



## Wilderness needs another \$1 million for restoration

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Niagara Foundation is raising \$1 million to preserve and restore the Wilderness, a historic property at 407 King St. in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The campaign marks phase two of the group's three-phase project. The first phase, acquiring the property, was completed in December, funded by \$1.6 million in donations.

"So by the end of phase two, we'll have over \$2.5 million in the project," said chair Lyle Hall.

All money raised goes 100 per cent into the project.

The next phase will involve clearing overgrowth, removing invasive species and

Continued on Page 10

# Home show a fun affair

## Kids line up for a chance to dunk the principal during school fundraiser



Splash! Crossroads Public School principal Kate Fish takes a dive in the dunk tank as part of the school's annual home show and fun fair on May 31. Students lined up to give it a shot. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Maddy Gordon  
The Lake Report

The dunk tank made waves at the Crossroads Public School home show's newest addition — a fun fair.

The fair included several outdoor activities for kids, including face painting, mini-games and bounce houses. But the most exciting part was Crossroads principal Kate Fish in the dunk tank, as seen by the line of students waiting for their turn to make the perfect shot.

The event's main feature, the vendors, was also a success, especially for the three young entrepreneurs.

Charlie and her mom own Charlie's Cool Creations, which sells 3D-printed items ranging from toy dragons to personalized name tags.

After a busy day of 3D printing and making sales at her first home show, Charlie said she definitely wants to come back next year. But for her, the best part is raising money to buy toys for the McMaster Children's Hospital.

While the best-selling item is

Continued on Page 4

# NOTL man asks Court of Appeal to throw out Marotta defamation suit

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

A Niagara-on-the-Lake man is appealing a judge's refusal to block a \$2-million defamation suit filed against him by prominent developer

Benny Marotta.

Lawyers for Stewart Hall, a retired NOTL resident, submitted a 40-page legal factum to the Ontario Court of Appeal on May 28 outlining what they say were several serious errors made

by Justice Edward Morgan when he allowed a libel suit by Marotta and his company Solmar to proceed.

Among the errors cited was Morgan's order that Hall pay \$89,000 in legal costs to Marotta.

In seeking to have the entire case dismissed, Hall had argued his comments on the NOTL 4U Facebook group should be considered protected speech under Ontario's anti-SLAPP legislation.

SLAPP laws, or "strategic litigation against public participation," are intended to prevent powerful people or organizations from using the courts to silence public criticism and comment.

Contacted this week, Hall

wouldn't speak about the latest step in the legal fight.

"We are appealing because we believe this case has all the earmarks of the type of action anti-SLAPP

Continued on Page 5

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Debate continues over ‘wine country’ brand

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Nearly a month after the term “wine country” was reworded in Niagara-on-the-Lake’s new tourism strategy, the debate is still ongoing.  
On May 30, the town reaffirmed its identity as wine country in a public statement after the change sparked backlash — and even drew attention from Toronto media outlets. But town councillors remain divided on whether the decision was right and if the town has explained it clearly.

The original draft of the vision statement described NOTL as “an extraordinary wine country destination, known for its natural beauty and unrivalled cultural experiences.” On May 6, councillors approved staff’s revised version: “Niagara-on-the-Lake is an extraordinary destination, known for its natural beauty, food and wine and unrivalled cultural experiences.”

In its statement, the town called the wording change “an intentional shift in language, not in values,”



Niagara-on-the-Lake has added the term “wine country” back into its tourism strategy after its removal fuelled backlash.

aiming for “a more deliberate and contextual use of wine country in marketing and communications.”

Some councillors, however, say more needs to be done to clarify the message.

Coun. Gary Burroughs, who supported the final draft, said the explanation should be delivered publicly.

“I feel it needs to be

presented formally,” he said, adding Toronto media have misinterpreted the change.

“To me, just issuing a press release isn’t sufficient,” Burroughs said.

“It needs to be spoken to by the lord mayor at a committee or council.”

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, also a supporter of the rewording, disagreed.

“I have no interest in doing that. I’m very comfortable with the decision of council — I think it’s a very good decision,” he said.

Zalepa said the statement helped clarify the distinct roles of the municipality and Tourism NOTL, the town’s destination marketing organization, especially in determining how and when to use the term “wine country.”

“It’s about clarifying the role of the organizations,” he said. “We wanted to get back onto that point.”

Coun. Wendy Cheropita said the recent media attention shows the public is concerned.

“I’ve never seen media attention to this degree, especially coming from Toronto media,” she said. “You do have to take it and listen

to it — to understand where all this is coming from.”

Cheropita, who served on the tourism strategy committee but voted against the change, said outlets like Toronto Star and Toronto Life rarely weigh in on town decisions “unless they really feel that it’s a big story and one that they should put forward into the public.”

She said residents have contacted her since the statement was issued.

“I think the town did the right thing to try to defend their decision, but (the decision) is something that, obviously, I don’t agree with.”

Coun. Maria Mavridis supported the change but said misinformation has spread.

“I feel that anyone who has questioned the ‘wine country’ wording hasn’t read through the entire strategy,” she said.

Coun. Adriana Vizzari also said she believes the statement was clear but welcomes further discussion.

“If there’s more information that someone is looking for, we’d be happy to continue the discussion,” she said.

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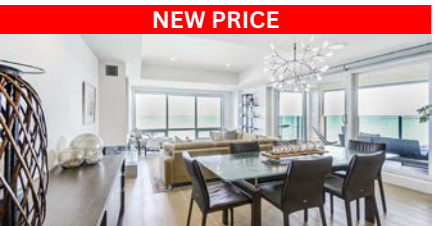
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# Destroyed speed cam is **back in action**

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The traffic camera in front of Crossroads Public School in Virgil, which was vandalized last week, was restored on Monday.

Niagara Region, which owns the automated speed camera, said that it is expected to be functioning again soon.

“As an updated timeline, the damaged equipment has now been repaired, and we expect it to be returned to service by early next week,” said Scott Fraser, the region’s associate director of transportation planning.

Originally, the region planned to keep the camera, which was installed in early May, at its current location on Niagara Stone Road until August. Fraser said that plan is still going ahead.

However, questions remain about who did it and why. Niagara Regional Police say the perpetrator has not been arrested.

“There is no progress to report,” Const. Rich Hingley said. “We have not received any new details about the investigation.”

This incident has garnered a variety of reactions from locals.

“I wasn’t aware of (this

incident),” said resident Robin Garrett. “I hadn’t really thought of it until now,” she said with a laugh.

Resident Richard James, meanwhile, called the incident “ridiculous and unacceptable.”

“But, I will say that they should restore the flashing lights they used to have to mark you were in a 40. They took those away. Silly.”

For now, police will continue investigating this incident and other acts of vandalism. The penalty for the vandalism of a speed camera worth more than \$5,000 is a charge of

mischievous over \$5,000 with a potential maximum penalty of two years in prison, a \$5,000 fine, or both.

Hingley said that no one among the public has come forward yet about the cameras, but he encouraged the public to share any tips they have.

Anyone with information is asked to contact police at 905-688-4111. Those who wish to remain anonymous can contact Crime Stoppers of Niagara online or by calling 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). Crime Stoppers offers cash rewards to any information that leads to an arrest.

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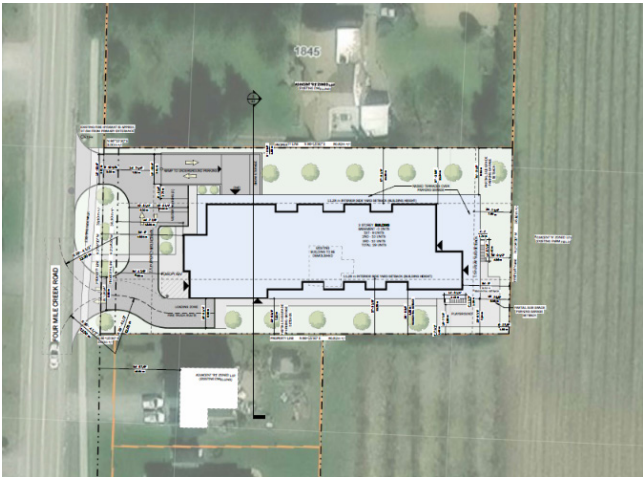
# Residents dispute Four Mile Creek **apartment proposal**

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Some residents of Four Mile Creek Road are voicing strong opposition to a proposed apartment complex, sparking another debate between supporters of single-family neighbourhoods and advocates for higher-density housing.

A plan to build a three-storey, 29-unit apartment building at 1839 Four Mile Creek Rd. was presented to Niagara-on-the-Lake council’s committee of the whole for planning on Tuesday.

The proposal was introduced by Niagara-on-the-Lake senior planner Victoria Nikoltcheva and supported by planner Aaron Butler and architect Michael Allen, representatives of Harvest Heights, which owns the project.



The proposed three-storey, 29-unit apartment complex proposed for 1839 Four Mile Creek Rd. has generated some controversy among nearby residents. SOURCED

the development is intended to align with the existing residential character of the area.

“The objective is to create more upper-scale accommodation,” said Allen. “Privacy to the neighbours is important ... light pollution can’t go beyond our property.”

During questions from councillors, committee chair Coun. Wendy Cheropita raised the main concern expressed by residents.

“This is an area of single-family homes,” said Cheropita.

Five residents from the surrounding area spoke in opposition to the proposal during the meeting.

anti-housing,” he said. “But this proposal oversteps.”

Phil Cahley expressed concern about potential impacts on the area’s groundwater and wanted reassurances from the developer. He also echoed concerns about neighbourhood density.

“The East/West Line and Four Mile Creek Road intersection is already busy,” he said. “The density of the building needs to be reviewed.”

Susan Gerbes told councillors she was making an “emotional appeal” and worried the project would worsen traffic and speeding.

“This is the perfect place, they say,” she said. “I disagree.”

Patrick Walsh, who lives just south of the proposed development, said the project fails to conform to the existing streetscape.

“We believe this project breaks the fabric of our street,” he said. “It’s out of place.”

While the proposal is still in early stages, Butler and Allen said a site plan application would be submitted soon, though a construction timeline is still unknown.

“This (project) is conceptual,” said Allen.

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# Crash leaves motorcyclist with **life-threatening injuries**

Staff  
The Lake Report

An 18-year-old man from Niagara-on-the-Lake suffered life-threatening injuries in a two-vehicle crash Thursday evening at the intersection of Four Mile Creek Road and Line 6 Road.

Emergency crews responded to the collision around 7:22 p.m. on May 29, according to Niagara Regional Police.

The crash involved a 2016 Suzuki off-road motorcycle and a 2017 Ford Escape SUV. Police said the driver of the motorcycle was transported to an out-of-

region hospital with critical injuries.

The driver of the SUV, a 20-year-old woman from St. Catharines, was not hurt.

Four Mile Creek Road was closed for several hours while members of the Niagara Regional Police Collision Reconstruction Unit investigated. The

road reopened at about 2:30 a.m.

Both vehicles were towed from the scene.

The cause of the crash remains under investigation. Anyone with information is asked to contact police at 905-688-4111, ext. 1009504, and reference incident number 25-55993.



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# Native Centre hopes to **restore** outdoor totem pole

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

As Canadians take time this month to recognize Indigenous history, the Niagara Regional Native Centre is moving ahead with plans to restore the 25-foot totem pole that has stood outside its Niagara-on-the-Lake building since 1988.

“It is in dire need of restoration right now,” said Halley Irwin, director of development and community engagement.

The Thunderbird totem pole, carved by Chief Mathias Joe of the Squamish Nation in Vancouver, was commissioned by Davis Lumber in St. Catharines in 1955 as a piece of art to promote the company’s ties to Western Canada.

At that time, it was billed as the largest totem pole east of the Rockies, said Irwin.

Approximately 25 feet high with a 14-foot wingspan, the pole was moved to the centre in 1988 after the lumber company closed.

But after spending the last 70 years outdoors, the totem pole is in desperate need of restoration, Irwin said.

“It should be a solid piece of wood and we know that there are definitely some hollow spots in it right now,” she said.



The Niagara Regional Native Centre, a hub for more than 2,000 Indigenous people across Niagara, is planning to restore its historic Thunderbird totem pole as June marks National Indigenous History Month. PAIGE SEBURN

“We currently know that there are a family of squirrels living in it.”

Irwin said the centre is hoping to start restoration this year in late summer to early fall.

“It’ll likely be a two or three-week process,” she said.

A campaign to raise funds for the project, which will cost more than \$150,000, is expected to launch a few weeks before restoration starts.

Now in its 53rd year, the

centre has grown into a key hub for more than 2,000 Indigenous people across the Niagara region.

