprudence includes the notion of a “clear and present danger,” originating in 1919 for protection of free speech and expanded now to include any real or perceived threat to the country.

Star columnist Salutin noted the stated intention of the U.S. “reclaiming” the Panama Canal, trying to buy Greenland for its abundance of minerals and other precious commodities and the casual mention of “economic domination” (annexation) of Canada.

Manifest destiny runs through these plans and Salutin provided clear examples — the U.S. buying Louisiana from France, Alaska from Russia, conquering much of the Southern U.S. in the

Mexican wars, “the major genocides on First Nations,” the invasion of Vietnam in the 1960s and intervention in both Middle Eastern and South American regimes.

The Jan. 20 inauguration address included the following: “(W)e will pursue our manifest destiny into the stars, launching American astronauts to plant the stars and stripes on the planet Mars,” said this new president.

When our premier and others threaten to cut off energy and power to the northern U.S. states in one of the worst winters ever, and the Alberta outlier throws a monkey wrench into a concerted effort to build a national Canadian front, the possibility of being considered “a clear and present danger” potentially justifies unilateral action against us.

One source (reginfo.gov) notes that Canada accounts for approximately 90 per cent of annual electricity imports in the U.S.

A critical and related fact

— in the state of New York alone, there are 19 military bases, installations and headquarters (see the New York State’s Division of Military and Naval Affairs page: dmna.ny.gov) and yes, there have been over the years, suggestions to point that military power north.

Some of these bases are headquartered in Niagara Falls, N.Y., Rochester (3 Aviation Regiment) and Buffalo (Company A, Brigade Support Battalion, Engineering Company Support). There are military installations in Jamestown, Buffalo and Rochester in the mix.

In Canada, we are not allowed to shut down power to anyone in the middle of winter. What reaction do you think there would be should Canada take similar action against the U.S. this winter? A clear and present danger of freezing to death?

One Star reader stated bluntly that America wants our water. That’s a start.

*Daphne Lavers*  
NOTL



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# Owners of Trimble House in Queenston fight heritage designation

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A Queenston couple is opposing a proposed heritage designation for their property, arguing it unfairly restricts them despite decades of upkeep and restoration.

Some local heritage preservation advocates believe the couple should've received proper notice of the town's plans, though some of them still support the benefits of heritage designation for a property's future.

Frank Fraser, owner of the Trimble House at 4 Walnut St. with his wife Donna Lynn Fraser, urged the municipal heritage committee to halt the designation process during their Jan. 8 meeting.

The homeowners of the two-storey building say they weren't properly notified about the designation and lacked sufficient time and documents to prepare for the hearing.

Fraser, who practiced law for 37 years, said he'd never seen a case where property rights were restricted without personal notice and access to hearing materials.

A letter dated Oct. 29, notifying the Frasers of a Nov. 6 meeting, arrived while they were abroad. Upon returning on Nov. 18 they



Frank and Donna Lynn Fraser live at 4 Walnut St. in Queenston, pictured here. The town of NOTL wants to give the property historical designation. PAIGE SEBURN

found the letter which didn't include the meeting time or the heritage report, which they later found online after searching.

"If this matter was brought in any other situation, it would not be adequate," said Fraser.

They argue the designation is unfair — restricting changes, lowering value and ignoring 51 years of restoration efforts.

A municipal report from planning and development services last year shows the property dates back to an 1841 sale between Joseph Hamilton and Benjamin Corwin.

Dr. Robert J. Trimble bought the property in 1883 from Robert Hamilton and then built the house, which

the Trimbles owned until 1944 when it was sold to Robert E. Hagan.

Because a heritage designation places limits and obligations on what can be done with a property, it reduces its value by limiting potential buyers, Fraser said.

Fraser questioned who decides what constitutes an inappropriate alteration — his architect or the town's.

"Why should your architect trump mine?" said Fraser.

Ontario Heritage Trust acknowledges property value reduction from heritage easements, Fraser said.

The trust appraises the property before and after the easement, treating the loss as a donation to the

Crown. Owners get a tax receipt for the lost value, fully deductible from taxes owed.

Coun. Gary Burroughs, a member of the municipal heritage committee, shared his experience designating his former property, the Chrysler-Burroughs house at 187 Queen St. in 2002.

"I don't recall involving the Ontario Heritage assessment," he said.

The Frasers also feel it's unjust to use their improvements as justification for the designation.

While their house is a Gothic Revival style, common for late 19th-century farmhouses, Fraser described it as a standard, "cookie-cutter" version.

Though the heritage re-

port highlights the fretwork, much of it was not original. Over time, they uncovered and restored parts that had been removed or covered.

