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Canada's most-decorated community newspaper

October 31, 2024

Foghorn House deal is a win-win, says Niagara Foundation

Richard Wright Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The Niagara Foundation says an agreement that saw the organization take over and operate NOTL's historic Foghorn House from the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is a win-win for both

Lyle Hall, chair of the foundation, says despite public criticisms that were voiced during the summer months on social media, the agreement benefits both the town and the foundation.

The criticism he's referring to was an anonymous post made on a NOTL Facebook group, which claimed the foundation got a sweetheart deal from the town during the 2018-2022 council period. The post ignored several important details surrounding the agreement, which has been in place since 1986.

The agreement allows the foundation to manage the property, located at 99 River Beach Rd., as a rental, with a portion of the proceeds going back to the town's coffers.

As part of the terms, the foundation was tasked with repairing and maintaining the dilapidated property, and must pay the town 15 per cent of the rental income. Until 2022, the foundation also paid prop-

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HEARTBEAT of the HARVEST

Making good things grow, from their farms in Jamaica to NOTL's vineyards



Oral Walters snips a cluster of grapes from the vine at Stratus Vineyards. DON REYN

Harvest activity is waning as October draws to an end, but some of the grapes for the most full-bodied reds are yet to be picked, and until they are, migrant workers will stay on to finish the job. They know their homecoming is close, but the ripening of the last berries will dictate the day they can head home. The Lake Report returned to two of the wineries we featured at the beginning of the series Heartbeat of the Harvest to sit down with some of the workers for their perspectives. Today we meet Oral Walters and Wayne Blake, at Stratus Vineyards

Jill Troyer The Lake Report

They are farmers first and last. Oral Walters has been applying his agricultural expertise to the vineyards at Stratus for more than 20 years. Wayne Blake is winding up his first year at Stratus, but he brings 20plus years of experience working in tobacco fields.

Both men have extensive gardens back home in Jamaica, growing yams, cabbages, sweet peppers, plantains, sugar cane, pumpkins and bananas. Blake has a goat as well.

They sell their produce either right from the farm or at a market and export some of their yams. Their proficiency with growing things is easily adapted to tending vineyards.

When Walters arrives in Niagaraon-the-Lake in April, he and his coworkers do all the pruning.

They will go through a row full of wood, with a riot of canes on each vine, and then it'll just be two sticks

Continued on Page 6

Niven approached Zalepa with idea of filling council seat

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The town's newest councillor Andrew Niven approached Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa with the idea of joining council, The Lake Report has learned.

Niven had first read about the vacancy in a press release from the town, he told The Lake Report.

"It caught me by surprise that he was resigning," Niven said.

The media release published on Sept. 13 announced Ruller's departure from Niagara-on-the-Lake town council and mentioned the vacancy that needed to be filled within 60 days.

"Reading that there could be an appointment, I had just emailed Gary to tell him I had been interested if that's a path council was willing to take," Niven said.

"He did reach out to me and express some interest," Zalepa told The Lake Report Wednesday evening.

Around a week later, Zalepa emailed to confirm with Niven that he would be interested.

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Andrew Niven



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Niven stepping down from chamber roles

Continued from Front Page

After the email from Zalepa, Niven did not receive any updates on the vacant position until council announced his appointment during a special council meeting on Oct. 16.

"I was watching it just like everyone else and they had said my name," he said.

"I guess he had reached out to a few different people — I don't really know the details of that — but it was really just that simple."

Zalepa told The Lake Report that one of those other candidates was "more obvious," so they were reached out to personally.

"The report identified the next in line from council election, so obviously I reached out to that individual because I wanted to gauge the level of interest. That was a call I made myself," Zalepa said.

Council's options for filling the position included a byelection, choosing a candidate from the 2022 election list or council putting out a call for candidates, Zalepa told The Lake Report in an interview following Niven's appointment.



Coun. Andrew Niven and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa during Tuesday's council meeting. JULIA SACCO

Before Niven's position was announced, Zalepa confirmed several community members were contacted about the position, including ninth-place finisher in the 2022 council election, Allan Bisback.

Niven was appointed with only couns. Gary Burroughs and Sandra O'Connor protesting in favour of Bisback.

Niven's contribution to the community as both the chair of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL, a director of marketing at Konzelmann Estate Winery, and

his interest in town politics contributed to him being selected, Zalepa said in a past interview following the announcement.

Niven has since stepped down from his role on the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL to prioritize duties on council, he said.

"Andrew's been a great contributor already, prior to his appointment," Zalepa said.

Zalepa is glad to see someone who has been involved and taken an interest in council be appointed to the seat, he said.

"He was involved with

our (strategic plan) and quite significantly with the tourism master plan work. I think those definitely show competencies, knowledge and ability," Zalepa said.

Niven ran for municipal council in 2018, placing eleventh. He did not run in the 2022 municipal election.

However Niven says he's been interested in serving on council.

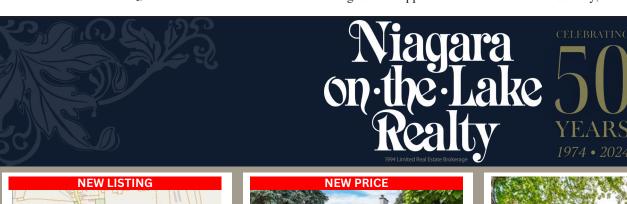
"I've been going to council meetings for a long time," Niven said.

Niven sat at the back of the room for many council meetings prior to Ruller's departure.

During his first committee of the whole meeting on Oct. 22, Niven expressed his excitement to be joining as a member of council.

"Looking ahead, I want to emphasize my commitment to working collaboratively with council staff, stakeholders and most importantly staying connected with residents, business and community groups," he said during the meeting.

"Ensuring that their voices are heard during the decision making process is a priority for me," Niven





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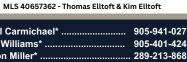
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Foundation has paid town \$270K

Continued from Front Page

erty taxes.

Hall said, in total, the foundation has paid the town more than \$270,000 from revenue share and property taxes during its time operating the Foghorn House. During that same time, after all costs and expenditures have been tallied, the foundation has earned about \$70,000.

The agreement was renewed and amended in 2022 due to operating losses suffered by the foundation. That amendment waived property taxes on the home from 2022 until now.

In a memorandum sent to the town in 2021, the foundation said from 2016 to 2020 it lost \$15,000 with depreciation, partially due to losses caused by the CO-VID pandemic.

"We just finished CO-VID so our nightly rentals were substantially reduced," he said, noting that the home is now rented by a permanent resident and not on a nightly basis.

The town agreed to waive property taxes on the home. The total amount of taxes deferred as of March 31 this year is \$20,806.50.

Now, the foundation is planning to exercise an option to extend a lease that allows it to continue to manage the town-owned structure until 2026.

"We have an option agreement in our current lease which allows us to add one extra year from February 2025 until January 2026," said Lyle Hall. "We are invoking that."

Home was in dire need of repairs

Hall says the home was in a state of disrepair when the foundation took over responsibility for the home in 1986. At that time, the foundation committed to restoring it in exchange for the right to recoup lost finances through a rental income stream.

"We spent a considerable amount of money — several hundred thousand dollars — in renovating and maintaining the structure, and as a trade off the town enabled us to recover some of that money through the rental of the building," he said.

An outline of the work completed was provided in a 2021 memo sent to the town by Hall.

In that memo, Hall outlined that between 1986 and 1990 the foundation spent \$100,000 to repair and renovate the building for habitation.



The NOTL Foghorn House is owned by the town but maintained and operated as a rental property by the Niagara Foundation. This has been called a sweetheart deal but the foundation says thanks to its restoration efforts, the deal is fair. RICHARD WRIGHT

"The foundation also contributed \$10,000 towards shoreline improvements during the initial year of the lease (1986)," he added.

"In the early 2010's an additional \$90,000 was spent on furnishings and minor upgrades to use the building for the purpose of nightly rentals."

the town would enter into an asset management agreement to allow an organization such as the foundation to manage an asset."

LORD MAYOE GARY ZALEPA

In an interview with The Lake Report, Hall elaborated on those renovations and repairs saying the foundation undertook the expense to connect the home to the town's sewage system, had electrical and plumbing refits done, put on a new roof, added new partitions inside the structure, put in a new kitchen and updated the bathrooms.

"The building was in pretty sad shape," he said.

When it came time for the 2022 renewal, the foundation asked the previous council — led by former lord mayor Betty Disero — for the new concessions surrounding the waiving of property taxes.

"Over the past five years, the foundation earned \$36,377 from operation of the Foghorn House before depreciation. After depreciating our capital investment, the foundation's loss stands at just over \$15,000

for the period 2016 to 2020. During this same period, the town received \$29,933 in rental commissions (15 per cent of total revenue) and an additional \$40,247 in property taxes," the memo reads.