National Indigenous History Month takes place in June and honours the history, contributions and strength of First Nation, Inuit and Métis people. National Indigenous Peoples Day is June 21.

With Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve and Mississaugas of the Credit Reserve located about 100 kilometres away, the

Niagara centre fills a vital role, Irwin said.

“It’s important to have a gathering place for urban Indigenous people,” she said.

And since 65 per cent of registered Indigenous people live off-reserve, Irwin said having a local space for community and cultural connection is essential.

The centre services First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in NOTL, St. Catharines, Thorold, Niagara Falls, Welland, Lincoln,

West Lincoln, Pelham and Grimsby — offering 27 largely social-service-based programs, as well as public and private events, Irwin said.

It’s been around since 1972 and moved to its current location on Airport Road in the ‘80s.

Its aims include supporting cultural and social interests, addressing social and economic challenges, fostering Indigenous leadership and building understanding between In-

digenous people and others in the community.

Totem poles are not traditional to Indigenous peoples who historically resided in Treaty 381 (Niagara Purchase), which covers NOTL, Irwin said.

“It’s definitely important to recognize that it is not part of our traditions — yet something that we still honour,” she said.

The centre has come full circle since its beginnings, Irwin said, and is still working to grow sustainably, be economically independent and self-sufficient.

The centre is now firmly established as a vital resource for Niagara and remains focused on adapting to the changing needs of the Indigenous community, she said.

It also continues to bring people together, like through its August BBQ, November Toonie Auction, January New Year social and regular drum nights and socials throughout the year.

Next up for the centre: A spring celebration this Friday, June 6 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. It will feature hands-on activities, food and community connection — rain or shine.

Updates on what’s happening at the centre can be found on its website at [nrnc.ca](http://nrnc.ca).

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# Crossroads Home Show brings out crowds to enjoy a fun time

*Continued from Front Page*

the pop-can lid, her favourite is the dragon, which Charlie said takes about six hours to print.

Another first-time vendor was Cindy Kaspar, who owns Splendidly Hooked Crochet, which sells crocheted plush toys.

Kaspar didn’t know what to expect but had heard positive feedback about the event, she said, which, by the end of the day, had turned out to be true.

“I’ve already broken a couple of hearts,” she said, as some items, like the ever-popular crocheted chicken nuggets, were quick to go.

The business owner said she heard about the home show on social media and decided to apply. At first, she was told all the vendor spots were full, but was happy to receive a last-minute invite after one opened up.

“This is the right kind of audience for my business,

so the feedback has been great,” Kaspar said.

Christine Heather and her daughter, Mya, owners of Monster Slime, also heard about positive experiences from vendors after attending the home show last year as customers.

Heather said the most popular feature at their table was the gumball machine that dispensed either a random slime sample or a Croc charm.

Jordana Hernder, one of the lead coordinators of the event, said her favourite part is getting to give youth vendors a space to grow their businesses.

“We have young entrepreneurs who are trying to start their business ... Charlie’s Cool Creations, Monster Slime and Simply Adorn,” Hernder said. “And they all make their own things themselves.”

Most vendors are on their fourth or fifth year of the home show, while two or



Jamee Jones and daughters Chara, 4, and Samantha, 9, eat a meal from the barbecue during the Crossroads Home Show fundraiser on Saturday. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

three just joined the event, she added.

Another change to the event was its date — in previous years, the home show ran in March. Hernder explained the switch was to

make the event “more about the kids,” which was also the goal in introducing the fun fair.

Sarah Dall’Orso, also known as SarahBeara, was painting faces at the fair.

She said it was her first time at the home show and said it was a fun environment, despite the cold wind making painting more challenging.

Still, a large crowd of kids, most being Cross-

roads students, gathered outside to watch Fish in the dunk tank.

For each attempt at knocking the school’s principal into the water, money was raised for Crossroads and other schools in the District School Board of Niagara.

Hernder said the money raised this year will go toward Crossroads’ library as well as new Chromebooks and books. A percentage of the earnings will also be donated to other schools, so kids outside the NOTL community can benefit too.

With the excitement garnered by the fun fair, particularly surrounding the dunk tank, home show guests are likely to anticipate its return next spring.

For the sake of whoever sits on the tank’s ledge next, hopefully, the sun will come out and take away the need for blankets and kettles to warm the water.





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# Thank-you supper **salutes** migrant workers

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

A packed church hall served up dinner and gratitude to the migrant workers who keep Niagara-on-the-Lake growing.

More than 100 migrant farm workers and Spanish-speaking locals filled the church hall on Davy Street on June 1 after the Spanish-language Mass at St. Vincent de Paul Church.

The free supper, run by the parish's Society of St. Vincent de Paul, aims to thank the migrant farm-workers on whom NOTL's agricultural economy relies.

"We just want to say thank you and make sure they have an opportunity to come together and celebrate and be recognized," said Cynthia Fuller, president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The Niagara region receives more than 4,000 seasonal agricultural workers each year, about half of them Spanish-speaking.

Founded during the pandemic, the society runs food drives, delivers welcome baskets to bunkhouses and helps with emergency utility payments. Supplies come from parish fundrais-



Teresa Costello serves bread and salad to attendees, with Fr. Peter Rowe (back) and Jennifer Pothier, during the dinner for migrant workers. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

ers, regional seed money and donations of food and clothing.

"These dinners started as just providing a hot meal and have evolved into a community event," said Fuller.

Fuller said attendance at the dinners has doubled since the society took over running the event last year.

"We usually also like to make enough so people can take a second meal because some people don't have dinner for the next day," said Rebecca Golding, one of the volunteer cooks at the dinner.

Jennifer Pothier, the society's former executive director, said the parish held similar meals for years before the society took over.

"It's a way of us being able to do something, but it also helps them integrate more into the community, so they don't feel like they're on the outside," said Pothier.

Western University sociologist Dr. Kristin Lozanski has called NOTL "unique" for its grassroots migrant support network, such as the society's dinners, Bikes for Farmworkers and the Niagara Migrant Workers

Interest Group's social, legal and health services.

"We wouldn't have what we have in Canada in our food industry if we didn't have migrant workers," said Pothier.

NOTL resident Melina Ritchie attended the supper after the Spanish-language Mass to show appreciation for the workers.

"It is hard for them to come to another country where they don't speak the language. We really appreciate everything they do here for the community," said Ritchie.

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# Man **appeals SLAPP dismissal** in Marotta defamation case

Continued from Front Page

legislation is intended to prevent," he said in a written statement.

"Unfortunately, I cannot comment further at this time as the case is before the courts."

On June 26, 2024, Hall posted remarks on NOTL 4U criticizing Marotta and his plans to build a luxury hotel on the former Parliament Oak public school property.

Hall accused Marotta and his companies of engaging in corrupt business practices, offering bribes to politicians and employing aggressive tactics against opponents.

The comments followed a controversial 5-4 town council vote that approved Marotta's plan for a hotel on the Parliament Oak site, which he purchased in 2022.

Hall removed the comments a week later, on July 3, 2024, after he received a letter of complaint from Marotta lawyer William McDowell. It threatened a libel suit and sought a public apology.



Stewart Hall, left, and Benny Marotta. FILE PHOTOS



With no resolution in the dispute, a hearing on Hall's anti-SLAPP motion was held in Superior Court in Toronto on Feb. 12, 2025.

Morgan issued his ruling on March 20, dismissing the application and allowing the libel suit to continue.

He ruled that Hall's statements went beyond fair comment and could reasonably be seen as defamatory.

In their Court of Appeal filing last week, Hall's lawyers Michael Robson and Ryder Gilliland argue that among "many palpable and overriding factual errors" in his ruling, the judge was wrong to accuse Hall of using "gratuitous slurs" and "false narratives" in his Facebook posts.

The legal arguments in the factum have not yet been tested in court.

The lawyers also contend that Morgan made "significant errors in the application of the law of defamation."

"He improperly found grounds to believe that the fair comment defence would not succeed because he deemed the posts to be 'unfair,' despite it being well-settled that fairness is not a component of the fair comment defence," Hall's lawyers said.

The case is "about a local resident expressing concern in two Facebook posts about a development being approved after a controversial past had handed a sitting councillor, who would be deciding his recently filed rezoning application, an envelope with \$10,000 of cash."

The judge also didn't note that the posts were up for only eight days and there is no evidence that Marotta's reputation was harmed, the factum states.

As well, Hall's legal team takes issue with Morgan's description of him as "an outspoken user of social media, especially when it comes to opposing real estate development in the area," calling it "false and unfair."

The judge's assertion also is incorrect that there is no "disparity of wealth" between Hall and Marotta, and that Hall lives in "an affluent neighbourhood in NOTL," they state.

His lawyers say Hall is an "ordinary retiree" who is being sued by "a well-financed development company and a tremendously successful developer."

And there is no evidence to support the judge's statement that Hall engaged in a "smear campaign" against Marotta and some town councillors, the factum says.

The lawyers urge the appeal court to set aside Morgan's ruling, award Hall damages of \$25,000 and reimburse his legal costs.



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Artist seeks permission to put art on farms

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake could soon see a series of roadside art installations honouring the town’s agricultural legacy, if local artist Ron Clavier gets his way.

Clavier appeared before council last Tuesday to seek permission to install large-scale public artworks on private farmland. The pieces, he said, would pay tribute to key contributors to the region’s farming history.

Inspired by a similar project in California’s Salinas Valley, Clavier’s plan calls for a series of 16-foot-tall aluminum-composite paintings. Each would depict an individual or group significant to the development of agriculture in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

“The project is our way of saying thanks,” he told councillors. “We owe the agricultural community everything, including our



Ron Clavier. FILE

lives.”

The first five structures include representations of Indigenous female farmers — known as the “Three Sisters” — United Empire Loyalists, Mennonites, winery pioneers and migrant workers.

The “Three Sisters” artwork was created by Indigenous artists Raymond Skye and Shayde Sandy, in consultation with members of the Indigenous community.

The pieces would be installed on private agri-

cultural properties and are meant to be viewed from the road by passing drivers. Clavier emphasized they are not intended to be stops or distractions, but roadside tributes.

As part of his presentation, Clavier requested council exempt the project from the town’s sign bylaw. The bylaw prohibits signage designed to attract driver attention, defining a sign as any object or structure used to convey information or promote a product, activity, service or idea.

“A sign is intended to distract drivers,” Clavier said. “This is not that.”

He argued that because the artworks would be on private farmland and are not promotional in nature, they should not be regulated under the bylaw.

“Artwork on private property is not a sign,” he said.

Clavier told council he has support from municipal staff but has not yet received backing from the town’s

agricultural advisory committee. As of last week’s meeting, the committee had not been consulted regarding the project.

Council voted to move forward with a bylaw amendment to clarify that public art is not considered signage. Council also agreed to consult the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre regarding criteria for approving public art. However, Clavier’s proposed initiative — titled “Thanks for the Meal” — was not formally approved.

The title references a line from “The Farmer’s Song,” a 1972 tune by Canadian singer-songwriter Murray McLachlan.

Clavier said he hopes the project will help raise the profile of visual art in the town.

“We want to elevate visual art to the same level of importance in our community as our theatre and our wineries,” he said.

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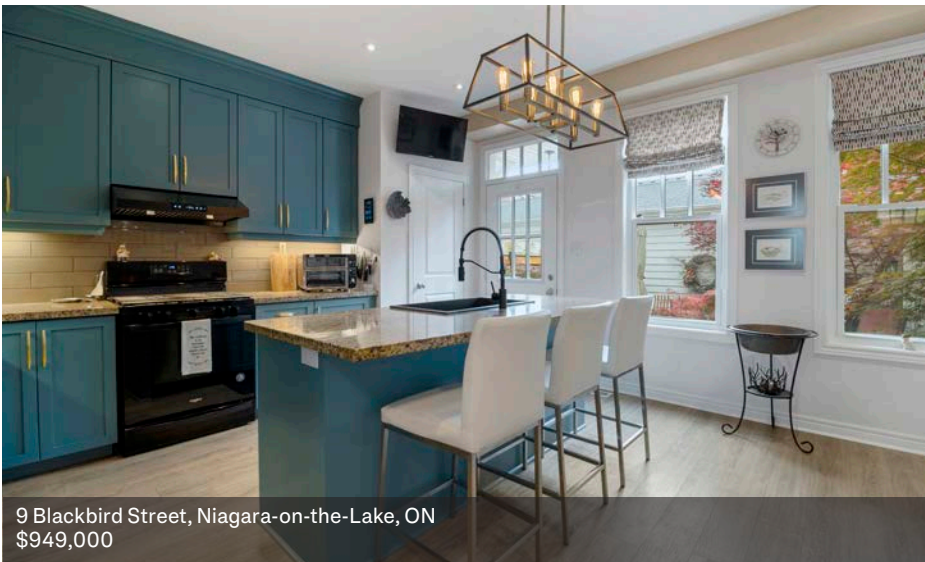
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# ‘I get concerned as a parent’

## St. Davids Public School adds portables as capacity worries pile up

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

St. Davids Public School is getting a fifth portable this fall as enrolment keeps climbing — and some parents say it’s time the school board stepped in to balance the load with nearby schools.