"It's 1988 fretwork, not 1883 fretwork," he said.

The Frasers said they invested hundreds of thousands of dollars, following expert advice, to restore and maintain the property, with ongoing yearly costs.

"The heritage designation would only complicate our continuing to do that and add to the cost," said Fraser.

Fraser said the town is rushing to designate 4 Walnut St. to meet a two-year deadline under the Ontario Heritage Act's Bill 23, avoiding a five-year removal from the heritage list.

The homeowners said they were never notified their property was on the list.

Burroughs acknowledged the pride in heritage designations but called for better communication with homeowners, noting his appreciation for 4 Walnut St. and understanding of the Frasers' frustrations.

Burroughs never got an evaluation or tax relief on his property which he considers a missed opportunity.

"I'm glad you're here," Burroughs said to Fraser during the meeting.

Committee member Brian Marshall opposed designat-

ing properties against owners' will, especially when well-maintained, and added that heritage designation can increase value by five to eight per cent.

Fraser disagreed, citing his experience with the Ontario Heritage Trust, which he said reduces property value, as reflected in their tax receipts.

John Morley agreed with Burroughs and Marshall, criticizing the town's communication process and the need to verify homeowners' acceptance of designations.

He said he would vote against designating the Trimble House.

Committee chair Drew Chapman praised the Frasers as excellent property owners.

"We wouldn't be needing to do things like this if everybody looked after the building the way you do," said Chapman.

He said a designation is future protection and encouraged the Frasers to consider that. Fraser disagreed and said it would hinder future protection instead.

"You can try and convince me, I'll meet with the heritage planners, (but) I can't imagine it will happen," said Fraser. "But at the end of the day, I suppose it's possible."

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com



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Have some fun



- Across
1. They get in the way (9)

6. Long-continued practice (5)

10. Macchu Picchu builder (4)

11. Resting, like actors (10)

12. Canes (8)

13. Stretched-out rectangle (6)

14. Embellish (5)

15. Strong dislike (9)

18. Turn on the waterworks (4,5)

21. Fleecer (5)

24. Showy decoration (6)

26. Amount of sugar needed to help with medication (8)

27. Diversion (10)

28. First name in French fashion (4)

29. Worrier's malady (5)

30. Advocates of land reform (9)
- Down
2. Communication problem for musicians in narrow streets? (9)

3. Rotates around a kind of heater (7)

4. Trapped (6)

5. 19th century American philosopher (7)

7. ---, coulda, woulda (7)

8. Eco-conscious (5)

9. Raring to go (2,3,2)

16. Immensely powerful (9)

17. Suffer remorse (4,3)

19. Merit (7)

20. Hazing (7)

22. Husband of Eleanor of Aquitaine (5,2)

23. Piano (6)

25. Standard of perfection (5)

Crossword Puzzle

1	2		3		4		5			6	7		8	
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12									13					
14						15							16	
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18			19				20			21	22			
									23					
24	25					26								
27										28				
29						30								

Last issue's answers

1	R	E	L	I	E	F	S		5	S	U	R	V	I	V	E			
	R	C	O							S	P	R	O	E					
9	V	O	Y	E	U	R			10	L	O	N	G	T	E	R	M		
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11	R	E	V	E	N	U	E	S		12	R	A	D	I	A	L			
											R	L	T	T	I	T			
13	B	A	N	G	L	A	D	E	S	H		15	N	A	I	L			
16	S	T	Y	E					18	F	A	I	R	Y	T	A	L	E	S
21	S	P	L	I	N	E			22	G	O	N	E	I	N	T	O		
24	A	L	F	R	E	T	O	N			25	E	N	A	M	E	L		
26	S	T	R	A	U	S	S			27	U	S	H	E	R	E	D		

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

MEDIUM

How to think about life in NOTL like a bonsai tree



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson

Columnist

During a quiet afternoon reading by the fireplace in our wonderful local library, a new friend and I wandered into an edifying discussion about bonsai. He has apparently been to Japan many times and his passionate hobby right here is bonsai.

I really only knew how to spell bonsai, but after our discussion, felt a real desire to learn more about this fascinating Japanese art form. And, why not ramble in The Lake Report?

Bonsai, with only a slight degree of creativity, can be related to our housing challenge right here in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Just last week, my son Scott happened to send me an article from Vancouver's online Daily Hive Urbanized, by guest author

Harmon Moon: "Opinion: Vancouver is not a bonsai plant, so just let it grow."

"It's a whole new world out there, folks." I was quickly pulled out of my Canadian housing crisis comfort zone, with a side order of bonsai.

For those not familiar, bonsai artists use shears to prune young saplings down to the desired size and shape. Future growth is planned and controlled.