The lease agreement also stipulates that other costs related to the property are to be shared by the town and the foundation.

The amended lease says the town is responsible "for routine maintenance of the building" and "for any costs associated with maintenance of the shoreline protection of the property. It says the foundation will "pay all heat, light, and other utility costs for the property" as well as "any capital costs with respect to the maintenance of the building" and "shall maintain the grounds of the property in a clean and trimmed condition."

Mixed opinions on value of the deal

Current Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said the deal, as it stands now, does have understandable factors, but when it comes to such things as waiving the property taxes, he is less understanding.

"I don't think I would have done that," he said.

He does, however, see the logic behind entering into a mutually beneficial agreement to manage the property.

"I can see why the town would enter into an asset management agreement to allow an organization such as the foundation to manage an asset, because it does make sense if you can create a sustainable MOU (memorandum of understanding) or relationship."

"I'm not sure that was

captured in all this," he concluded.

Zalepa said a more sustainable relationship "that allows the municipality to fairly recover the cost to do this and responsibly put away proper funds into a reserve for capital repairs and maintenance just like any owner of property would do to manage an asset," is the kind of agreement that he would prefer.

He didn't explain why the current agreement, to him, doesn't accomplish that goal.

Hall, however, believes the current agreement is a win-win situation where the town gets an important historical property restored and maintained, plus some revenue, and the foundation is happy because it helps it accomplish its mandate to protect the history and culture of NOTL.

"The foundation's objectives with this building, and with several others in town, was to preserve heritage structures," he said.

He is confident council will honour the extension clause in the current agreement.

He said the foundation has "achieved our mandate in terms of maintaining and putting the house in a good state of repair," he said.

"We have no reason to believe the town won't abide by the lease that they agreed to and that that lease is consistent with the last three years, which was that we will not pay property tax."

Hall adds there was never any intention of the foundation entering this agreement to make money and that the town benefitted financially.

The Town of Niagara-onthe-Lake refused to disclose financial figures for the property.

wright@niagaranow.com





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Town approves funding for Heritage Trail

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The Upper Canada Heritage Trail will be able to finish up another kilometre of groundwork before the winter weather sets in.

During Tuesday night's meeting, Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors approved the use of \$21,000 remaining in the town's discretionary grant funds toward completing phase two of the Heritage Trail.

All councillors voted in favour of the decision except for Couns. Gary Burroughs and Maria Mavridis.

When completed, the second phase will extend the trail from Line 2 to Line 3 roads.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita brought the issue forward and highlighted the urgency of funding needed.

"We are trying to get staff assigned to this project so that we can get up to Line 3 — which was already a commitment the town has



The NOTL Kinsmen Club donated \$6,000 to the trail last week, ahead of council's decision to spend another \$21,000 on trail improvements. SUPPLIED

previously made — before the snow comes," she said.

A grant application for \$250,000 was submitted through the federal economic development fund, but the Heritage Trail committee said the application is unlikely to succeed.

Coun. Erwin Wiens questioned whether or not the project would be able to be completed on time, even with funding.

Kevin Turcotte, the town's manager of parks and recreation, confirmed that with proper funding the second phase can be completed by the end of 2024.

Wiens was in favour of the decision.

"I pass (the trail) all the time, it gets lots of use, we want to finish this," he said.

It is also the first time the Heritage Trail committee has needed money from council, Wiens said.

Coun. Gary Burroughs suggested using funds from the municipal accommodation tax, referring to a possible tourism component.

Kyle Freeborn, the director of corporate services for the town, said he is unfamiliar with tourist uses of the trail.

"I see it more as a local piece of infrastructure," he said.

Burroughs said NOTL's hiking and bike trails are tourist attractions.

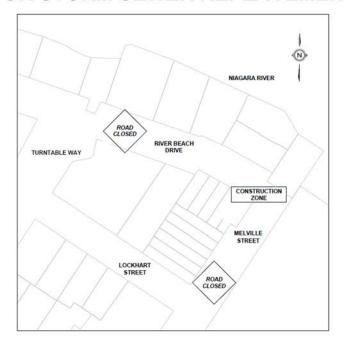
"I'm assuming the Heritage Trail would be an added incentive," he said.

"I have a problem with spending other money when this money is available," Burroughs said.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



TOWN OF NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE MELVILLE STREET ROAD CLOSURE FOR STORM SEWER REPLACEMENT



WHAT: The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, through its contractor Advance Excavating, will be commencing with the storm sewer replacement on Melville Street from Lockhart Street to River Beach Drive. A road closure will be in place to facilitate a shorter construction schedule for the sewer replacement. A detour route will be provided around the site for traffic.

WHEN: The road closure for the storm sewer replacement project will begin on October 28, 2024, and will be in place for 12 weeks.

CONTACT: Any inquiries concerning this project may be directed to Mike Komljenovic, Engineering Supervisor, at mike.komljenovic@notl.com or 905-468-3266 ext. 240.

Emergency Services have been informed of this closure and have developed a plan to ensure emergency service to the properties in the closure area remains unaffected.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation.



GENERAC®

Jam Queen wins four more firsts at Royal

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Kim McQuhae likes to keep judges on their toes during the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair's annual jam and jellies competition — and this year was no exception.

The fair, which will open to the public in Toronto on Friday, Nov. 1, released competition results online last week.

McQuhae submitted 28 jams and jellies across 14 categories, taking home four first-place wins, three second-place wins, four third-place wins and sixteen more wins outside of the top three.

Aside from the single fruit jams and jellies, all the submissions were new recipes, McQuhae said.

"I like making things that are different," she said.

Some of her favourites of the year were a strawberry hibiscus jelly along with a pear and lychee fruit jam.



NOTL's "Jam Queen" Kim McQuhae has won another four first-place awards for her jams and jellies. JULIA SACCO

"At the market, I've been calling it Pearl Jam," Mc-Quhae said.

The pear and lychee recipe was a great seller at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Farmer's Market and placed fifth in the competition in the "fruit jam — other" category.

Some of her more experimental jams McQuhae particularly enjoyed making this year, she noted, including a blackberry watermelon preserve, which placed first in its category. "I've always found that watermelon is such a giant fruit. How come no one makes anything from it?" she said.

There are big chunks of watermelon in the recipe, making for a unique texture, McQuhae said.

Other recipes experimented with colour, like a bright pink jelly made using dragon fruit nectar, which placed fifth in its category.

"It's a bright sort of pinky colour that looks really nice on a white cheese," she said.

McQuhae also mentioned her pawpaw fruit jam — made with the high-demand fruit she sources right in town.

"It didn't place all that well at Royal, but it's very popular at the market," she said.

The pawpaw fruit looks like banana custard when you open it up and has a banana-mango citrus flavour in her recipes, McQuhae said.

"The reason you don't see (pawpaws) in stores is because they have a very short shelf life," she said.

McQuhae hopes to keep her pawpaw connection secret, but did mention that a few other culinary fans in town source them there as well.

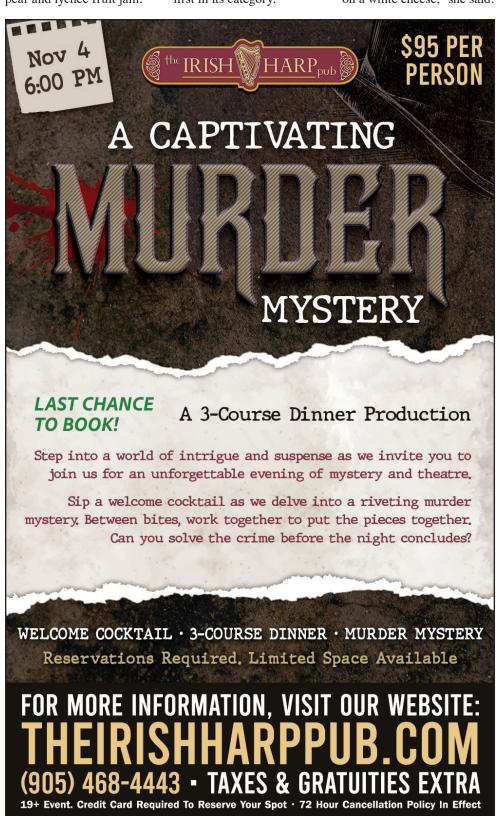
For those who want a chance to try out McQuhae's award-winning jams and jellies, stop by the Gryphon Ridge Jam Store on Larkin Road in NOTL.

"I have just about everything," she said.