Stacy Veld, treasurer for the District School Board of Niagara, confirmed the school is over capacity in an email to The Lake Report.

She said the school board is carefully watching the situation and converting a meeting space into another classroom to address pressures.

Recommendations to address the situation will be brought to the board of trustees for consideration this fall, though she did not specify what those recommendations would entail or exactly address.

“Nevertheless, the school remains over capacity,” Veld said.

The school’s principal, Carl Glauser, agrees. He’s been principal for three years and said he’s seen a “steady growth” of both the school and the community.

“This is not the first time I’ve navigated enrolment pressures and I’m confident in the board’s plan to effectively address them,” said Glauser in an email.

Parents at St. Davids say their school is bursting at the seams, while others at Crossroads report a better experience.

“I get concerned as a parent,” said parent Judith Atwood, who has kids at the St. Davids school.

Glauser said his focus remains on ensuring a “safe, supportive and positive learning environment” for students.

“St. Davids is a vibrant place for students to learn and grow,” he said. “I look forward to continuing to share updates with the school community as we move forward.”

The school’s “functional capacity” is 328 students, Veld said, “which provides a more accurate reflection of its available classroom space.”

The school board’s 2023–2032 long-term accommodation plan shows St. Davids was operating well over capacity in 2022, with enrolment expected to



St. Davids Public School is feeling the pressure of rising enrolment, with portables added to manage space, prompting concerns from the parents of some students. The school board says it will have recommendations this fall. PAIGE SEBURN

continue rising in the coming years.

Meanwhile, nearby Crossroads Public School has space available and is projected to see a decline in enrolment, and currently has no portables, the plan states.

**Overcrowding causes bigger classrooms, parking hazards and long washroom lineups**

Andrew Stewart’s children started at St. Davids Public School three years ago. Since then, he said, there have been “clear signs of overcrowding.”

Atwood pointed to the crowding parking situation at the school, which has become “a real hazard,” leading to some instances of people parking on sidewalks, for example.

Stewart said the lot has even had accidents, including a collision between two buses, though no one has been hurt.

Parents say they’re taking note of how the school is handling the growth.

Coun. Adriana Vizzari has had children at St. Davids since 2021 and said the school’s population “has definitely increased over those years.”

“My kids came home and said they heard that they’re getting rid of the swings to accommodate a portable,” she said. “Day-to-day parts of their school life are impacted, I guess, with the growth.”

Atwood said an old computer lab is also being converted into a classroom, cutting into library space.

“We’re actually growing by two classroom sizes,” she said.

**“It appears to be a combination of bureaucratic malaise ... a sensitivity around implementing change and oddly, a preference to spend taxpayer dollars on temporary fixes, rather than optimize the existing infrastructure.”**

ANDREW STEWART  
ST. DAVIDS PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT

Parents say portables and conversions won’t solve the real issue.

Portables don’t ease the strain on bathrooms, gyms, or playgrounds — they just add more students to already crowded spaces, Atwood said.

Stewart said there are often “line-ups at the washrooms because there are so few available.”

Parent Eric Teichgraf, with kids at St. Davids, said the overcrowding is “serious and unsustainable” and

called these modifications a “band-aid solution” in an email.

The school currently cannot support new expansions like portables, Teichgraf said, “without significantly impacting the learning environment and overall well-being of our students and staff.”

Parents extend their sympathy to those working at the school and dealing with the issue.

Atwood said the school is “amazing,” nonetheless and that the staff, teachers and community are “truly special.”

The school’s teachers, who Stewart said are “phenomenal,” are being “pushed to (the) limit” by the overcrowding, he said. **Parents say nearby school could accommodate more students**

Stewart questioned why those in charge didn’t consider reviewing the demographic boundaries that dictate what school parents send their children to in NOTL before approving funds for portables and conversions.

To him, the solution is clear: “Complete a boundary review immediately, conduct an audit of enrolment to ensure all parents live within the boundary and move a portion of the student population to Crossroads,” he said in an email.

Lauren Bennett, a Crossroads parent of two,

said she’s had an “excellent experience” at the school.

“We’ve never felt as though the class sizes are too big for the teachers to be able to manage it,” she said.

As for whether she’d support a boundary change that sends more students to Crossroads, Bennett said the school board should do what’s needed to keep class sizes reasonable.

“I wouldn’t support any school being overcrowded,” she said, adding that if the school board is acting “in a way that supports the recommended numbers,” she said, “we can all make it work.”

Atwood was taken aback when she saw the numbers in the school board’s accommodation plan showing the enrolment imbalance and the board’s awareness of both the overpopulation at St. Davids and the excess capacity at Crossroads.

“When I found that, I was so disheartened,” said Atwood.

“It appears to be a combination of bureaucratic malaise,” said Stewart, “a sensitivity around implementing change and oddly, a preference to spend taxpayer dollars on temporary fixes, rather than optimize the existing infrastructure.”

**Some frustrated after missing unannounced superintendent visit**

The last week of May, Stewart said, superintendent

Mary Anne Gage made an unannounced visit to the school council meeting to give a brief update. Since it wasn’t on the agenda, most parents weren’t prepared or able to attend, he said.

Glauser said it was an example of how the school plans to keep its community “well-informed through school-wide communication.”

But the lack of preparation disappointed Teichgraf, who had hoped to be part of the discussion.

“We were surprised and frustrated that no effort was made to include us in that conversation.”

Stewart said the superintendent advised that a boundary review “may happen next year, with implementation the year after.”

“But no clear timelines were given as it has to first go to the trustees,” he said.

Teichgraf said, “It’s troubling that the (school board) has not shown a greater sense of urgency,” especially since another school nearby has space, he said.

Stewart questioned the “bewildering” use of taxpayer dollars on studies showing St. Davids’ overcapacity and Crossroads’ underutilization, without resulting action.

The town’s communications coordinator, Marah Minor, said council requested a presentation from the District School Board of Niagara on the long-term accommodation plan for NOTL students and wants to schedule a meeting to discuss this.

“To discuss this presentation, their long-term accommodation plan (2023–2032) and discuss the background on council’s request,” said Minor.

“This meeting has not yet occurred,” she said.

The town is “going to continue to pursue that as a municipality,” said Vizzari. “Because this is our community, these are our kids,” she said.

Stewart said the solution lies in redirecting students to nearby schools with available space, such as Crossroads.

“We need concrete action now, not general promises for the future.”

The Niagara Region Parent Teachers’ Association did not respond to requests for comment by press time.

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# Meet three of NOTL’s top 40 under 40 young professionals

Jill Troyer  
The Lake Report

The annual Niagara 40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards recognize young professionals who drive innovation, business success and community impact. The awards, hosted by Business Link Media Group, were presented at a gala event last Thursday.

All of the recipients are impressive in many ways. We talked to three of the winners who are among those from Niagara-on-the-Lake being honoured.

**Dean Stoyka, winemaker at Stratus Winery**

Dean Stoyka radiates exuberance when he talks about his work at Stratus Winery. As the winemaker, he loves to innovate and experiment in the cellar. He also manages the farm, with “a focus on sustainability and innovation, with respect for tradition,” he explains.

One innovation is an initiative to reuse wine bottles, working in partnership with a facility called Circulr in Kitchener. In the first year, he made 50 cases of wine in reused bottles.

Stoyka says the aim is to grow the volume at Stratus and encourage other wineries to adopt the same practice.

In the vineyard, Stoyka says he doesn’t use any herbicides: “We actually have a special piece of equipment to seed crimson clover underneath the vines. It makes all these beautiful red flowers, and it makes a mat that outcompetes the other weeds. It doesn’t compete with the vine, because



From left, Sam Maxbauer, Dean Stoyka and Julie Taylor have been awarded 40 Under 40 business achievement awards. DON REYNOLDS

it’s actually giving nitrogen back to the soil.”

Community involvement is important to Stoyka as well.

“We work with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. Our whole staff gets involved. We’ve built them rehabilitate a pollinator garden around the Virgil dam, for example,” he explains.

Stoyka says he’s very honoured “to be part of all these other really great business leaders and entrepreneurs.”

“The Niagara region has a massive entrepreneurial spirit. It’s been the hub for commerce for hundreds of years. I grew up in Niagara Falls around business leaders and local family businesses. So to be nominated and awarded is exciting and very prestigious. It feels great,” he says.

“I was shocked and surprised, because I know how competitive it is. It’s great to shine the spotlight on

Ontario wine tourism and manufacturing,” he adds.

**Julie Taylor, owner/pharmacist, Stone Road Pharmacy**

“Caring beyond the prescription.” It’s written on the wall at Stone Road Pharmacy, and it’s in the DNA of the drug store Julie Taylor started up in 2019.

“It was seven months before COVID started. It was tough, but it actually gave us that opportunity to really show that care during a critical time when everyone was fearful and locked down,” she recalls.

“Doing flu shots and COVID immunizations has been important to us. It gives us a lot of one on one interaction with people,” she explains.

Taylor, who has lived in Virgil all her life, is a familiar face to many. She has been a pharmacist since 2008. She worked for Rex-all for six years, and then she worked at Simpsons for six years before opening her own pharmacy.

It’s still a relatively new business, and Taylor is juggling that with her growing family. Her two-month-old daughter is snoozing in the pharmacy office, and her three-year-old son is at daycare.

As the business becomes more established, she plans to get involved with sports teams and organizations in the community.

Taylor remembers when she found out she had won a 40 Under Forty award.

“It was a great surprise and honour. I found out on my daughter’s due date, actually. So when she wasn’t born on her due date, at least I had something happy that day,” she relates with a big smile.

“I know that I am the name on the award, but it’s really my team too, they’re amazing,” she emphasizes.

**Sam Maxbauer, master brewer & co-founder, the Exchange Brewery**

It’s 9 a.m. at The Exchange Brewery, and while the doors aren’t open to the

public yet, lots is going on inside.

Staff are in the back bottling a new amber ale, and master brewer and co-founder Sam Maxbauer is at work on his laptop. There’s always something going on.

Since opening in 2016, the Exchange has aimed to be a positive force in the community.

“We wanted to create a safe and inclusive place for everybody. So we’ve always been welcoming to everybody that comes into our tap room,” Maxbauer says.

The Exchange also supports many charities. “We’ve done a series of charity brews where we donate all the proceeds from that specific brew to a charity. We work together as a team to decide which charities.”

Maxbauer says proceeds have been donated to various charities, including Autism Ontario, Colorectal Cancer Canada, Canadian Veteran Service Dog Unit,

Plenty Canada, MS Society of Canada, as well as Canadian Mental Health Association (Niagara chapter), LGBT Youthline and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation.

Maxbauer himself also volunteers with the Master Brewers Association, which is a non-profit that facilitates learning.

The Exchange opened in 2016. “It’s been a long and sometimes slow process, especially in our construction stage, but, but we’ve made it through the pandemic, and we’ve been slowly expanding our distribution over the last 10 years. So we’re definitely here to stay,” he says with conviction.

For Maxbauer, “it’s a great honour to be named one of the 40 under Forty.”

He reflects on the fact that there are many business owners and community leaders in the group, and he is glad to be one of those to receive the award.

# NOTL teen leads picnic at Simcoe Park to celebrate Pride month

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

In celebration of Pride Month, 13-year-old Soleil Chauncey is bringing Niagara-on-the-Lake’s only public Pride event to Simcoe Park.

Chauncey’s organization, Queer Niagara, is hosting its second annual Pride Potluck on June 14 from noon to 7 p.m. under the bandstand at the park.

“There is almost no queer representation in Niagara-on-the-Lake, so I decided to create Queer Niagara,” Chauncey said.

Last year’s inaugural picnic drew about 30 people. With more marketing this year, Chauncey expects a larger turnout but hopes to maintain “a similar energy” where people can drop in, share food and meet neighbours.

“There are a lot of fun

events in St. Catharines, but it’s nice to have Pride events to go to that you don’t have to drive half an hour to,” they said.

Chauncey’s mother, Silk Chauncey, said the event is open to the entire community.

“Everyone is welcome, allies included. Just bring a dish, a blanket and your Pride flags,” she said.

While Chauncey acknowledged past incidents

of pushback in NOTL, such as the defacing of the Pride crosswalk near the public library, they anticipate a peaceful celebration.