Please allow me to quote liberally from Harmon Moon out on Canada's left coast, in the Nov. 26, 2024 issue of Daily Hive.

We can make a clear and obvious comparison to how NOTL's thinking about municipal growth has resembled Vancouver over the past many decades.

Sometime in our past, NOTL decided that the end goal was a perfectly manicured city.

Residents were tacitly promised access to quiet, low-rise houses, with unobstructed views of vineyards, sunsets, the escarpment and occasionally water.

Apartments were forbidden on much of the residentially zoned land, and planners feared large buildings might cast their shadows on



Ross Robinson says NOTL needs to be treated like a bonsai tree — it needs to grow, but it should be carefully shaped to grow the way residents want it to grow. FILE

adjacent residences.

To ensure perfectly designed neighbourhoods, BANANA (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything) Republic types have reacted negatively to even suggestions of increased height or density.

The parallels between desirable Vancouver and desirable NOTL are obvious. Each year, many newcomers arrive, and the low rental housing vacancy rate persists.

The desire for non-single-family accommodation continues, so it behooves NOTL to somehow grow and densify.

Like bonsai, let's plan our growth and appearance.

Not surprisingly, last year's quite comprehensive housing survey indicated that a majority of NOTL seniors want to "age in place."

We want to continue living without moving far away. We like living here. For many, it's a matter of dollars and cents. Perhaps good common sense?

Around the world, millions of people love their quality of life in numerous cities like London and Paris, and very few of them

live in single-family dwellings. If we want amenities like public transit, hospitals, schools and recreational facilities, we need population growth to pay the freight.

Gentle upzoning over the years would allow people to fill into modest apartment units rather than vying for space in a very limited number of single-family detached houses.

If we want to live in a great town, we must allow it to grow. Think bonsai, NOTL.

We must wholeheartedly join in a bonsai-like pruning process and let NOTL grow. Let it ramble!

Often well-developed acronyms help us to remember and understand.

From the very cool and liveable west end of Vancouver, Scott sends along four clever bonsai acronyms:

- Because Our Neighbourhood Stays As Is.
- Back Off! New Structures Are Intrusive.
- Bungalows Only?! No Skyscrapers Anywhere, Imbeciles.
- Because Our Nostalgia Stifles All Improvement.

Rambling over to Japan, let's think bonsai planning for the future of housing in our Niagara.

## EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM



### Winter in Niagara

This pencil sketch shows a couple taking a sleigh ride in the winter weather. There is a cabin along the left-hand side and several stumps in the yard. One could assume the homeowner chopped a number of trees down to either build the cabin or perhaps to create a woodpile to sustain the fire during the winter season! At the bottom right-hand corner, someone wrote, “Forest Road to Niagara, January.” Unfortunately, the artist did not put in the date of this beautiful local piece. It has been a real winter for Niagara-on-the-Lake residents recently. This cold weather can bring on what one may call “cabin fever” or the “winter blues.” We all need to embrace the beauty of winter. Step outside and enjoy this natural phenomenon. Check for animal prints in the snow to see where bunnies squirrels or the dreaded coyote have been! Or perhaps you can get a bit more active and enjoy some tobogganing, skating, a sleigh ride or even a nice winter walk in the snow.



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# Adding flow to your garden landscape



Joanne Young  
Columnist

Like most gardeners, you have most likely been slowly plugging along with your garden, adding more gardens as time and budget allow for.

Unfortunately, the end results could look like all afterthoughts.

Nothing seems to connect with or blend with each other. After all that hard work, it is discouraging to see that you are not satisfied with what you have done.

It still does not capture your eye like you thought it would. Everything seems disconnected from the other elements.

What is missing is the sense of flow. It is the sense of flow that creates unity and peacefulness in the landscape.

Creating a sense of flow in a garden refers to two different aspects of the landscape.

It can refer to the way that people move through the space physically. That might be with the use of a pathway that will lead your guests down the side of a home or from a patio to a gazebo.

Also, the use of structures can create a sense of flow.



Creating a sense of flow in a garden refers to two different aspects of the landscape — how you move through the landscape physically and how the eye moves through the landscape visually. JOANNE YOUNG

A well-placed arbour will draw someone to venture in a certain direction to see what is beyond.

As well as the physical sense of flow with your landscape, the sense of flow also refers to how it visually leads the eye continuously around the garden.

To create flow and unity in your landscape, you need to learn how to guide a person's eye from one garden area to another or from one element to the next. To create flow, you need to have a line that continually runs throughout the landscape.