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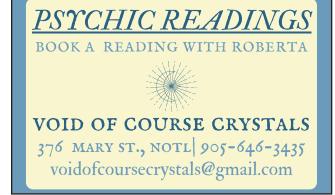




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Left: Wayne Blake harvests Malbec grapes. Right: Oral Walters. The two are Jamaican seasonal workers at Stratus Vineyards, and soon, after the last grapes are picked, they'll return to their gardens back home. DON REYNOLDS

When grapes are done, they head home

Continued from Front Page

by the time they're done.

They'll decide how many of the buds to leave on the vine for the best growth, and which ones.

On a sunny day in October, Walters' experienced eye assesses the Malbec grapes he's picking and sees they have excellent colour.

Both he and Blake clip the bunches, skillfully flicking out any damaged berries, and move down the row briskly.

Walters says he likes to see the grapes ripening to perfection at harvest time, after months of caring for the vines.

Harvest may be nearing a close, but they won't be going home until the last grapes are picked and sorted.

Walters' home is in Clarendon, Jamaica, and Blake's is in Manchester two of the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Beryl in July.

It was a category four storm, and one of the most

powerful ever to hit Jamaica, knocking out power and wreaking havoc in its wake.

It was scary for them, but luckily, their families were not severely affected and their homes escaped serious damage.

They connect with their loved ones every day, Blake talking with his common-law wife, his mom and his 21-year-old daughter, who is studying at agricultural school.

Walters is on the phone with his girlfriend every night and he's looking forward to being reunited.

Both Walters and Blake say things are not easy in Jamaica and the money they earn here makes things much better.

Blake is in the process of building a house and he's also able to pay for his daughter's school expenses.

While they are working here in NOTL, a few things help bring them some of the comforts of home.

They like to go for a bike ride down to the lake, get together with friends and just relax on their days off.

They have their own vegetable garden at the house on East West Line where they stay while they're here. They grow pumpkin, cucumbers, corn, peas and callaloo, a leafy green.

They buy certain groceries from a woman who makes the rounds in a van once a week, selling Jamaican specialties. Sometimes they go to a Jamaican eatery in Niagara Falls.

And all the time, they cook their food the way they like it. There's no problem finding the ingredients they need.

Yet, some things still make their mouth water for home.

Walters misses green bananas, which he cooks down into a sauce to go with fish or chicken curry dishes. And nowhere here can he match the absolute freshness of a banana cut from a tree or a plantain.

Walters and Blake will

be bringing some extra clothes home when they go, they shop at the outlet mall on occasion. They'll also have some icewine stashed in their luggage.

Some years, like many of his coworkers, Walters ships a large crate to Jamaica filled with staples like flour, rice, cooking oil, coffee and sometimes electronics like TVs or equipment like generators or lawnmowers. Those items are less expensive and more readily available here.

The two men are affable as they talk about the things they like about working here, the people and food they miss from home, and their one shared aversion — to cold.

This fall has been unseasonably warm, which is fine by them. The one thing they definitely do not like is working in the cold.

So, by the time those last grapes are ready to come in, the cooling temperatures will only intensify their hankering for home, where warmer days await.



This tiny column is about promoting kindness in our lives. Bradley Hamilton has written 100 pieces of advice to help spread joy and happiness to our community. Enjoy, and be kind.

#3: "Volunteer to clean up your local park or playground, making it a better place for kids to play."

NEWS (%)

Milestone moments and connections at the inaugural Harvest Festival

Paige Seburn The Lake Report

As the sun shone brightly on Saturday, the firstever Niagara-on-the-Lake Harvest Festival provided the perfect backdrop for Jan Bauer and her daughter Jenny Karn to celebrate their milestone birthdays with family and fun.

"We got together with my cousin last night, and we were talking about our itinerary for today. The first thing she said was that we had to come and see the market. So, we did that," said Bauer. "My daughter just turned 40, and I'm turning 70."

Bauer's cousin, Sharry Flett, is part of the Shaw Festival, which brought Jan and her daughter to NOTL to see her performance in "My Fair Lady."

"We've been down several times to see her performances. We just love the area. All the shops are beautiful, and it being fall just makes it that much prettier," she said.

"I told my daughters, we've never done this before — just a ladies' weekend," said Bauer. "So, we said, what do we want to do? We looked at different ideas, and decided on Niagara-on-the-Lake."

Hosted by the NOTL Chamber of Commerce and Anchor Niagara, the festival transformed the Market Square parking lot into a lively gathering from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Oct. 26.

As the music from Niagara performer Cory Cruise filled the air, locals



Sarah Kaufman and family enjoy the festival. PAIGE SEBURN

and visitors celebrated the season together.

They browsed a variety of local boutiques, listened to the live music, participated in children's crafts like face painting, and sampled and purchased offerings from local vendors, including artisanal cheeses, handmade jewelry and seasonal treats.

Vendor Jamie-Lynn Jones said she was delighted to participate in the festival.

"After the Peach Festival, I reached out to see if there would be something for the fall," she said.

When she learned about the Harvest Festival, she was eager to connect with the community and showcase her store, she said. Some discovered her boutique for the first time that day, and some were returning customers.

"We've had a lot of people that have come by
— and when I asked them if they've been in the store before — they have," said Jones. "One local was wearing one of our sweaters that she got a couple of years ago. She said she's just got to get a new one."

"I found out about the Harvest Festival in the news," said Sarah Kaufman, who attended the festival with her three children — Audrey, Isabel, and Maddie. "We love fall things to do in the community, so I brought the kids to check it out."

Kaufman said she was thrilled with her purchase of a stylish scarf from Must Boutique.

"I didn't know about the boutique before, and it's really nice to see them out here. Now, I'll know that their store is on Queen Street, and I can check it out," she said.

As the day drew to a close, Kaufman said they left with a deeper appreciation for their community and its local treasures.

"I think any event that brings different businesses together and highlights the harvest season and the agricultural community is a great opportunity to bring different communities and people together."

The kids were having fun listening to the music and dancing, eagerly anticipating the face-painting booth, she said.

The best part? It was free, making it perfect for families, she said.















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Lions Harvest Breakfast a big hit

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Lines were long and plates were full at the St. Davids Lions' annual Harvest Breakfast.

Sunday morning, starting at 8 a.m., guests could visit the Lions' branch at 1462 York Rd. for a homemade breakfast buffet for \$15 in support of the Lions.

"Every year it's a big job. It's a lot of work for the Lions, but it's all worth it and the community really appreciates it," St. Davids Lions chief Martin Forster told The Lake Report.

Of the 96 members of the club, more than half were all hands on deck dur-



Susan Snider serves up eggs to hungry diners.

ing the breakfast service, between cooking, serving, collecting donations and more, Forster said.

"We've got pretty well the whole club helping out for a great cause," he said.

Running until 1 p.m., the breakfast was busy from start to finish, between the early risers and the afterchurch crowds.

Martha Fleming, Susan Cote and Kathy Paul were part of the after-church crowd and were eager to dig into a warm meal after mass.

Katherine and Otto Peter and Elanie See were visiting family from out of the country and enjoyed their first arvest Breakfast in Niagaraon-the-Lake.

"The best part is being with family and friends," See said.

The Harvest Breakfast marks the beginning of the Lions ramping up for the holiday season, Forster said.

Christmas tree sales will begin the third week of November, outside the Lions hall on York Road.



The Lake Report





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Contributed by Patty Garriock

"Always keep that happy attitude. Pretend that you are holding a beautiful fragrant bouquet." - Candice M. Pope

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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Harvest Classic returns

The NOTL Harvest Classic tournament took over the Virgil arenas on the weekend. Photographer Dave Van de Laar was there to capture some of the action. In this photo the U13 NOTL Wolves play the Shelburne Wolves, winning 4-1. Visit niagaranow.com and check the paper next week for more images and the full story.

Opinion

The monster (house) slayer



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner Columnist

It was, he admits, a "moment of weakness."

But a fight. "I'm a trader," Tom says. "Always have been. So when there were multiple offers, it kinda got me going. There was competition. And I won."

That cost him \$1.6 mil-

"When I've done a deal, the litmus test is always how I feel right afterwards. The gut. And you know what? I'm glad I bought it."

Just like that, after a brief but intense battle last week, Niagara-on-the-Lake's Mould House had a new owner. What is more salient, it got a protector.

Neither competitors nor money nor a boatload of fungus could keep Tom Caldwell away. And with his purchase of what turned out to be the house next door to his, an unusual thing happened in Old Town.

Why did he pay \$200,000 more than asking for an uninhabitable and vacant pile that cleaners refused to enter without hazmat gear? Turns out the guy who



The infamous Mould Cottage. GARTH TURNER

owns a major financial brokerage bearing his name, with a Toronto mansion, an Order of Canada medal, honorary regimental command, deep local roots and serious Bay Street creds is, well, a softie.