“There’s a lot of queer community in Niagara-on-the-Lake and that’s not really recognized,” they said.

Chauncey hopes the picnic will encourage more grassroots events and help queer residents feel more at home in their town.



Pride Potluck organizer Soleil Chauncey, left, and her friend Nova Versteegan showing off their pride spirit in 2024 in Simcoe Park. FILE/RICHARD WRIGHT



## HISTORY BITES TOUR - JUNE 6

Taste local fare, as you walk, talk, and learn with NOTL Museum’s History Bites tour. Join Museum guides as they lead you through the heritage district of Niagara-on-the-Lake, exploring local landmarks, and discovering tales of intrigue and mystery, mixed with a healthy dose of historical fact, fun, and scandal. Participants will enjoy stops for food and drinks at three of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s popular culinary businesses.

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# Same hugs, new hands: The Grist sold, owners retire

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Every day, Rob Begin greeted guests at the Grist Craft Kitchen & Brewery with a hug — so many, he joked, if he didn't hug 60 per cent of them, he was doing something wrong.

After four years of pouring their hearts into the business, Rob and his wife, Danielle Begin, have decided to step away from the restaurant and brewery they built from the ground up.

Rob and Danielle's final day is Sunday, June 8 and the official takeover is the following Wednesday (the Grist is closed Monday and Tuesday).

Regulars don't need to worry — the heart of the Grist will stay the same, said Rob and the new owner, Mamdouh Abdelmaksoud.

Abdelmaksoud said he's keeping everything exactly the same, from the staff, beer and menu to the community-focused spirit Rob and Danielle made central to the Grist's success.

"My goal is to continue their vision," said Abdelmaksoud in an interview. "We're keeping everything running as-is."

"Why fix something that's not broken, right?"

Rob said letting go is bittersweet — but knowing the place they built will carry on unchanged makes it easier to step away.

Following years of long hours and little time for themselves, Rob said the decision came down to one thing: Reclaiming balance.

"After four years, we're



Rob and Danielle Begin, left, their daughter Devin, second right, and new owner Mamdouh Abdelmaksoud gather outside The Grist with Luca, the restaurant's team mascot, marking the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. PAIGE SEBURN

still putting in 80 hours a week," he said. "We don't really have a life outside of this business — and so, it was time to sort of recapitulate that."

The Grist opened in July 2021 after the couple converted an old fruit packing house on Four Mile Creek Road into what quickly became a local hotspot.

Rob said it was a business built during a pandemic, against all odds.

"There was a tremendous amount of risk," said Rob. "The only way we were able to do this was to sell our house and use the funds from the house to be able to build out the restaurant."

Rob said he and Danielle realized their lives had become entirely wrapped up in the business. So, they wanted to start being more present for their children

and grandchildren.

He said he knew it was time to step away while things were still going well.

"Sometimes, you need to know when to leave on a high note — as opposed to continuing with less involvement," he said, adding that he didn't want to become a partial owner or simply cut back his hours.

A business needs fully hands-on owners to succeed, he said — anything less would have risked their reputation.

"You become like other owners that are sort of hands-off owners," Rob said.

The decision to retire wasn't easy, said Rob. But he and Danielle were determined to hand off the business in a way that wouldn't compromise what they'd built.

That's where Abdelmaksoud came in.

A customer of the Grist for the past year, Abdelmaksoud said he and the Begins gradually became friends.

"At least over a year as a steady customer of ours," said Rob.

Then, the couple started talking about thoughts of moving on.

"I became a customer, and then we became friends and then we just started talking informally about the restaurant and their goal to possibly move on and spend more time with their family," Abdelmaksoud said.

Abdelmaksoud, who has worked in the restaurant industry since 2017, is a part owner of Mick & Angelo's Eatery and Bar in Niagara Falls and has experience in food distribution and bank-

ing, said he knew it was the right opportunity at the right time.

"I think they wanted to leave it in the right hands," said Abdelmaksoud, a Niagara resident for more than 25 years who holds an MBA from York University and completed his undergraduate studies at Brock University.

"I like to be around our customers and I like to make them feel welcomed" — the same values he said the Begins carried from day one at the Grist.

For Rob, selling to an individual owner, not a corporation, was essential.

"Corporate people run their businesses differently," said Rob. "He believes in the business so much that he really wanted to be the new owner of it, so it was kind of a natural fit — because he sees the passion."

All current staff, including the Begins' daughter Devin Begin, will stay on.

"Devin is key to the transition because she's been here from the start," said Abdelmaksoud.

Devin opened the restaurant alongside Rob and Danielle in 2021 and will remain as a bartender and manager, to make sure the Grist keeps its same standard as a restaurant.

"I want to just make sure that everyone has the same experience that they had prior."

Devin said she stayed on because she trusts Abdelmaksoud to carry on the Grist's legacy.

"I wouldn't be staying if I didn't have the utmost faith that he was going to maintain what we have built."

Brooklyn, their other daughter, will continue helping with the Grist's social media, while Dan Lillo, their nephew, will continue waiting tables.

"A lot of the DNA that's already here I'm keeping," said Abdelmaksoud. "I think it's going to be a smooth transition."

Knowing the Grist would remain in the trusted hands of their staff made the decision easier, Begin said.

"This is their legacy now," said Begin. "I really wanted them to know that life for them wasn't going to change and that everything was going to be fine for them."

Abdelmaksoud officially takes over June 11, after a short transition period. He said he doesn't plan on bringing in new staff but may consider support staff or another manager down the line.

Rob and Danielle will step back entirely after the handover, but they'll stay in touch to support as needed, whether for menu development or simply offering advice, said Abdelmaksoud.

"They won't be in the restaurant, but there'll be a phone call away and they'll continue to support the success of the business."

Meanwhile, the couple is looking forward to their new full-time gig as private chef and nanny for their grandchildren — spending summers at their cottage about an hour away and winters in Los Angeles with the grandkids.

"The pay sucks — but the perks are priceless," Rob said with a chuckle.

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## Restoration of next part of heritage trail to begin mid-June

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The next phase of the restoration of the Upper Canada Heritage Trail is underway, confirmed the town's heritage trail committee during its meeting late last month.

This latest effort involves work on the trail starting at Line 3, which will begin in mid-June, and will ultimately span four kilometres of gravel trail, ending at Line 8.

This step marks the latest phase of a project that started in 2017. It has looked to beautify and restore the trail that once

marked the old site of the Erie and Ontario railway line, which ran from 1854 to the mid-1950s and had since become an unmaintained trail.

Phase three of the project is estimated to cost \$400,000. The public will be able to give their input on how they want the trail to be made.

Committee members also concluded that phase two is now complete, which involved restoring two kilometres of the trail, extending from East/West to Line 3 along Concession 1.

The committee members were happy with the progress being made so far and said they believe that this

newest restoration effort will go smoothly.

"I would say we could cut the ribbon on phase two being done," said Kevin Turcotte, a committee member and the town's parks and recreation manager.

There were some potential concerns over the effects of the project, including archeological digs and trees obstructing the path. However, these concerns are not a problem, say committee members.

"I don't have any concerns because phase two was so successful," said Turcotte.

The first phase of trail construction, which is a trail line that goes from John Street to East/West

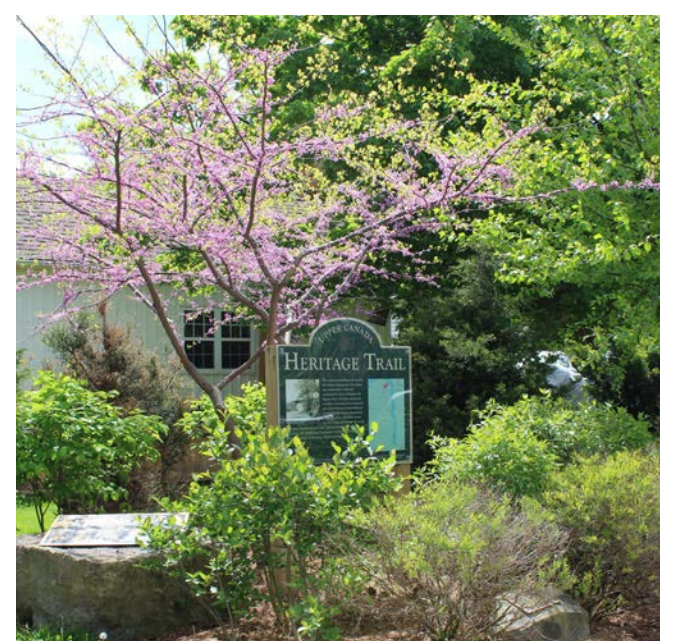
Line, was completed last year at a cost of \$118,000. The second phase was estimated to have cost \$100,000.

The project, which has been funded by the municipality as well as donations and sponsors, was slow to get started but has picked up in the last year. If successfully completed, the new trail will be 10 kilometres long.

The heritage trail committee meets again on June 18 at 1 p.m.

Any members of the public who wish to give their input on phase three can do so at [jointheconversation-notl.org/heritage-trail](http://jointheconversation-notl.org/heritage-trail).

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



Work on the Upper Canada Heritage Trail between Line 3 and Line 4 is set to start mid-June. When completed, the restored trail will span 10 kilometres. DAN SMEENK



# NOTL library throwing big bash to celebrate 225 years

Debbie Krause  
Special to The Lake Report

Get ready for a party two centuries in the making — the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library is throwing the ultimate summer kickoff this Saturday, June 7, and everyone's invited.

This isn't just any summer celebration. It's a birthday blowout marking an incredible 225 years of library service.

That's right, NOTL is home to the oldest circulating library in Upper Canada, and it's been at the heart of the community since 1800.

Now, it's time to celebrate the past, the present and the future with a free, family-friendly event packed with fun.

From 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, the library will come alive with music, laughter and the unmistak-

able bounce of not one, but two bouncy castles.

Kids can meet the ever-popular Dogman, groove in the library's first-ever silent disco and enjoy free popcorn, cotton candy and hot dogs.

While you're there, be sure to visit Sharon McDonald to register for this year's Summer Reading Club and get a head start on your adventures "Around the World."

And, yes, there will be cake courtesy of Willow Cakes and Pastries.

Some of the community's favourite groups will be joining the party, including the Tiny Museum, the NOTL Ukesters, and the Yellow Door Theatre Company. Expect great local vibes and plenty of surprises.

At 12:30 p.m., don't miss a special Storytime with the Lord Mayor, followed

by a short ceremony marking the library's remarkable 225-year milestone.

"This event is a great way to connect with the community and kick off the summer," says Laura Tait, CEO of the NOTL Public Library.

"Celebrating 225 years of library service makes this year especially meaningful. We're looking forward to a truly memorable day."

Local organizations will also be on hand to share information about programs, services and ways to get involved across the community.

This unforgettable celebration is made possible thanks to the generous support of BCM Insurance through its community grant.

The NOTL library is deeply grateful for BCM's commitment to foster-



Library staff member Adrianna Polito whips together some cotton candy at last year's summer kickoff. This year's celebration will be held on Saturday. SUPPLIED

ing community spirit and enriching local life. The contribution ensures that events like this can remain free, inclusive and fun for everyone.

Whether you've been

coming to the library for decades or just discovered it this year, this event is the perfect way to join in the celebration.

Come for the fun and help us celebrate 225 years

of stories, learning and community.

For details, visit [notlpubliclibrary.org](http://notlpubliclibrary.org).

*Debbie Krause is the NOTL Public Library's community engagement co-ordinator.*



Carter Simpson and Ewen Barclay are set to lead the walk along NOTL's heritage trail this weekend. FILE PHOTO

## Local Special Olympics medallists to lead walk for International Trails Day

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A scenic stretch of Niagara-on-the-Lake will set the stage for a community walk this weekend to mark International Trails Day.

The Town of NOTL and the Upper Canada Heritage Trail committee are hosting a community walk on Saturday, June 7, being held at Veterans' Memorial Park on King Street.

Local Special Olympics World Games medallists Carter Simpson and Ewen Barclay, who were both in Italy this past March for the winter games, will lead the walk. Simpson, who's from NOTL, brought back two bronze medals in alpine skiing this year.

The route follows the Heritage Trail from the memorial park to East and West Line and Concession 1 Road, approximately four kilometres in total.

The walk, which starts at 1 p.m., is free and open to all ages. Participants can

choose to walk all or part of the trail and may extend the walk to Line 3 Road if they want.

No registration is needed, and there is plenty of free parking, according to a May 29 news release from the town.

Although it's free to attend, organizers are accepting donations for the ongoing restoration of the heritage trail, which can be made by cash or cheque and are appreciated, the release states.