This line could be the outline of a garden blending into the shape of a patio. It is important to understand that wherever a line stops or your eye stops as it goes around the garden, so too does the sense of flow stop.

Before you begin to make any decisions about how you are going to create a sense of flow, there are a couple of things to think about.

One of the big decisions that you need to make is whether to have beds and other elements in the garden (decks, patios etc.) with curved lines or to go with more straight, geometric lines. There is no right or wrong answer to that question, but there are some considerations to look at.

The first consideration is the garden style that you have chosen. This will help dictate what types of lines that you should go with.

Curved lines are better suited for more informal and natural-type gardens. So, if your style is cottage, woodland, natural or traditional, curved lines will help to convey that style better. Beds with curved lines follow the natural terrain as nothing in nature happens in straight lines.

Straight lines create more of a formal look. The formal gardens rely greatly on symmetry. The geometric shape selected may be copied from an architectural feature found on your home.

The second consideration is the feeling that you want to convey.

The human eye follows curves more easily than straight lines. Curved bed shapes allow the eye to follow the outline slowly, taking in more of the garden. A garden with curved lines is more relaxing.

Gardens with strong geometric lines have a much sharper, more precise look to them. Your eye quickly follows the lines to the end points. They can still create the sense of flow.

This style appeals to those people who like a clean, tidy, crisp look. It conveys more of an orderly and uncluttered look.

If you have a smaller space, especially a long, but narrow space, going to geometric lines will help to make your space feel larger.

Doing a similar look with curved lines will take up more space both physically and visually.

Once you have connected elements in your garden together, creating that sense of flow, you will find your garden will suddenly become a more peaceful place to spend your time.

Joanne Young is a Niagara-on-the-Lake garden expert and coach. See her website at [joanneyoung.ca](http://joanneyoung.ca).

**The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society is pleased to be hosting a series of Saturday morning gardening classes, available to the public. They will be facilitated by Joanne Young starting on March 1 and will run until May 31. Join us for the classes that interest you. For all the details and to pre-register for the classes, visit [notlHORTSOCIETY.COM/classes](http://notlHORTSOCIETY.COM/classes).**

## Obituary

### Peter Gossen



GOSSEN, Peter P — Our dad, Peter Gossen, born Nov. 12, 1923, was granted his heart's desire to reach his heavenly home on Jan. 25, 2025 at 101 years old.

Dad farmed and drove tractor trailer for many years. He was proud of his many safety awards.

Upon his retirement, our parents traveled to Europe, Alaska and some sunny destinations during the winter. Dad enjoyed his fall time hunting trips. They loved camping with the kids and grandies. They hosted a weekly Pie Day for who ever could make it. Dad sampled all varieties, just to make sure they were good.

Our dad had missed our mom, Mary (Regier) since 2016. He is survived by his daughters Elizabeth (Ron) Andres and Marion (Fred) Janzen. He also loved his grandchildren and their families. Erin (Josh) Bice, Eli and Chloe; Luke (Rachel) Andres, Ruth and Miriam; Maray (Steve) Janzen, Abigail; Jessica (Erik) Nickel, Wesley and Ashley. He was predeceased by an infant daughter and daughter Maggie Ryan (2024). His brother Arthur (Agnes) predeceased him. His sister Laura, has been his neighbor at Heritage Place for the last few years.

As a family, we are thankful for the compassionate care he received at Radiant Care, Pleasant Manor and if desired, donations can be made to Radiant Care.

On Monday, Feb. 3, 2025 we will celebrate his life. Visitation at 1 p.m. and service at 2 p.m. at Bethany Mennonite Church, East & West Line in Virgil.

Online condolences at [www.tallmanfuneralhomes.ca](http://www.tallmanfuneralhomes.ca).



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# NOTL realtors want to **liven up** your Mondays



Angela Bachert, Peter Mulcaster, Nicole Marsh-Burke and Joy Miele shared smiles and conversation over baked goods and coffee on Monday. JULIA SACCO

If you're looking for a way to spend your Monday mornings, Niagara-on-the-Lake Realtors are here to help.

On the third Monday of every month between 10:30 and noon, you can find coffee, cookies and friendly faces at the Community Coffee Social sessions in the community centre's Penner Room.

Hosted by realtor Joy Miele and broker Nicole Marsh-Burke with McGarr, the social sessions aim to provide a space for NOTLers to connect with their community.

"We wanted to create an opportunity to facilitate the connection with community members and for people who are lonely or maybe new to the area to come out and make some new friends," Miele said.

Peter Mulcaster saw the ad for Monday's first gathering and since he lives alone, came out to enjoy the company along with Angela Bachert, Marsh-Burke and Miele.

**Have an opinion you want heard?**



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