He was smitten. Couldn't

So, instead of throwing wealth into erecting a hulking, conspicuous, Mississauga trophy home on a prime development lot (like the one across the street) or a profitable multiunit edifice, this mouldy wee cottage with quixotic chimneys stole Tom's crusty heart.

"God only knows how much it's going to cost to preserve it," he says. "But this is what the Old Town is about. And this is the heart of NOTL. Council won't mess this one up."

It's the battle of our time and place. Do we opt for more housing, a fatter tax base, more people and intensity — or quietly restore and revive what we've got?

Local politicians, taking

their lead from a prodevelopment province, have turned up the flames by greenlighting a major new hotel in a residential hood, condos on Mary Street, tracts of new houses near Virgil and GTA-style towers

at Glendale. Egged on by the feds, cities across Canada have trashed zoning laws, opened the door for sixplexes, eased financing for homes with suites and given newbie buyers 30-year mortgages and lower down payments on seven-figure properties.

Meanwhile, rates are plopping, with four cuts now by the Bank of Canada. More coming.

The policymakers are anxious to pump things up before (a) the potential reelection of Donald Trump (and ensuing tariffs) and (b) after the surprise announcement to slash immigration.

Economists say that'll have quick consequences as consumer demand drops and the worker pool dries. Small business operators

say it's all crazy. Politics, not logic.

The big swirly things may seem remote from our streets. But they're not. NOTL's a microcosm of these pressures.

Is more always better?

"Council thinks so," says Tom. "They really don't have the vision needed to know what to protect and preserve. Some of us need to ante up to do that, and it takes money. I blame the town for allowing houses to be built that just don't fit

So one of the 800 empty and available listings currently on the market is being shielded from demolition.

Original features will be preserved as it becomes a family guest house. "Hopefully, this will work," Tom says, "for the grandchildren, and beyond."

Is this a one-percenter thing to do?

Of course, it is. Not everybody has a couple of million kicking around to snatch and rescue a faded, troubled architectural gem. Most would seek to turn mould into money.

Truth be told, Caldwell isn't helping to solve the nation's housing crisis. It's more about our soul.

And thus, a fine argument for having more rich people..

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

garth@garth.ca



Pauline Reimer Gibson

Audiologist

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TREE CARE



LETTER OF THE WEEK

Defend residents, not private interests

When people are asked what government's main role is, most answer with some version of "the security of its citizens."

On a federal level, this means economic security, health and wellness and protection from foreign invasion.

At the municipal level, we're talking safe roads, waste collection, policing and upholding bylaws.

In the Oct. 23 edition of The Lake Report, in reference to the town's recent victory at the Ontario Land Tribunal regarding the Rand Estate development ("Success is 'when the bleeding stops,' Wiens says of Rand hearing"), Coun. Erwin Wiens is quoted as saying: "I'm always concerned when people say a complete victory. A complete victory would mean the bleeding would stop."

"When the bleeding stops is when council stops paying to take development proposals such as these to

court, Wiens told The Lake Report," the article states.

Unfortunately, Wiens has

Council did not take Solmar to the tribunal over the Rand Estate. The developer initiated that action themself to challenge the planning rules in place.

The developer has had opportunities to compromise and settle with the town. They chose not to do so, believing they would win at the tribunal.

It is the developer that's caused the bleeding, not the town. The town is simply defending itself.

Large developers like Solmar have tremendous resources and financial capabilities. A small town cannot compete when it comes to enforcing planning policies and regulations.

For large developers, legal battles are a cost of doing business and an expense that reduces their tax bill.

They play a long game and can often outwait municipalities and politicians until they get what they

It is no coincidence that Parliament Oak was sold to Two Sisters two days after the current council was elected.

To illustrate, an interview with Benny Marotta for The Lake Report from Nov. 2, 2022 ("Parliament Oak property sold to Two Sisters for \$8 million") reported: "The plans for the property aren't set yet, but he is eager to 'work with the new administration, with the new lord mayor and council, and to see what is the best way to develop in a way that will satisfy the needs of the town."

"He added that 'residents need to be part of the discussion. But at the end of the day, the town cannot go by what everybody wants, otherwise there will never be a decision. So, they need to trust council, especially the new council, in order to make a decision that we can all enjoy.""

So what is the town to do?

If we follow Mr. Wiens' advice, council simply gives in and lets the developers have their way. There are far better uses for tax dollars than going to court.

But, if NOTL doesn't defend itself and developers are allowed to do whatever they want, what is the cost to the community in terms of quality of life and property values?

Do you want to live next to a hotel or housing development that doesn't fit with your neighbourhood?

If Coun. Wiens and others are not prepared to defend NOTL against companies that don't respect the rules and put the needs of tourism and development before residents, then we must elect different politicians.

Defending the rights of citizens, rather than businesses whose goal is to maximize profits at the expense of residents' quality of life, is job number one for a town councillor.

> Stewart Hall **NOTL**



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Library Month celebrates diversity of thought

Dear editor:

On the final day of Canadian Library Month, FAIR in Libraries celebrates the critical role libraries play in bringing all viewpoints to their communities.

As a nonpartisan network advancing fairness, understanding and humanity, FAIR in Libraries supports libraries in their mandate to offer a diversity of perspectives in collections, programs and daily operations.

This diversity of perspectives is key to library neutrality, the professional stance that libraries and library workers cannot impose their values and worldviews on users.



Western societies are home to many different cultural, racial, ethnic and faith groups, making neutrality the only ethical position a publicly funded library can

There are too many community members with their own priorities, values and political causes for the library to endorse any one

of them and still hope to provide a welcoming environment for all.

Library neutrality serves as a defence against pressure from across the political spectrum to censor information.

Some within the library profession propose to replace neutrality with social activism or radical empathy but such a change would undermine public trust and lead funders to question supporting libraries that fail to represent the full diversity of interests in their communities.

We applaud library board and staff members who uphold the principles of neutrality, viewpoint diversity, free speech and intellectual freedom.

It takes courage to defend citizens' rights to access the world's ideas and information.

This Canadian Library Month, we applaud and celebrate libraries as one of the most important foundations of our liberal democracy.

FAIR in Libraries

Bravo to Lake Report on Zalepa & Co. editorial

Dear editor:

Last week's editorial about the behaviour of "Zalepa and Co." got it right ("Editorial: Zalepa & Co. acted undemocratically in filling vacant seat," Oct. 24).

The lord mayor and his sidekick need only to look up the definition of "democratic" to validate their in-camera decision to fill the council seat was anything but.

It does, however, reinforce the pattern of

behaviour "the Gang" is exhibiting. They appear to be acting as a cabal (look that up as well) to the detriment of the town and its citizenry.

I've asked before whether there's a road to redemption for the mess that has and continues to be created.

Declaration of interests?

Explaining why their voting flies in the face of their election promises? Not

Consulting more effectively with those immediately affected by specific decisions? Oh no, we'll just change the official plan again — it's a very flexible document and the flak will dissipate.

Rather negotiate than litigate? Simple — we'll just tweak the unwarranted proposal and approve it soon enough. Or so it's been to date ...

What are we to conclude? Concerns that there's something rotten going on are growing.

Discount known facts and rumours by half and, unfortunately, a similar conclusion still lingers.

The dam has now broken. We can either submit to going under or insist that changes be made to this behaviour.

If that fails, other actions will be needed.

Bravo, editor: You have done our citizens a service!

Terry Mactaggart **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 or drop them by our office at 496 Mississagua St., NOTL.



Considerations of a civilized society



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall Columnist

I like to believe we live in a civilized society.

Since the time of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, individuals — all far smarter than myself — have cogitated upon what constitutes a civilized society. The vast majority believed that a functioning democracy was a necessary component thereof.

But, what core principles are necessary in a functioning democracy?

One of the best answers to that question I've come across was written by Jonathan Day and published on April 12, 2022, by the Civil Liberties Union for Europe.

Titled "14 Principles of Democracy," this article outlines, in brief and succinct terms, 14 principles that are necessary components of a functioning democracy.

Now, I'm not going to visit this article in its entirety (should you wish to do so, it can be found here: liberties.eu/en/stories/principles-of-democracy/44151), but rather draw on certain points.

So, let's begin with number one: "Participation of citizens."

In Day's words, "By its very definition, democracy allows the people a voice in charting the course of their government and their future."

He continues, "citizen participation is the foundation that makes democracy strong. Participation is not just voting on election day, although this is surely its most notable form. But equally important are public debate, town meetings and peaceful protests, among other things."

From there he speaks to the principle of equal-



Brian Marshall says the character of Niagara-on-the-Lake needs to be protected at all costs.

ity, writing, "It is not only important but necessary that all people are treated equally in a democracy."