In the release, chief administrator Bruce Zvaniga said the heritage trail continues to be a meaningful way to bring residents together and that he's thankful for the staff and committee who put this together.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said it's a chance to enjoy the trail system while supporting active living and community connection. He also said it's an honour to walk alongside inspiring local athletes.

Veterans Memorial Park is located at 370 King St. [paigeseburn@niagaranow.com](mailto:paigeseburn@niagaranow.com)

## Wilderness needs another \$1 million

Continued from Front Page

hazardous trees and restoring the grounds.

"Lots of hazardous trees that we've spent a considerable sum to have removed," said Hall. "That's what we're raising the funds for right now is to pay for what we've done and what we hope to do through phase two."

About a third of the \$1-million goal has already been raised, said Hall.

"I'm very grateful for the support of the interest of residents," he said.

The foundation hosted a sneak peek on Saturday for past donors, neighbours and volunteers, offering a look at the site's progress and sharing plans for its future.

The property, known as the Wilderness for about a century, was partially left to the foundation by Ruth Parker, one of two sisters who owned it, on the basis that it be preserved and used for the benefit of NOTL residents, he said.

In April 2024, the foundation announced that it had acquired 100 per cent of the property, thanks to a \$1 million donation from the Goettler Family Foundation and several other significant donations from NOTL residents.

"In accepting that responsibility, we feel we owe it to her to maintain and achieve her wishes," he said. "We're calling it an oasis in town."

It'll be a place where people go for walks, take



View from the north of the main residence at the Wilderness. Story panels were displayed during a sneak peek on Saturday as the Niagara Foundation works to raise \$1 million for the next phase of preservation and restoration. SUPPLIED

their dogs and a gathering place, as it has been for thousands of years, Hall said — a place rooted in Indigenous, horticultural, British colonial, governmental and local history, he said.

Cleanup work has started on the south side of the property, where dangerous trees have been removed, trees trimmed and ground cover cleared.

The foundation plans to create a path and replant with native trees and ground cover, while looking at possible perimeter borders, like gates and fencing.

Similar work is planned for the north side, where One Mile Creek runs through, though Hall said the team must follow conservation authority rules for working near the watercourse.

The work has created a few ruts on the property, which the foundation has

re-levelled and re-seeded. Hall said this kind of site maintenance is ongoing.

"We brought crane trucks in to help remove some of the trees," Hall said

Much of the work is being led by professionals, including arborists, landscape architects and heritage architects — some of whom have donated their time or offered discounted services, like Arborwood Tree Service.

"That's what's driving the more intensive things. The tree removal, for example," he said. "That was paid work done by Arborwood in partnership with the foundation."

"We know we're getting very, very good value," he said.

There's no set donation amount and the foundation will continue fundraising even after reaching its target. "There's no shortage of

things to spend money on," Hall said of the site, adding that every dollar is carefully tracked and he's prepared to explain how it's been used to any donor.

The foundation isn't actively recruiting volunteers right now, but Hall said "that almost certainly will change."

Once phase two is complete, phase three, which remains unfunded and will likely require a partner, will focus on the main house and carriage house.

Right now, the focus is on getting through the second phase. Hall said the foundation has a clear vision for the grounds — what the current \$1-million campaign is focused on.

"I'm hoping that we could potentially provide some form of public access into next year."

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



# Tulips sell out fast – and make \$1.5K

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Residents didn't waste time scooping up colourful blooms during the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society's one-day tulip bulb sale Tuesday morning.

The pop-up event at the community centre started at 9 a.m., and within 15 minutes, nearly half the inventory was gone. By 11:30 a.m., all bulbs were sold and \$1,564.37 had been raised for a local women's shelter. The sale was originally set to run until 1 p.m.

The horticultural society has not yet selected which shelter will receive the funds.

Sisters Jeanette Leyden and Dianne Bradshaw, who grew up in St. Davids, were among the early birds hoping to bring home a piece of the town's spring displays.

Leyden said she plans to mail her bulbs to her daughters in Calgary.

"I have two daughters that are moving into new homes," she said. "I'm going to mail them."

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake donated the bulbs



Shoppers browse the tulip bulbs, organized by colour and mystery mix bundles. PAIGE SEBURN

after removing them from garden beds during seasonal replanting.

"The town has been very generous with all of their bulbs," said society board member Wendy Cadman, who oversees membership. "We're hoping that everybody will enjoy them and be able to plant them and have them for next spring."

Board member Rosemarie Laird, who looks after hospitality, said the town plants tulips and daffodils in the spring, which are later replaced with summer blooms such as canna lilies and other annuals.

"Because they replant their beds in the spring with summer stuff," she said, there's "nothing at

all" wrong with the bulbs being sold.

After lifting them, the town placed the bulbs in bags and labelled most by colour before delivering them to Laird's barn. Volunteers then sorted and repackaged the bulbs over five days.

"Some of them were a mystery mix," said Cadman.

"It was a lot of bags," added Laird — estimating it was "probably a gazillion and a half" bulbs.

Shoppers were initially limited to four dozen per person, but the restriction was lifted shortly after the morning rush. Anyone hoping for more was encouraged to return after 10 a.m., though by then only a few

bags remained and the crowd had thinned.

Bradshaw said she plans to give her tulips to friends and family — with one perk.

"I can pick them," she said, laughing.

Residents were encouraged to bring their own bags, though backups were provided and quickly used. Bulbs were sold for \$3 per dozen, with options including red and yellow, purple and pink, or a surprise mix. Some shoppers chose to pay more than the listed price.

"It's wonderful of the community to do that," said Cadman.

Resident Amanda Xu purchased four dozen and said she'll keep half and give the rest away.

"Amazing," said Xu. "It also supported the community."

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society's annual Garden Tour is scheduled for Saturday, July 12, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For updates, visit [notlhotsociety.com](http://notlhotsociety.com) or follow @notlhotsociety on Facebook.

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

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

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- Jim Rosa

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Ka-BOOM!  
Cannon fires at Fort George’s Artillery Day

Photographer Dave Van de Laar captured the exact moment the cannon was fired during Fort George’s Artillery Day on May 25.



Editorial

Slow down, you’re moving too fast

Kevin MacLean  
Editor Emeritus

Hands up if you don’t mind getting a speeding ticket.  
Exactly. No one likes being dinged for exceeding the limit on our roads and highways.  
And when it comes to automated, unmanned speed cameras, “hate” might not be too strong a word to describe many people’s feelings.

It seems that many residents really, really detest the concept: blow past a speed camera and get a nasty surprise in the mail a few weeks later — a sizable fine.  
Because the cameras don’t identify the person who is driving at the time of the offence, no demerit points are accumulated. That’s about the only good news in the whole process. The vehicle’s registered owner receives the fine.  
It’s a bit of modern tough love.  
Over the past year or so, Niagara Region has gone all-in on the idea and is



A vandal took down the speed cam on Niagara Stone Road last week. Now it’s back up. DAN SMEENK

expanding its use of speed cameras in areas where authorities want people to slow down. Notably near schools.  
And by the way, anecdotally at least, it appears that the vast majority of those who exceed speed limits all across the community are not visitors and tourists. They’re driving slowly, soaking it all in.  
The culprits are your friends and neighbours, the folks who should know better.  
The whole speed camera concept rubs many people the wrong way, apparently,

because, since the program began, numerous cameras have been cut down around the region by vigilantes seeking some twisted form of justice.  
And last week some people celebrated the vandals who cut down the camera set up near Crossroads Public School in Virgil.  
“It’s just a cash grab,” is the common refrain.  
Well, yes.  
It certainly IS a cash grab. But so what?  
Take responsibility for your actions: it might hurt financially, but the wisdom of obeying the speed limit

near a school (whether kids are present or if it’s late at night) seems like something right out of Driver Ed 101.  
In other words, don’t do it. And if you do — and Big Brother catches you — suck it up, pay the fine and be better.  
Besides, it’s not as if warning signs and numerous in-car navigation apps don’t warn you about the speed trap.  
The fines incurred are an unpleasant, often unexpected (and pricey) intrusion.  
To paraphrase the legendary actor John Houseman, those who have been dinged achieved it the old-fashioned way. They earned it.  
And those who embrace the hillbilly ideal of vigilante justice by chopping down or damaging speed cameras should be vilified instead of praised.  
Their actions are irresponsible, their “successes” short lived (and just cost us all).  
As for the Virgil speed camera — it’s ba-a-a-ack.  
Drive carefully.  
kevin@niagaranow.com

We welcome your letters

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



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Celebrating 225 Years

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Saturday, June 7th 10am –1pm

visit notlpubliclibrary.org for full details!









# Speed control measures are there for a reason

Dear editor:  
 Seriously?  
 Some drivers find the speed camera in Virgil inconvenient? (“Traffic camera beside Crossroads school vandalized,” May 29). Or, they deem it to be a cash-grab? But they were “only” doing 52- 53 kilometres an hour in a 40 zone?  
 I seriously do not get the mentality. Countless research has shown that when a vehicle hits a pedestrian at a slower speed, less harm is inflicted. Countless research has shown that drivers cannot make correct decisions on the road every single day.  
 Look at Four Mile Creek recently as a case in point — an average of a collision a week, in dry broad daylight, sometimes involving an air ambulance.

This is an extra-wide straight road with an 80km/hr speed limit and yet people routinely do 100+ there.  
 There is no measurable disadvantage to a driver getting to their destination any slower as a result of them being “delayed” for a 500-metre section of road, by driving at 40 instead of 50.  
 As for a cash-grab by local government, give your heads a wobble. Nothing would please everyone more than to see zero revenue from the cameras, because it means that no one is speeding.  
 But yet, everyone thinks they are a “very good driver.” Clearly they are not.  
 The laws are created due to car collisions, they are not accidents, they

are usually a direct result of driver error and/or law-breaking. Speeding, distracted driving, following too closely, impaired driving, etc. But yet we all think, “No way, not me.”  
 Every day I drive on Four Mile Creek, I can see two out of three drivers with their heads down on their phones as they go by in the opposite direction.  
 I can only imagine that this is one of the primary causes of collisions; it only takes a second or two before they wander into the opposite side of the road.  
 Don’t look to the police to help with any of this. They are part of the cleanup crew, to write up reports for insurance, to lay charges if appropriate, to take witness statements, to manage traffic at a col-

lision scene, and in the worst scenarios, to go to someone’s home, to tell a family that their loved one has died in a vehicle collision and they will not be sitting at their dinner table that evening ... or ever again. Lives changed, forever ruined.  
 Wake up, everyone, please. Life is short and precious: Let’s not accelerate our demise.  
 We are all supposedly adults, it was all a part of getting a driver’s licence in the first place. To indicate that we are supposedly mature enough to handle 4,000 to 5,000 lbs of rolling metal, glass and rubber.  
 Please, let’s behave as adults.

*Frank Hayes  
 St. Davids*

## Opinion

# Open the floodgates? Then expect the flood



**THE TURNER REPORT**

Garth Turner  
 Columnist

Hotel creep. We got it bad.  
 The town’s infected now — an unintended consequence of leaders whose mantra is, “build, baby, build.”  
 So when they greenlit the hulking, curvy 102-room Clayfield Hotel at the Village with its wall of stacked vacay rentals, plus the four-storey Parliament Oak Hotel in the midst of Old Town (130 rooms plus restaurant), plus the on-again-off-again 81-room Hummel mansion (Van Riesen Hotel Group), what’d they expect?  
 We already have a raft of rooms available — from the Prince of Wales to the Queen’s Landing, Harbour House, Oban Inn, Shaw Club, Pillar and Post to Q124.  
 So the town has launched a race for business survival. Not only do we risk displacing people and houses with hotels and tourists, but life is a whole lot tougher — and more expensive — for the guys already in the hospitality biz.  
 “We are attempting to set our property to be able to



Garth Turner says NOTL is at risk of becoming a theme park with a historic vibe if builders keep making new buildings look like they’re historic when they aren’t.  
 fairly compete with these large approved hotels,” says David Jones, owner of the Q124 Hotel, “to attempt to garner interest from business group travel in the off-season. We are a small boutique hotel.”  
 Jones is fighting back with an expansion. It comes a few short years after the last swelling of his operation, which included underground parking, an addition in the style and scale of the main street, spa, restaurant, bar and open event spaces.  
 This brings us to 222 Gate St. And to a question. Is NOTL a bucolic, preserved historic site that people love to live in and visitors flock to for authenticity — or on its way to becoming a theme park with a historic vibe?  
 This proposed building may symbolize that, as well as being a flash point for anti-build sentiment. As you can see from the picture, Jones is planning a pseudo-Georgian mansion in the style of our grandest homes. Damn, it’s gor-

says Donald Combe, who lives around the corner. “It appears that these townsfolk are simply ignored as they and their complaints are too trivial to deal with.”  
 Brodie Townley agrees. He says Jones failed to live up to past promises, and is beseeching the town to hit the hotel-creep pause button.  
 “This new hotel plan is further commercial creep into the residential Heritage District,” he tells the town.  
 “I don’t know why this is even being considered at this time as the town tries to expand the Heritage District. Those of us living in the district now are not allowed to apply for changes while the process goes on. Why is this being considered?”  
 “The town says that third party groups may not appeal this application as per Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024. Why? This is not housing. It is a hotel. This in no way should apply.”  
 So, controversy. Ill will. Conflict. More development pressure.  
 On one hand, we should be happy to have an entrepreneur like Jones building quality. But we should also shield NOTL from turning into an over-hyped caricature of itself. Then everyone loses.  
 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: TV “Q”

**The title of this limited series starring Anya Taylor-Joy refers to an opening in chess.**

**Last issue: SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS**  
**Clue: This Italian scientist’s legendary falling bodies experiment showed falling objects accelerate at the same rate.**  
**Answer: Who is Galileo?**  
**Answered first by: Margie Enns**  
**Also answered correctly (in order) by: Lynda Collet, Bob Wheatley, Jane Morris, Susan Dewar, Esther VanGorder, Sylvia Wiens, Wade Durling, Katie Reimer, Jim Dandy, Catherine Clarke, Nancy Rocca, Gordon Yanow, Marla Percy, Sheila Meloche**  
 Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)  
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Bill 5 opens the door for environmental and democratic erosion



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

Last week’s column suggested that I was writing the “final chapter” on the clear-cut in Virgil, so let’s call this a postscript to that.