And follows on by suggesting the "most fundamental element of democracy" is that the vote of each and every citizen, whether prince or pauper, counts the same.

Next, he raises accountability and posits that "People entrust powers to those they elect, and they are tasked to use those powers to enrich their communities. Politicians are accountable to the people, must act consistent with their will, and have a duty not abuse their power to enrich themselves and their friends."

Transparency follows, a term that Day defines as such: "Transparency means government actions are clear to the people, as are the results and outcomes."

He elaborates, "Information of the government should, with few exceptions, be available to the public upon request, journalists and people alike should be able to ask their politicians questions, and groups that work on transparency should be free to operate."

On the principle of political tolerance, he submits that "In a true democracy, the rights of all citizens are equal and must be respected regardless of who's in power."

Further down in the article, one finds that control over the abuse of power is seventh on the list and here Day argues that "Democracy can only survive if everyone buys in – the citizens through their support on voting day and all other times of year, and politicians by playing by the rules and working to improve the lives of everyone."

He continues: "Abuse of power occurs when a government decides it is above the law, when politicians believe a different set of rules apply to them, when the levers of the state are moved to favour only a certain segment of society at the expense of others ..."

The final principle Day considers a requirement in a democracy is the rule of law, and he writes, "... a nation's laws apply equally to all people, and everyone, especially the government, must play by the rules."

"It means that the rights and freedoms and democratic processes ... are respected and nurtured," he writes. "And it means that the laws are also enforced in a fair and consistent way, and there's an independent body, like the courts, to

settle disputes that do arise."
Day's considered article echoes many of the thoughts of historical figures who have contemplated the principles and ramifications thereof vis-à-vis democracy.

Over two millennia ago, Aristotle wrote, amongst other writings on the topic, "For, if liberty and equality, as some persons suppose, are chiefly to be found in a democracy, it must be so by every department of government being alike open to all; but as the people are in the majority, and what they vote is law, it follows that such a state is a democracy."

In 1690, English philosopher John Locke wrote in his "Two Treatises of Government" the terse statement, "Wherever law ends, tyranny begins."

Thomas Jefferson, 1780, famously wrote, "Equal rights for all, special privileges for none."

In James Madison's 1788 defence of the American constitution, he stated, "Since the general civilization of mankind, I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people, by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power, than by violent and sudden usurpations".

I could go on ad nauseam but, will refrain from doing so and will instead turn to asking a number of questions concerning the state of civilized society (functional democracy) in our wee town.

Do you feel your voice is heard — particularly reflective of the level of public debate (notably illustrated by the letters to the editor published in this paper), the limitations imposed on the number and length of citizen delegations presented to council and the characterization of a peaceful protest as "appalling" — in "charting the course of government" with regards to council decisions that affect your future?

In consideration of a variety of council decisions, including but not limited to Parliament Oak, 225-227 Mary St., White Oaks in Glendale, etc., do you think our elected "representatives" believe themselves to be accountable to the people and must act consistent with the will of those voting citizens?

Are the actions and decisions of council – and town staff - consistently transparent to the public or too often conducted behind closed doors?

Do all the decisions of council reflect equal benefits that flow to all NOTL citizens or do some of those decisions appear to favour certain segments at the expense of others?

I leave these questions to you, dear readers, to ponder.

As a final observation, representative democracies, like ours, are formed as an expression of the will of the people and, as former American House Spaker

Henry Clay observed in the early 1800s, in a democracy, "Government is a trust and the officers of the government are trustees, and both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people."

One of the charges vested in those trustees is to ensure that those "benefits" are safeguarded, even when that undertaking requires the expenditure of public dollars.

Here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, I suggest that one of the primary "benefits" is the character and heritage of the town that we have inherited.

And, when a part of that inheritance is threatened, I argue that our elected officials are obligated to fight for its preservation.

Moreover, this is an ongoing responsibility — not a one-time thing — since NOTL's unique legacy will continue to be periodically challenged by those who are not vested in the town and whose principal motivation is simply making more money.

I contend that the assertion this protection is not worth expenditures from the public purse is tantamount to suggesting that funding the police services is not worth it.

After all, that's another ongoing war conducted for the benefit of the people, in which we sadly, and too far often, lose individual battles in court.

However, because we do have the police (thank God) and wage that never-ending war, our society maintains a reasonable level of safety and security.

The protection of our town's unique legacy — within all its boundaries — deserves no less.

And forgive me, but I have to leave you with one more quote... this one attributed to Edmund Burke:

"Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little. The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

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



New! FALL FLIGHTS

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Glendale secondary plan update proposes even taller buildings



Steve Hardaker Community Correspondent

When I retired in 2010 after 35 years with the federal government, I relocated to Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Glendale community.

My motivation? To get away from the harsher winters of the Ottawa Valley and to live in a smaller community.

I bought a house in the yet-to-be-completed Niagara on the Green neighbourhood. At the time, Glendale was only starting to develop into one of the five settlement areas of Niagara-onthe-Lake. But the town had

In 2011, the town approved the Glendale secondary plan, which was to help guide future development within the community.

Fast forward to 2024 and little, if any, additional residential development has occurred in Glendale.

Glendale became a strategic growth area for the Niagara Region and in 2018, the region commenced developing the Glendale Niagara district plan.

Within the district were portions of Niagara-on-the-Lake and a small portion of St. Catharines between Homer Road and the Welland Canal.

As stated by the region, the purpose was to develop an exciting urban vision for an area that has been identified to accommodate higher-density, mixed-use urban growth. The district plan was approved in 2021.

A district plan is a framework for the landuse planning, design and development of complete communities. It does not deal with building heights.

This then spurred the town to update its secondary plan to become in line with the district plan.

The current draft of the Glendale secondary plan update identifies acceptable building heights in conformity with the Niagara District Airport's airport zoning regulations.

Those heights generally are not to exceed six stories,

without requiring an exemption from Transport Canada to the regulations.

The updated plan now also recognizes areas in Glendale where enhanced building heights may be considered in addition to the already accepted higher builds at White Oaks and York and Airport roads.

The enhanced heights are mainly eight stories, with two areas identified for builds up to 20 stories. One of those parcels is at the northwest corner of Glendale Avenue and Taylor Road and the other is south of York Road and west of Glendale Avenue.

While the town can approve proposals with these heights, the proponent still must seek an exemption from the airport zoning regulations. An amendment to the Town's Official Plan would also be required.

On Oct. 15, the town hosted a Glendale secondary plan update statutory public meeting. This was an opportunity to update residents and others on the secondary plan update and give landowners and residents an opportunity to present ideas, ask questions and raise concerns.

It became very evident during presentations by the numerous landowners and planners in attendance, that eight to 20 storeys were not enough — even higher buildings were desired.

Some of these properties where additional heights are desired will overshadow the other already established lowrise neighbourhoods in the community like Niagara on the Green and along Queenston Road — all to the objections of residents.

Which then begs the question: How high is too high in Niagara-on-the-Lake?

If it is acceptable to have highrises in Glendale, why not the rest of Niagara-onthe-Lake?

When council approved the four-tower development at White Oaks with their 17, 18, 21 and 25-storey towers and the two-tower development on York and Airport roads with their eight and 10-storey towers, residents objected and presented a petition to council with more than 640 signatures.

The problem with these approvals is that they set a precedent for future development proposals in Glendale.

And it became very clear that this had become the case, as planner after planner presented requests for additional heights.

For instance, during their presentation, the planners for the lands between the Outlet Collection and Glendale Avenue, known as Niagara on the Green North, wanted additional heights without the need for an official plan amendment.

They also wanted their parkland requirement reduced and spread out to other lands in Glendale.

They projected that the population of this land could be as high as 7000 residents alone if approved to proceed.

It is clear this council does not care how its residents feel about density and heights in Glendale. They are only interested in additional revenues from property taxes and development charges, regardless of residents' concerns.

Residents only want a community that mirrors the other four settlement areas that make up Niagara-onthe-Lake. Is this too much to ask for?

And Glendale does not need all these additional highrises to reach the population targets of 14,000 residents and 9,200 jobs by 2051 or 100 people and jobs combined per hectare already enshrined in the draft Glendale secondary plan update document.

The residents of Glendale want reasonable development that increases our population and brings much-desired amenities to the community.

What we do not want is numerous highrises scattered across Glendale. If that is allowed to happen, then Glendale will become Niagara's version of Mississauga.

Steve Hardaker has lived in Niagara-on-the-Lake's community of Glendale since 2010. He was previously a Niagara-on-the-*Lake appointee to the* Glendale task force. He was appointed by the Niagara Region to the community focus group for the Niagara Region's Glendale Niagara district plan initiative and most recently a town appointee to the Glendale secondary plan update community focus group.