A few days ago, I received an email from someone whose backyard bordered on the former coniferous forest and whose family now has the unfortunate daily experience of looking out over the desolated lands with the sad anticipation of the lost trees being replaced by a row of townhouses.

The individual wrote: “It’s truly so heartbreaking to see these animals lose their homes. The birds have been so confused here and watching them hop through the fallen trees where they probably had nests already was so hard.”

They continued by reporting that a “pond” had formed in the clear-cut lands and was attracting all

manner of birds and wildlife including a bald eagle — possibly one displaced by the cutting down of trees near Lakeshore (which had historically been an eagle nesting site) earlier this year — finishing the missive by stating, “It will be another heartbreak when they start the construction process and destroy this little habitat.”

Now, we know that Mother Nature, left to her own devices, will rehabilitate many of the scars left on the land by humans. However, we also know that she will not be given that opportunity by the developer in Virgil.

But, this is only a single, relatively small, local example of the potential devastation which could, and likely will, be visited upon the landscape of this province should the Ford government’s Bill 5 be passed into law.

We visited some of the provisions enfolded within this legislation in the May 14 column of Arch-i-text (“Arch-i-text: Ford government attacks Ontario’s livability”), so I will refrain from repeating myself, except to say that it poses an unconscionable attack on the environment, heritage and the democratic process by concentrating power in the hands of provincial poli-



Virgil’s clear-cut lands, where a coniferous forest once stood, is now home to a “pond” attracting all manner of birds and wildlife, including a bald eagle. SUPPLIED

ticians — individuals who lack the expertise to make educated decisions.

Further, it bypasses any pre-consultation with the First Nations and gives lie to any claim by the government that they are committed to the principles of “peace and reconciliation.”

In response to a hurricane of objections by Ontario’s First Nations, the Ford government amended the bill to include consultation with those nations which might be affected by decisions made under the new law.

However, as Chief Shelly Moore-Frappier of Temagami First Nation pointed out during a Global News interview from May 31 (segment titled “Focus Ontario: Bill 5 Showdown”), this offer

is, “after the fact. They are going to pass the bill and then we’re waiting on the graciousness of the Crown to do this (consult).”

And, she continues, “When we wait for the Crown to consult with us, sometimes it never happens.”

Personally, I am not aware of any First Nation in Ontario that has not suffered government abuse and marginalization of their territorial rights.

Consider the appalling example of the Haldimand Tract granted to the Six Nations Confederacy in 1793 which, over the last two centuries, has been systematically reduced — by government complicity, neglect and unilateral

decisions — to only five per cent of its original size and is subject to the longest-running unsettled Indigenous land claims/court actions on the planet.

And that’s just one example of many.

Is it any wonder that a government that wishes to pass a law putting the power in their hands now and then promise to consult later might be viewed with incredulity?

Environmental groups across the province have also joined in protesting this piece of legislation, staging protests in several cities and the front of Queen’s Park.

Then there is the concern — yet to be fully understood by the public at-large — that this legislation will apply to any lands which, “in the opinion of the lieutenant governor in council ... could advance the following provincial priorities: Transit, housing, health and long-term care, other infrastructure or such other priorities as may be prescribed.”

If we consider the scope of this provision, it provides that the provincial government can unilaterally direct and approve land utilization/development proposals that meet any of its current or future policy priorities, notwithstanding the current

use (zoning) of the lands.

Thus, our agricultural (Greenbelt) lands and communities are exposed to the same threat as environmentally sensitive and heretofore protected natural reserves (like parks).

While Doug Ford loudly proclaims that this legislation is necessary to protect Ontario’s economy from the Trump administration’s tariffs, many question the claim based on the unbri-dled nature of Bill 5.

I just may be a cynic, but I question any piece of legislation that grants a government the power to award benefits to select individuals and corporations at the discretion of a minister — there is just too much potential for decision-making that damages the public good.

Given that the loss of farm land in Ontario has nearly doubled under the Ford government tenure — currently standing at a reduction of 319 acres per day — one has to question the future of the Greenbelt.

Wasn’t there an issue with a proposed highway and the greenbelt a little while back?

Hmmm ...

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



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# All.Together.Now strives for human connection

Tim Carroll  
Tim Jennings  
Special to The Lake Report

At the Shaw Festival, we have embarked on a bold movement for Real Human Connection. Our \$150M campaign, launched last weekend as All.Together.Now, will transform the Shaw into a leading centre for communication, creativity and curiosity, a unique space dedicated to deepening connection through the art we make for you and the people you share it with.

All.Together.Now. is about bringing people together in a world that is increasingly disconnected. As such, while this campaign has a capital element, it is fundamentally not about buildings but about people and the human experience.

The Shaw is in the vanguard of a movement for real connection. We are perfectly placed to make a difference: We have a beautiful location, ideal for gatherings on a human scale; and we make theatre, an activity that not only relies on people coming together physically but positively fosters all the qualities we need more than ever — imagination, the courage and eloquence to look someone in the eye and tell them the truth, and the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and see how the world might look to them.



Tim Jennings, left, and Tim Carroll. SUPPLIED

We want everyone who comes to the Shaw to have the chance to develop all these qualities, and more.

This campaign will see us expand the footprint of our festival theatre through the addition of the Shaw artists' village next door, transforming the former Upper Canada Lodge site into a true campus with outdoor and indoor spaces for performance, education, artist housing, theatre craft and personal development.

At the heart of the artists' village will be the Burton Centre for Lifelong Creativity, a unique space dedicated to awakening the inner artist in all of us, no matter how old or young.

It will house tailored programming and experiences to reconnect seniors, youth, businesses, tourists, teachers, physicians, artists, theatre lovers and local community members to their own creativity.

We aim to lead work



that will reduce isolation for more than one million seniors across Canada every year by 2030.

And the campaign will enable us to rebuild the iconic Royal George Theatre.

This 110-year-old community landmark must close in December due to its failing infrastructure. Our aim is to rebuild it into a world-class performance space that we believe will also be North America's first carbon-neutral theatre.

The new Royal George's unique and much-loved character will be preserved while we create a historically inspired, world-class jewel-box theatre.

Offering modern, leading amenities, including new community spaces, the new theatre will have Rick Hansen Foundation Gold Certification levels of accessibility, allowing us to welcome both patrons and a workforce with diverse needs.

Every dollar that our patrons spend with us translates into seven dollars spent in the region. Our expanded campus and reimagined Royal George will help us attract more cultural tourists to Niagara-on-the-Lake, visitors who come more often and stay longer, supporting not just the Shaw but local restaurants, hotels, B&Bs, wineries, attractions and more.

In 1972, with the opening of the Festival Theatre by Queen Elizabeth, Niagara-on-the-Lake made the commitment to becoming a world-class centre for culture.

Over the years since, the town and the Shaw have grown together, welcoming first tens of thousands and then hundreds of thousands of patrons every year, helping this little corner of Ontario become one of the most cherished destinations in Canada.

Today, we are renewing that commitment to the town, to the region and to our shared future with a vision for the next 50 years. One that will bring connection and creativity into the life of everyone in this vibrant community.

We invite you to be a part of it.

All.Together.Now.  
*Tim Carroll is the artistic director of the Shaw Festival. Tim Jennings is the executive director.*

# The big push for traffic circles

Dear editor:

A generation ago, we went from mostly right-of-way intersections to mostly four-way stops. This was more fair. It was safer. It was (you could say) progress.

Not only were four-way stops an improvement, but there was a calming effect. A moment to take your bearings, to fish out your wallet and check to see if you remembered your bank card, a moment to calm the kids in the backseat. A calming effect; that is, if you are not an impatient, irrational person, always trying to push your way through.

But progress, as they say, "never stops there."

These days, fairness isn't enough: Things must be equitable (which is a word like fair and should mean fair but somehow ends up being more expensive).

Making intersections equitable requires the involvement of social science and a lot of money for cultural impact studies, traffic studies and road construction. To be progressive, to show that you are making progress, one really should have as many traffic circles as possible.

But the traffic circle is, in some respects, a return to the right-of-way. If a procession of cars chooses to push

through on the same road or turn left, then opposing traffic to the right must wait for as long as it takes or (not recommended) attempt to push harder and make their way in.

Perhaps the new idea is that traffic should be constantly pushed, without stopping, with as seldom a stop as possible; drivers should have their foot somewhere between the brake and the gas.

Just like the mayor's politics: Isn't he pushing this change on the town, pushing his will on the unwilling, pushing, pushing, pushing?

And the survey he sent out is more of the same. Choice is pushed and packed into a not-a-choice. A push for "public feedback" that ticks the democratic-process box for the social scientist: The people can be consulted but not, on the whole, trusted, and all the participation must be, implicitly, for the change. A sort of Manufacturing Consent Lite.

Our progressive, sociological democracy in action. The interests for the traffic circle push, the people against the traffic circle push back and, despite the best arguments (even, in spite of, the best arguments), the bigger push wins.

**Jeremy Langton**  
**NOTL**

# An early June palindrome as weather finally resembles summer



## Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

As more and more inexplicable things happen in the world we call home, let me return to a comfort zone as spring transitions to summer. We have all waited patiently, and this morning, visitors on our Queen Street reminded me that living in Niagara is a delight.

Palindromes have always intrigued me, when a word or phrase is the same when read forwards or backwards. Read "A man. A plan. A canal. Panama" both ways. I know, know. It's tricky.

Just last week, I enjoyed a superb bottle of BOTL wine. Clever name, and a high-quality Cabernet Sauvignon. BOTL from NOTL.

BOTL is the acronym for Blends On The Lake, I was told by Martin Werner. He is the proprietor of MW Cellars, which recently received a very prestigious recognition from Decanter Magazine in England.

Martin and his St. Davids neighbour on York Road, Paul Harber, shared the win in the category of Best Sparkling Wine from the Americas, I am told. Their wines were crafted from local chardonnay and pinot noir grapes. Attaboys!

Going back one step to the world of palindromes, how about upside-down mirror images? MW reads MW when looked at as an inverse mirror image. Like the number 8118, eh?

Let's go to the West Coast, to an old railroad



town near the skiing mecca of Whistler/Blackcomb.

The town was named Mons, to honour Canadians who died at the battle of Mons during the First World War. Quick now, write the word MONS on a piece of paper, and then turn it upside down — and you get SNOW. Amazing, eh?

Join me in not knowing

where I am rambling to this week.

Back on Queen Street this morning, I had a retired couple from the Cape Cod area arrive for my free walking tour. They have been spending the Memorial Day long weekend here, and were absolutely effusive while telling me how beautiful our town is, with the many

flowers and charming downtown.

The highlight home for them was the Blue House on Regent Street just north of the very classy Greaves Shop.

Then we walked toward the lake and passed the Promenade House. Talk about history, and the well-hidden historical plaque never fails to impress visitors.

In conjunction with the very historical flag hanging on the wall, from way back in the time of the Boer War in South Africa, I am certain you will be overwhelmed by the historical factoids noted below the flag.

We finished our tour in Simcoe Park at the Terry Fox tree. Town staff were busy at work, preparing to hang floral baskets to beautify our town.

I asked foreman J.B. Hopkins how many baskets would be hung this year.

I expected him to say, "about 50." To my absolute amazement, he replied, "In the whole municipality, over 200."

Now, that's amazing, and a whole heap of hard work and planning and ongoing TLC to keep the blooms blooming.

Have I lost you all yet? Believe me when I say it is not easy coming up with a subject for my ramblings every week. Sometimes, I just have to let my mind wander, which leads to rambling on the keyboard.

The concept for this column came from a conversation with an effervescent and sparkling local lady named Maeve Viernick. She had proudly tipped me off about the international award won by MV Cellars.

Thanks for allowing me to ramble at you this week.

Enjoy the warm and sunny weather, which seems to be here now.



# With \$110 million raised, Shaw two-thirds of way to goal

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Shaw Festival organizers announced last week that the once more quiet effort to raise \$150 million is now an open campaign — something for the world to know about.

The organization announced the creation of the All.Together.Now campaign, which is the newest phase of their long-standing fundraising efforts with the goal of building numerous brand new arts facilities in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The slogan All.Together. Now refers to a common refrain in theatre to encourage everyone in the room to join in the play or the song. The idea of the campaign is to promote the idea that the theatre brings people together and doesn't isolate them.

Tim Carroll, the artistic director of the Shaw Festival, said that he hopes this idea inspires people to support the organization in what Shaw Festival executive director Tim Jennings said was the "most significant cultural investment in



The Royal George Theatre, a 110-year-old landmark in Niagara-on-the-Lake, is slated for demolition and reconstruction as part of the Shaw Festival's \$150-million All.Together. Now campaign to expand and modernize its arts facilities. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Niagara in the last 100 years." "This fundraising effort has been going on since I was here (in 2017)," said Carroll. "We had been raising money quietly but we hadn't launched the campaign until now. ...We will be raising money from everyone and not just the people who knew about it."

The efforts to raise money through government and private fundraising before the campaign started has resulted in \$110 million already having been raised. This leaves \$40 million to go. The Government of Ontario said they were giving \$35 million to help rebuild the Royal George

Theatre back in April. The federal government has also given \$15 million for the development of the Artists' Village. The Shaw Festival is also waiting to hear from the federal government about funding for the Royal George Theatre. The rest came from private donations. These include larger donors like

the James A. Burton and Family Foundation and Tim and Frances Price, as well as members of the public who wish to donate to the Shaw Festival. The Shaw Festival's efforts centre around two main projects. The first is to take down and restore the Royal George Theatre, a 110-year-old theatre in the Historic Old Town which is set demolished due to age and disrepair. The second is to create a new campus called the Artists' Village, which is an expansion of the Festival Theatre. They will renovate five decommissioned buildings in the Old Upper Canada Lodge that will be used for seasonal housing for Shaw actors, classrooms, performance spaces, and studios. The feature of the Artists' Village particularly singled out for mention by the Shaw Festival is the Burton Centre for Lifelong Creativity, which is meant to be a place where people from all walks of life are encouraged to come to be creative. As per the theme of the campaign, one of the major aims for the centre is for it

to be a place that can reduce isolation for more than one million seniors by 2030. The Artists' Village will open to the public in May 2026, though Jennings said some outdoor work will continue throughout 2026. The festival's aim is to demolish the Royal George Theatre in 2026 with the new theatre to open in Fall 2028. The Shaw Festival also has an offshoot idea from All.Together.Now called the Movement for Real Human Connection. Carroll says this phrase "tells you what we're really about," which is using drama to bring people together. The Shaw Festival is the organization that runs an internationally known summer-long festival, named after famous Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw. It puts on plays in Niagara-on-the-Lake from spring until winter each year. The festival's website says 10 or more productions are shown in three theatres to an audience of around 250,000 people each year. The festival was founded in 1962. [daniel@niagaranow.com](mailto:daniel@niagaranow.com)

## Have you visited the newly expanded Il Gelato di Carlotta yet?

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# Local artists shine at annual Chautauqua Art and Garden Tour

Maddy Gordon  
The Lake Report

Artists and gardeners in the Chautauqua neighbourhood opened their homes and backyards to visitors this past weekend for the Chautauqua Art and Garden Tour, giving visitors an intimate view of their artistic worlds.

Hosted by the Chautauqua Residents Association, the tour included seven locations where visitors could observe the creative spaces of eight talented artists and residents of the neighbourhood.

Some stops gave residents the chance to bring their canvas art outside for guests to view, while others focused on showing off different artistic forms like wood carvings and guitar playing.

Artist and gardener Tara Korkmaz created a walkway throughout her garden with her art pieces scattered along the path. She described the event as the “perfect fit” to showcase her work because of her artistic passion and residence in the neighbourhood.

“I want my garden to look



Left: Musician Mary Kilmer performs her original song Brother John, written as a birthday gift for her brother, during the garden tour. Right: Tara Korkmaz showcases one of her key works — a charcoal painting on wood — as part of the garden tour. The Chautauqua resident says the event is a “perfect fit” to share her art. MADDY GORDON

like a collage,” Korkmaz said, referring to the variety of decorations and plants in her yard.

She displayed some of her pieces around her garden so guests could take in the art while exploring the green space.

Her yard is where she keeps her workspace, where sketches and ideas for future projects on the drawing board can be seen.

One of the pieces she decided to showcase is a

charcoal painting done on a canvas made of wood, which was displayed on her porch overlooking the greenery.

Korkmaz’s garden isn’t the only one in the neighbourhood that includes an outdoor workshop.

Another stop on the tour, Troy Miller’s Japanese-style garden, included various kinds of art he creates in his backyard, such as wood-carved stools and large-scale paintings on fences.



Having fellow art lovers wandering his garden helped sell some of his pieces and shine more attention on his work, according to Miller.

The emphasis on clever usage of small spaces in Japanese architecture inspired the artist’s space, which features bamboo and Japanese text painted on fences to bring the vision to life.

“The Japanese are the masters of small spaces,”

Miller said.

In addition to visual art, the neighbourhood tour also showcased musical talent.

A small crowd of guests gathered to watch Mary Kilmer, an executive member of the Chautauqua Residents Association, pick up a guitar and play in one of the tour route gardens.

She sang an original song called “Brother John,” which she wrote for her brother as a birthday present.

While watching Kilmer’s performance, Weston Miller, the association’s president, said he was happy to see a “great turnout” at this year’s event despite the gloomy weather.

He explained how most stops on the tour were newcomers this year, giving more local artists a chance to show off their work at an event he said was brought back by “popular demand.”

Margret Walker, a volunteer and leader of the event’s bake sale, shared a similar sentiment.

Even though guests at the earlier hours of the event had to bundle up, she said the baked goods flew off the table — especially her famous shortbread cookies.

Alongside the bake sale was a plant sale, which included plants found in various gardens on the tour route, such as coral bark Japanese maple.

For creators like Korkmaz and Miller, the tour brought a chance to introduce their work to a new audience — one that might not have considered gardening a form of expression before seeing a welcome sign on these artists’ back gates.

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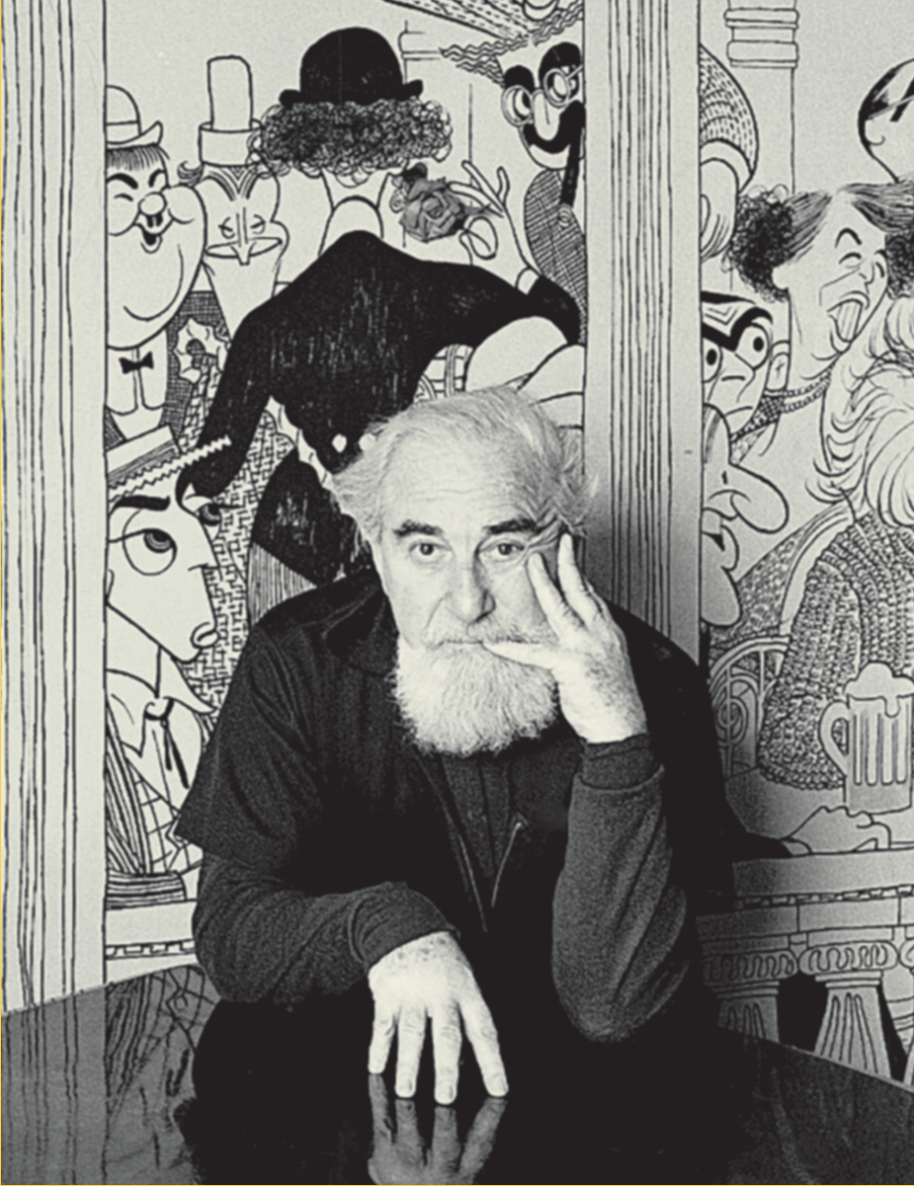
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# Howe-Hull scores season's first hole-in-one at NOTL club



Erin Howe-Hull celebrates her hole-in-one on the ninth hole at the NOTL Golf Club. DARREN SMITH

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

She shoots, she scores. Big time.

NOTL's Erin Howe-Hull notched the first hole-in-one of the season Monday evening at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club.

Despite her hockey-centric surname, she has no connection to the Original Six stars of yesteryear, but she nailed her tee shot like her namesake snipers.

Standing on the tough par-3 ninth hole, Howe-Hull drove her tee shot 167 yards into the cup for her first-ever ace.

It's a difficult green for many golfers to reach, male or female.

So acing it is quite an achievement for someone who generally plays once a week and has only been at the game for about three years.

Playing with Robin Ride-sic and Brianne Hawley in the club's Business Ladies

league, she teed off first and smacked her shot toward the green — but lost sight of it.

The shot “felt great. My partners, though, tracked it a bit better and said, ‘I think it’s in there.’ But I didn’t see it.”

“I just didn’t believe it and they had to hurry up and make their shots so we could all run up and see. They had me run ahead and check for certain that it was in there. And there it was,” Howe-Hull recalled the next day.

“It was all very exciting. We did a little happy dance all of us.”

Later when she arrived at the clubhouse, the crowd in the dining room gave her a rousing ovation.

Meanwhile, Carroll Baker had the best Business Ladies gross score this week, with 41. Other winners: Kim Breaksheare (longest drive #1), Susan Bologna (closest to 150 on #2), Mary Breccario (closest to pin #4), Jen Kroeker (longest putt #7) and Howe-Hull (closest to pin in two on #9 ... with her ace).

It was a busy week on the NOTL links.

In Tuesday's 18-hole women's league, Christine Earl carded a net score of 68 to win the Roslyn Cup.

Diana Dimmer, closest to the pin on #4, also won low gross, shooting 88.

Yolanda Henry was a shot behind at 89 and Louise Robitaille scored 90.

Brenda Bell had the fewest putts, with 29, followed by Gayle Tanner (30) and Carolyn Porter and Henry (31).