Kittens found in NOTL suspected to have been dumped

Richard Wright Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Local animal advocates are calling on pet owners to make sure their cats are neutered and spayed after a number of kittens were allegedly dumped in rural NOTL.

Ginny Taylor and her friend Ria Rosenberg operate the charitable fund Let Pets Live and say the dumping of kittens in the community has gotten to a disturbing level.

They suspect owners are being overwhelmed because of unwanted pregnancies.

"It's a huge problem," said Rosenberg from her home.

As she spoke, she clutched an eight-week-old kitten found on Lakeshore Road in NOTL on Oct. 22.

"I think a lot of the time when people find out that their cat is pregnant — you know, the kittens are really sweet when they're born — they let them (nurse) and when they stop feeding, they dump them."

The latest discovery happened near the water treatment plant on Lakeshore



Ria Rosenberg in her home with one of the three kittens found on Lakeshore Road on Oct. 22. RICHARD WRIGHT

when Taylor was out with friends walking their dogs.

"One of the dogs stopped and when he stopped we heard a cry," she said.

"I heard it again and I looked up and right in front of me there was a skinny tree, and about eight feet up was a kitten hanging in the tree."

The kitten was alive but obviously in distress, added Taylor.

Immediately, she reached out to rescue it expecting to be bitten and clawed, knowing that most wild kittens go into fight mode when humans approach, especially those with dogs.

"But it didn't. I cuddled right into me and that's when we knew, 'Okay, somebody's dumped some kittens."

With the kitten in her arms, Taylor began to walk back to her car to call Rosenberg to inform her of her discovery and to discuss next steps.

"So we're walking back on the trail and I just happened to turn around, or one of us turned around and looked, and there's a kitten following us. So we grab that kitten, and we start to look and look and look and don't find any more."

Later, after Taylor had taken the kittens to the vet, she and her dog-walking friends returned to the area a few times throughout the day.

They didn't find any more kittens.

However, the next morning after picking up the kittens from the vet and bringing them to Rosenberg's house, Taylor received a call from her dog-walking friends saying they had made another discovery.

"They called us and said, 'We're on Lakeshore, in a totally different area than yesterday, and we found another one."

The news wasn't surprising to Rosenberg, who said the problem with kittens being dumped is a NOTL-wide issue.

"Lakeshore Road is one place," she said, "but kittens get dumped everywhere."

She wants owners to make sure their pets are fixed.

"People let their cats roam, not spayed or neutered, and you have got huge cat colonies everywhere because they just keep breeding," she said.

Owners, Rosenberg suspects, simply take the animals out to the countryside with the hopes they will find a home on a farm.

She wants owners to understand this is a cruel and irresponsible thing to do.

"It's incredibly cruel," she

"It is something that could be very different if people were a little bit responsible. Instead of dumping your kittens, you could take them to the Humane Society."

The Lake Report contact-

ed the Humane Society of Greater Niagara and learned all stray cats are accepted at its Fourth Avenue location in St. Catharines during regular working hours.

Closer to home, NOTL Cats is a rescue group for pets that have been abandoned or are unwanted, primarily cats and kittens. It's made up of volunteers living in town.

The group's founder, a woman named Marian, asked her last name not be published because she has experienced people dropping off cats at her home at all hours — even some that are dead.

Marian said she does accept all cats, but by appointment only.

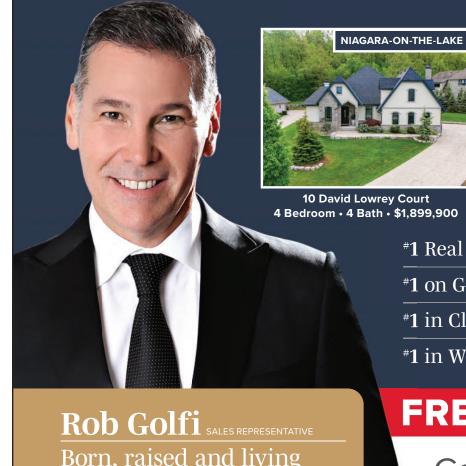
"All they have to do is email me or Facebook me," she said. NOTL Cats' Facebook page is simply NOTL Cats.

NOTL Cats has a mission "to shelter, nurture and socialize abandoned and homeless cats in a loving home-like environment until they can be adopted out to their forever homes."

Its email address is notl. rescue@hotmail.com.

wright@niagaranow.com

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Award-winning Lake Report photographer's 2025 NOTL calendar now available

Richard Wright Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

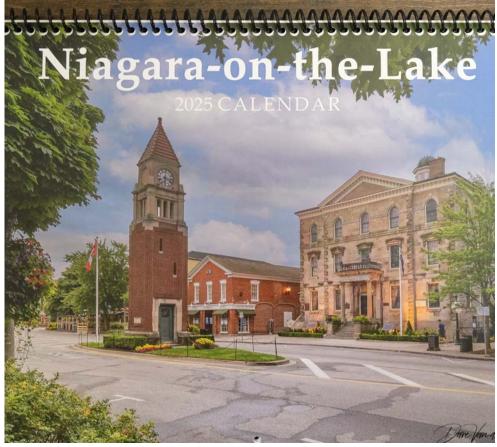
Award-winning Lake Report photographer and NOTL resident Dave Van de Laar has released his 2025 calendar, showcasing photos of the town.

Van de Laar's photography captures the essence of the community through the changing seasons with images of streetscapes, historical and modern buildings and, of course, the beauty of area orchards both in bloom and covered in snow.

"Niagara-on-the-Lake is a beautiful place," he said.

"I love the architecture, I love the old buildings, I love the orchards and the old barns. I love mainly the history of Niagara-onthe-Lake."

The calendar opens with a night image of a grape picker during the icewine harvest in January, progresses through a lonely but captivating shot of the gazebo at Queens Royal Park under a blanket of snow and moves on to capture iconic NOTL images such as the Prince of Wales Hotel draped in early summer foliage to other shots of Queen Street, historic manors and fields of blossoms.



Dave Van de Laar's 2025 NOTL calendar is available now and makes a great gift.

"I tried to get one representative of each month," he said.

Van de Laar was named photographer of the year by the Ontario Community Newspapers Association earlier this year and took home a third place for Best Feature Photo in News Media Canada's national competition with his Oct.

12, 2023 photo "Happy 254th birthday, Brock."

That photo depicted Jack Hill, 6, wearing a red-coat soldier's uniform and relaxing during a celebration at Queenston Heights.

Van de Laar's calendar is available for purchase by emailing davehv@gmail. com or by visiting davehvandelaar.com.

Born and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake, this is Van de Laar's second calendar. His 2024 edition was his first.

Last year's calendar sold out quickly.

"I would have sold more than 500 but I stopped at 500," he said, adding that depending on demand, he may order more this year.



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

In Greece or Cyprus, you might want to try this four-letter liqueur flavored with anise.

Last issue:

Category: THE NAME OF THE GAME

Clue: A war vessel of the most heavily armed

Answer: What is Battleship?

Answered first by: Larry Mantle

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Jane Morris, Susan Hamilton, Lynda Collet, Bill Hamilton, Bob Wheatley, Claudia Grimwood, Sue Rautenberg, Jim Dandy, Lynda Hosty, Howard Jones, Wade Durling, Mike Gander, Gordon Yanow, Daniel Smith, Tuija Johansson, Katie Reimer, Elaine Landray

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)

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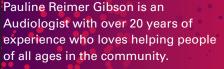
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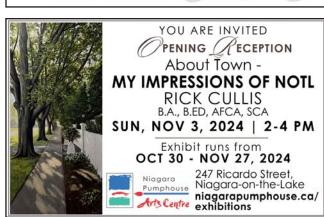
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Have some fun

Across

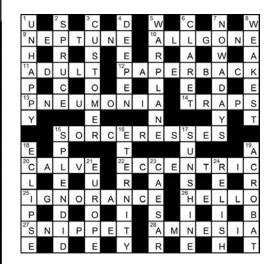
- 9. Highland (7)
- 10. Burst violently (7)
- 11. Tennis tie (5)
- 12. Clogged (9)
- 13. Keeps (7)
- 16. Welsh castle, fortress and stately home (5)
- 17. Butt (4)
- 18. City in NW France (4)
- 19. Fortune (4)
- 21. Purchases (4)
- 23. Follows orders (5)
- 25. Republic containing the northernmost point in Africa (7)
- 26. Discouragement (9)
- 28. Intended (5)
- 30. Cap attachment (7)
- 31. Thrash (7)

Down

- 1. Long and thin (7)
- 2. Hawaiian island (4)
- 3. Excision (8)
- 4. Prosperous (10)
- 5. Skinny (4)
- 6. Maintenance (6)
- 7. Short nap (5,5)
- 8. Rosy (7)
- 14. Path of a projectile (10)
- 15. Replace (10)
- 19. Monasticism (8)
- 20. Pongo (7)
- 22. Tack maker (7)
- 24. Move up or down through computer text (6)
- 27. Spot (4)
- 29. Flat-bottomed river boat (4)

Crossword Puzzle 12 17 18 19 22 23 30

Last issue's answers



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



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Oligarchs are beholden to the bottom line, not democracy



Keith McNenly Special to The Lake Report

The vast majority of us are politically invisible, and political invisibility is a form of freedom that the uber-rich might not enjoy.

We also have balanced values where money holds a critical position but is still subject to the better angels of our empathy and sense of right and wrong.

While it may take a little courage to put yourself out there, such as by placing a candidate sign on your lawn during an election, you can be relatively certain it won't blow back on you with financial repercussions.

That's the case in a functioning democracy anyway. Those with little to lose have little to fear.

That is not the case in a fascist country, where, inevitably, all are at risk. The current American election is shining a spotlight on big business and the oligarchs who own them.

Having so much to gain, and so much to lose, they are quaking in absolute fear over this election, it being a contest between fascism and democracy.

Their hundreds of billions of dollars in wealth might as well be lead chains around their necks. For some, morality and empathy weigh but a feather to the lead chains of vast wealth. Democracy doesn't even enter into the equation.

This election cycle we see large corporations and billionaires cozy up to the fascist side of the electoral battle.

Why is that? They know that fascist wannabe dictator's very first act upon taking power will be to turn the entire legal infrastructure into his own personal retribution law firm.

The free press is always the first target and domino to fall.

Last week, we witnessed stalwart Pulitzer Prize-winning American newspapers, the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times owned



Keith McNenly says when newspapers can have their editorial departments controlled by billionaire owners, the threat to democracy is grave and imminent.

by billionaire oligarchs, succumb to the Republican candidate's threats of retribution against any who oppose him.

Rather than stand up against his threats, they rejected their own editorial board's editorial endorsing the Democratic candidate for president. This moral cowardice is the inevitable evolution of the mindset of significant numbers of the vastly wealthy.

That is how democracies fail, and that is how even the one south of our border might fail.

Even before his potential electoral win, the

Republican candidate has cowered the newspaper that exposed the Watergate crimes and brought on the resignation of former president Richard Nixon.

Knowing that the Post's commitment to truth and facts, free from the fear of government retribution has succumbed, not in the face of a governing power, but even just in anticipation of an authoritarian, has rendered that publication rather valueless as a source of truthful and factual information.

How will readers know if their editorial opinions are based on truth, fear or mutual collusion?

Contrast the Washington Post owned by one of the richest persons in the world to The Lake Report.

Recently, The Lake Report editor took on the politics and misleading messaging of a potential next prime minister of Canada in a challenging editorial.

The Washington Post editorial board by comparison was overruled by its vastly wealthy owner.

This is a very big deal. Around a hundred years ago, American Supreme Court associate justice Louis Brandeis said, "We can have vast wealth in the hands of a few, or we can have a democracy. We cannot have both."

That prescient insight will come to fruition this Nov. 5 at hundreds of thousands of voting locations in the United States.

Money wins elections in the U.S. where donations and spending on campaigns is almost a free-for-all.

A few oligarchs can easily donate enough to drown out the financial voices of millions of ordinary citizens.

The greed, fear and lack of moral character of some oligarchs having hundreds of billions in wealth, have direct consequences on the freedoms the rest of us enjoy.

Why is this important to us north of the border, and to the rest of the world? We may very well find out next week.

Keith McNenly was the chief administrative officer of the Town of Mono for 41 years until his retirement in 2016.







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NOV. 15 - POSTMEN

NOV. 16 - THE HITMEN

NOV. 17 - DUO LEEPA

NOV. 22 - LOST BOYS

NOV. 23 - A SIMPLE GESTURE

NOV. 24 - RON MCEWAN

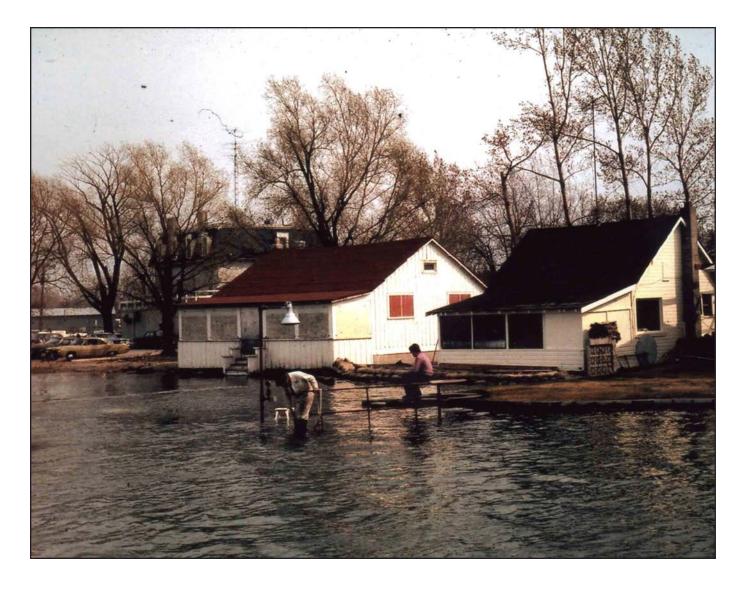
NOV. 29 - WHISKEY RATTLERS

NOV. 30 - COTTAGE BREW

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River Beach Waterfront, 1972

This week's photo shows some of the summer cottages on River Beach Drive from the Niagara River perspective. Note the proximity of the water to the cottages. The area was prone to flooding every spring. This section of the waterfront had always been a marshy area of town. The Niagara Harbour and Dock Company attempted to fill some of this area in when they dug out the marine basin in the 1830s. The two-storey hotel to the left, behind the cottages, was built in 1860 and was known as the Lakeview House. Over the years, the Lakeview was renamed the Riverside and then the Harbour Inn. The building burned down in the late 1990s and is now the site of riverfront condominiums on Melville Street.

Election in U.S. has NOTLers talking quietly



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson Columnist

Back in the day, many of our mothers and fathers told us to avoid talking religion and politics.

But frequently, we would have interesting and respectful conversations at school and on the streets, with friends, friends of friends and strangers.

We often disagreed, but we rarely got upset, nasty or belligerent.

Now, I spend a lot of time in front of the old Court House, and speak to many passersby from Niagara, Canada and "across the river." And other world citizens.

Only occasionally do I discuss politics, because it's just not worth it. Most people are now wearing blinders and earplugs, and are incapable of listening to,

understanding or respecting opposing ideas.

Yesterday morning, under autumn-coloured maple trees, an older gentleman from Wisconsin said to a sharp lady from Florida who had a Trump-Vance badge on her sweater, "Even for town councillor or school board trustee, how can you vote for a bully, pig, sexual predator, unabashed liar and convicted felon?"

Her clever and trite response was, "He speaks highly of you. And, the alternative is a socialist."

At that point, I suggested we start our free walking tour of Canada's self-described prettiest town.

I told them that on Dec. 10, 1813, the departing Americans burned every wooden house in town, and that soon after, we torched part of Youngstown, Buffalo and Washington, D.C.

Even after all that pain and suffering, over the ensuing years, we have found a way to get along.

I do a pretty good job of staying out of the political fray. Donald Trump and Pierre Poilievre delight in name-calling and clever slogans like "axe the tax."

I am trying to ramble without stooping to their



Ross Robinson, while only just a Canadian, says just about anyone is better than a lying, cheating, abhorrent criminal for president of the U.S. — or any position of power. Whether it's a school board member, director of a chamber of commerce or literally anything else.

nasty levels, but I would rather vote for a self-admitted occasional knucklehead than an unlikeable lying candidate for vice-president.

As my fraternity brother and great pal Bob Potter says in battleground state Pennsylvania, "A vote for Trump is a vote for president Vance." Yes folks, Trump is aging in front of our eyes, and J.D. Vance would be one heartbeat away from being president of the world's most powerful nation.

One learned pundit posits that if elected, Trump will be out within a year.

Food for thought, eh?
Almost the entire political

scene is negative in North America. Just this week, at the Trump rally in a packed Madison Square Garden, speakers made disgusting and demeaning references to Puerto Ricans, Hispanics and Black Americans.

Some audience members booed, but the majority laughed, waved their signs and went along with the mood.

Rambling to a totally awkward conclusion, I continue to find it odd that in our wee and beautiful NOTL, with miles of Lake Ontario and Niagara River shoreline, we cannot figure out a practical and safe place to launch kayaks.

Many times each week, I gaze at kayakers enjoying time on the water, gliding along in front of sturdy trees and lovely waterfront homes.

I learned years ago from my day, "Free advice is usually worth exactly what you paid for it," but in this seemingly endless sad situation, I will suggest, "Figure it out."

Surely our hard-working and competent and conscientious elected and volunteer leaders can creatively locate and design a workable kayak launch pad, with parking options fairly nearby.

Rambling now closer to ending this column, I note that the portable toilet has arrived at the old Parliament Oak school, which surely indicates that the demolition crew is ready to commence the sad but unavoidable and predictable work.

Plenty of signs warn us not to trespass, but there must be a way to pass along souvenir yellow bricks to past students and parents.

And, John Parker and his coworkers are steadily readying our historic cenotaph for its coming out event on Nov. 11. This year, Remembrance Day is on a Monday, and I predict the weather will be perfect.

Let's all make every effort to attend, lest we forget. I have been assured that the sound system will be excel-

I talk to numerous wise people in front of the Court House, in aisle four of the Valu-mart (I know, the Independent) and at Sweets & Swirls in the community centre. The majority join me in loving the opportunity to live here.

Niagara-on-the-Lake is not perfect, but it's pretty darn good.







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Turn those fall leaves into black gold



GROWING **TOGETHER**

Joanne Young Columnist

Well, you knew that this time was coming, you hoped that it didn't, but regardless it is upon us. That's right, it is leafraking time.

I must say that as long it is a warm, sunny, dry day when I tackle raking, I really don't mind this task.

Before you start raking up leaves, though, let's stop and think about what we are

We spend hours raking up the leaves, putting them into bags — at least they are now biodegradable paper bags — and placing them out at the curb for the garbage truck to pick up.

Then, the following spring, we head off to the garden centre to buy compost to add to our gardens.

It always seems strange to me that we just discard these leaves and not make use of this resource turning the leaves into "black gold."

The cheaper solution is to use what nature gives us for free and take advantage of all the benefits dead leaves



Joanne Young says people should shred their leaves and use them as mulch instead of sending them away in bags.

So, before you start stuffing all those leaves into bags, you may want to consider making use of them as mulch in your gardens.

To make use of the leaves, it is best to shred them up first. Some leaves, such as Norway maples and oaks, have a thicker cuticle layer and may not break down on their own over winter unless shredded.

The easiest way to shred the leaves is by using either a lawn mower with a mulching blade or a leaf blower/ vacuum/mulcher.

If you don't have a mulching blade on your mower, which cuts up the leaves smaller, you can just use your regular mower and go over the leaves several

Shredding the leaves first, before putting them on your garden, will help them decompose that much quicker.

The smaller the pieces of leaves are, the quicker they decompose. It is best if the

leaves are dry when shredding them.

The only leaves that you do not want to use are ones that have had a disease on them, such as tar spot or powdery mildew.

You also do not want to use walnut leaves as they contain a substance (juglone) that can inhibit plant

When using dried shredded leaves as mulch, spread them at a depth of 7.5 to 10 centimetres (three to four inches) around existing trees and shrubs and five to 7.5 centimetres (two to three inches) over perennial

You can also put a thicker layer of shredded leaves on vegetable garden areas in preparation for spring planting.

The benefits of using shredded leaves as mulch are many:

Applying leaf mulch will keep the soil warmer in the winter and cooler in the

summer, thereby protecting more sensitive plants.

Applying leaf mulch will improve the amount of nutrients in the soil, reducing the amount of fertilizer needed. As the dried leaves decompose they release traces of calcium, magnesium, phosphorous and potassium.

Applying leaf mulch will suppress the growth of weeds in your garden. This, in turn, cuts down on your maintenance time and use of herbicides.

Applying leaf mulch is a great way of adding organic matter back into your garden. This will help to break up heavier clay soil or help provide better moisture retention with sandy soils

Applying leaf mulch will shade your soil and therefore the soil will not dry out as quickly compared to being fully exposed to sunlight. Therefore, you will not need to water as often.

Applying leaf mulch can help reduce soil erosion in certain instances.

It's free!

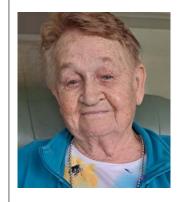
All great reasons why you should consider mulching your leaves this fall and watch them turn into black gold.

So, when you see all the leaves falling from the trees, don't think of them as another chore on your to-do list, but as a gift that keeps giving back.

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

Obituaries

Antonia Schulter



SCHULTER, Antonia "Tonka" (Hanicar) — It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Antonia "Tonka" Schulter on, Wednesday, Oct. 23, 2024, at Pleasant Manor in Virgil, at the age of 93. Beloved wife of the late Anton "Tony" (2020). Devoted mother of Anne Lanthier (Claude), Elizabeth Chap-

man, Rose McCormick (Rick), and Tony (Barb). Adored grandmother of Robert (Stacy), Taylor, Tonya, Olivia (Brad), Jon. Great grandmother of Anthony, Alex, Dean and Brody and dear sister of Marja Kralik, Agneza Androcek and Katarina Kovac. Fondly remembered by many nieces, nephews, and friends. Predeceased by sons Frank (1977) and John (2024) (late Martha- 2020), brother Tomo Hanicar (2011), and sister Josefina Amant (2012).

The family would like to thank all the excellent staff of Pleasant Manor for their care and compassion shown towards our mother.

The family received friends at Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Sunday, Oct. 27 from 1-5 p.m. Private family funeral was held on Monday, Oct. 28, 2024. Rite of committal St. Vincent de Paul Church cemetery. Those who wish may make a memorial donation to Alzheimers Society. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



Jack Lowrey

LOWREY, Jack — With sadness, but with gratitude for a long, well-lived life, the family of Jack Lowrey announce his peaceful passing at home on October 16, 2024.

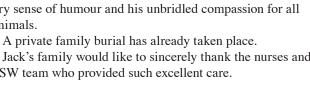
He is survived by his wife Barbara, children Debbie (Dennis) and Tim, his grandchildren Leigh (Stuart), Ian and Andrew. Jack was predeceased by his parents, Clifford and Daisy Lowrey of St Davids, and his brother Skip (late Joan).

Jack's passion for golf began at age eight, when he taught himself the game at St. Davids Golf Course. He had an exceptional golf career for which he was later inducted into both the St. Catharines and NOTL Sports Halls of Fame. Jack won the Ontario Amateur at the age of twenty, and twenty years later continued to be ranked by the OGA in the top seven amateur golfers. He won many Champion of Champions. But for Jack the greatest prize was the many friendships he forged while playing golf.

Born and raised on the family farm in St. Davids, Jack became a chartered accountant. After retiring from Kenmore Construction, he embarked on his next career, rejuvenating Queenston and St. Davids Golf Courses. He worked tirelessly on improvements, always mindful of his goal of providing affordable golf for all levels of players, a legacy his family will continue.

Jack believed in contributing to his community, and for a time served as a councillor for Niagara on the Lake. He was a quiet modest man who was generous while never seeking attention. Those who knew him will fondly remember his dry sense of humour and his unbridled compassion for all

Jack's family would like to sincerely thank the nurses and PSW team who provided such excellent care.



Local artist unveils NOTL's hidden charms in new solo exhibition

Staff The Lake Report

Rick Cullis has spent the last decade exploring the streets, landscapes and waters of Niagara-on-the-Lake, and says his latest collection of artwork represents the good fortune of living where he does.

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre's latest solo exhibition, "About Town: My Impressions of NOTL," is running from Oct. 30 to Nov. 27, and will feature the paintings of longtime artist Cullis, a member of the NOTL Arts Collective.

"Moving here felt like winning the lottery," he said in a media release. "These paintings represent what

I've experienced in this special place: Peaceful quiet, a deep sense of history and the strength of the river."

His naturalistic, realistic oil paintings convey the cultural and natural history of the area, from the architecture of historic homes to the forests, parks and lakeshores.

Cullis hopes to evoke a sense of connection to the town's unique history.

"If someone can look at my work and begin to get a sense of the cultural and natural history of this region, I've succeeded," he said.

Through his careful attention to light, texture, and perspective, Cullis brings these familiar locations to



Rick Cullis' oil paintings capture a variety of idyllic scenes around town, inspired by his walks. SUPPLIED

life, offering a visual narrative of the town's enduring

Pumphouse will hold an opening reception for the exhibition on Nov. 3 from 2 to 4 p.m., featuring refreshments and nibbles.

Guests will also be able to hear directly from Cullis, who will be giving remarks at 2:30 p.m.

For more information, visit niagarapumphouse.ca.



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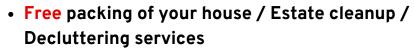
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