Birdies were recorded by Robitaille (#2), Cheryl Yamamoto (#4 chip-in), Cathy Dulder (#7), Sue Sherk and Dimmer (#13) and Martha Cruikshank (#17).

In the women's nine-hole league Tuesday, Julie Smethurst was low net with 31, Deborah Williams was 35 and Shelley Samson and Joan Maida were 36.

Best gross score was Suzanne Watson with 46.

In the men's Woofs league Tuesday, Jim Meszaros was tops for the second week in a row, firing a 1-over 37. Don Allen and Randy Churchill won the hidden hole with birdies on #7.

Peter Falconer was closest to the pin on #4.

Patrick Craig dominated the Thursday men's league, shooting an even-par 36 to win low gross, one shot ahead of Jared Mines.

Craig and Mines shared low net honours with 34.

Other prize winners: Doug Hernder (longest putt #2), Devon Neudorf (longest drive #3), Rob Chubey (closest to pin #4), and Mark Derbyshire (closest to pin #9).

Michael Sanders scooped the lone gross skin, worth \$220, with a birdie on #2. Net skins (\$70) went to Don Stewart, Jeff Jacques, John Liotta and Sanders.

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NIAGARA PARKS





BECAUSE YOU ASKED

What are the key benefits of joining and maintaining your membership with the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce?

**Networking Opportunities**  
Access to local business leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals. Regular events like mixers, luncheons, and business expos to build relationships. Opportunities to collaborate with fellow members on joint initiatives or promotions.

**Marketing and Visibility**  
Business directory listing on the NOTL Chamber website, which is visited by locals and tourists. Promotion through the Chamber's social media, newsletters, and visitor guides. Sponsorship opportunities and exposure at Chamber events.

**Advocacy and Representation**  
The Chamber advocates for business interests at the municipal and regional levels. Participation in committees or consultations that influence local economic development or tourism policy.

**Business Resources and Support**  
Access to workshops, training, and educational sessions on topics like marketing, HR, and business development. Referrals and recommendations from the Chamber to potential customers or partners. Insight into local trends, tourism statistics, and economic updates.

**Credibility and Trust**  
Being a member signals that your business is reputable and engaged in the community. Chamber affiliation can influence potential customers or clients to choose your business over a non-member.

**Affinity Partner Programs**  
Gain exclusive access to a wide range of benefits through our partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, such as Chamber Group Insurance, Meridian Credit Union, Gales Gas savings, Grand & Toy, Purolator and more.

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

CHAMBER of COMMERCE  
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NIAGARA - ON - THE - LAKE



# T-shirts to support Canada and local charities

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

With phrases of defiance from Canadians ranging from “Canada is not for sale” to “elbows up” becoming rallying cries on this side of the border, Niagara-on-the-Lake resident David Scott wants to show his support in an overtly positive way.

His choice is to start and promote a new slogan: “Canada G.O.A.T.,” which stands for “greatest of all time.”

It’s an acronym often used to rank the historical greatness of elite athletes, but here, it signifies Canada as being the greatest country of all time.

Scott has a long history of charitable work. He helped run a series of fundraisers at the Cherry Hill Golf Club for more than 30 years, which raised more than \$1 million.

Given the situation with



Aiden Harber, David Scott’s grandson, rocking Scott’s new T-shirt, which he’s currently selling to raise money for Niagara food banks. SUPPLIED-DAVID SCOTT

U.S. President Donald Trump, Scott thought it would be a good idea to get his creative fundraising ideas out again.

He is creating and ordering the shirts while his niece is helping to print and deliver the shirts. Seven other surviving members of the fundraising group have also been promoting the shirts.

Scott hopes these pale

blue shirts, meant to resemble the colour of the Royal Canadian Air Force, with dark blue letters and a Canadian flag, will ultimately be a positive expression of being Canadian.

The T-shirts cost \$35 each. Besides supporting the country, the T-shirt sale will also help out people in the Niagara region.

“Canadian pride is the number one thing,” said

Scott. “It’s also about supporting food banks ... It’s a win-win.”

A portion of the proceeds will go to three food banks: Project Share in Niagara Falls, Community Care in St. Catharines and Newark Neighbours in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The charities in Niagara Falls and St. Catharines will get \$10 each from a T-shirt sold to someone outside NOTL, while Newark Neighbours will get \$20 from each T-shirt sold to someone in town.

Scott said he’s already sold a couple of dozen T-shirts.

With Canada Day just around the corner, Scott said the timing is appropriate for his endeavour, but he wants the T-shirt’s message to last a long time past that.

“It’s not just for Canada Day,” he said.

The “Canada G.O.A.T.” T-shirt can be purchased at [scottfam.org/canadagoat](http://scottfam.org/canadagoat).

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



**June Is Cataract Awareness Month**

Did you know cataracts are the leading cause of vision loss worldwide?

**June is Cataract Awareness Month**


**Did you know cataracts are the leading cause of vision loss worldwide? They develop gradually, causing blurry vision, faded colors and difficulty seeing at night. The good news? Cataracts are treatable with proper care! If you're noticing changes in your vision, book an eye exam today and stay ahead of cataracts.**



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- Across**
- 1. Eyots (5)
  - 5. Rubbish (5)
  - 8. Incantation (5)
  - 10. Russian sleigh (6)
  - 11. Defence covering (6)
  - 12. Having the form of a song (5)
  - 13. Sister of Mary and Lazarus (6)
  - 14. Resident of e.g. Nairobi (6)
  - 15. Stage play (5)
  - 17. Scratched (6)
  - 19. Plan (6)
  - 21. Cuban dance (5)
  - 22. Die from lack of food (6)
  - 23. Professional killer (6)
  - 24. Locations (5)
  - 25. Workshop machinery (6)
  - 27. Pressed (6)
  - 29. Grecian architectural style (5)
  - 31. Go back (6)
  - 32. Beast (6)
  - 33. Porridge (5)
  - 34. E.g. Tarka (5)
  - 35. Is inclined (5)
- Down**
- 2. Rill (9)
  - 3. Throw out (5)
  - 4. Not in any circumstances (Poetical) (4)
  - 6. Recall past experiences (9)
  - 7. Sweat room (5)
  - 8. Mayonnaise (5,8)
  - 9. Lazy (13)
  - 16. Allow to enter (5)
  - 18. Storage building (9)
  - 20. Cemetery (9)
  - 26. Representative (5)
  - 28. Oil source (5)
  - 30. Part of speech (4)

Have some fun

Crossword Puzzle

1	2		3			4		5	6		7	
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Last issue's answers

1	G	O	R	G	E	O	U	S		5	S	W	I	M	S
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10	O	F	F	B	E	A	T		11	A	V	I	A	T	O
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\*Based on unit sales and \$ volume of closed transactions in RAHB Jan 1, 2020 - Dec 31, 2023.  
\*\*Source: Google Trends and Google Reviews    †Source: RE/MAX LLC rankings for Large Team Residential, 2024.    ††Source: REDATUM Agents by units - listing and selling combined performance in TRREB Jan 1 - June 30, 2024. RE/MAX Escarpment Golf Realty Inc., Brokerage. Independently owned and operated.



**EXPLORING HISTORY**  
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## Memorial Hall opens June 4, 1907

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum celebrates Janet Carnochan Day every year on June 4. Who is Janet Carnochan, you ask? She was a local powerhouse of a woman who worked as a teacher for 45 years and became the Niagara Historical Society's first president. Janet, along with her board, opened Memorial Hall on June 4, 1907. It is the first museum building built in Ontario for the sole purpose of being a public museum! It was built on the edge of the Commons so that soldiers who trained here each year could come learn about the War of 1812 and early Ontario history. Today, Memorial Hall is still part of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum complex. It is used for exhibitions as well as a makeshift programming space. We are very proud to continue preserving this large artifact and plan to adaptively reuse it with our expansion! Join us on June 4 for free admission to the museum for all visitors from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Ginger RESTAURANT

### In closing ...

We at Ginger Restaurant would like to thank everybody for their support over the last 28 years. We will be closing our doors for the last time on June 15.

**Thank you.**

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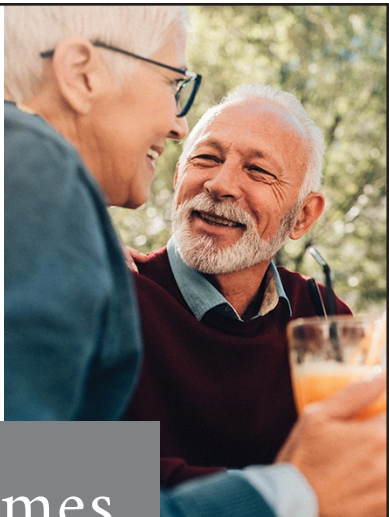



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STONEY CREEK





Obituaries

Sandra ‘San’ Alvarez-Toye



ALVAREZ-TOYE, Sandra “San”—  
March 30, 1955 - May 13, 2025  
Sandra “San” Alvarez-Toye, beloved wife of Michael Alvarez-Toye of Calgary, AB passed away at Agape Hospice on Tuesday, May 13, 2025, at the age of 70.  
San was born in Chatham, ON and shortly thereafter, moved to Niagara on the Lake, the ancestral home of her mother. Excelling in school, San formed friendships with children as early as Grade 3, including lifelong friends, Lesley Lepp and Charlotte Weber.  
In high school, San joined the gymnastics squad, eventually reaching “all of Ontario” during which Sandra formed another friendship with Doris Teichgraf. Each of those friends named figured prominently in the last few years of San’s life.  
After receiving a BA at Brock University, San came out to Calgary. She moved into a house rented by three people, including the only person she knew in Calgary, Michael Alvarez; and the only person that she would, within three years, marry. As soul mates, friends, and lovers, they married in 1982.  
In 1986, when her husband wound up going on strike, San got a job with the Calgary Public Library, resulting in a lifelong relationship with a career she truly enjoyed.  
This marked her first commitment to Calgary outside of her family. The second one came a few years later, and resulted in a profound impact on her very identity, as well as consequences on Calgary and beyond. Opposing Alberta’s rubber-stamped approval of the wolf hunt and then the hunt of caribou became San’s catalysts in creating a grass roots organization, The Calgary Animal Rights Coalition (CARC).  
As the stature and reputation of CARC grew, she chose to focus her attention more on Damien and her fulfilling career at CPL. It was a smooth transition as her husband, Michael, took over CARC’s operations. San proved to be much more an asset within the library complex. She became the smile that greeted staff and patrons alike. Most of all, San loved being Damien’s mother, the depth and strength of her love never wavering.  
A wish of theirs came to pass on their 25th Anniversary. A dear friend, Fiona, a Wiccan Priestess, offered to preside over the renewing of their vows. Not having had a honeymoon, they decided instead to have a romantic getaway to La Ville De Quebec. San’s most memorable trips were with friends to England and Quebec. Her greatest joys in life were riding her bike, sitting on her porch greeting friends, and spending time with her family and her cats.  
Besides her husband, San is survived by her son, Damien; brother, Christopher (Lori) and their daughter, Sarah; as well as numerous members of her extended family, and wonderful friends.  
The family would like to thank Agape Hospice for their care and compassion during San’s stay. She left her mark on the staff. The family would also like to thank Joe and Marianna, San’s closest friends in Calgary, for their love and support.  
If desired, donations may be made in San’s memory to the Meow Foundation, The Donkey Sanctuary of Canada, or to Agape Hospice.

Thomas ‘Tom’ Murray



HAINES, Thomas Murray “Tom” —  
It is with great sadness we announce the passing of our beloved Dad and Papa, Tom Haines on Saturday May 31, 2025 at the age of 75. Adored Dad to Emma (Graham) Thwaites and proudest Papa to Kayla, Brooklyn, and Luke. Tom is reunited with his beloved daughter, Alison (1984) and his parents Murray (1993) & Marie (2010) Haines. Tom will be sadly missed by his cat Bingo, and Emma & Alison’s Mother Yvonne Haines. He will be fondly remembered by his great friend Jennifer, his friend Doug, his coffee shop buddies, fellow car enthusiasts, and by so many friends and family whom he loved and cherished. Born in Niagara on the Lake, “Tommy” was well known in town growing up on Wellington Street. He was always seen driving one of his British Cars around town. He owned his Austin Healey since he was a student at Niagara District Secondary School. Known as the “British car guy,” he took pride in restoring and fixing British cars for many people, running his repair business until semi-retirement. He was also a member at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sailing Club for many years, and enjoyed sailing his boats Therapy, and then Therapy Too, on the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. He was the biggest fan of his daughter, son-in-law, and his grandkids, who were his pride and joy. He always showed up every holiday and birthday with a card and a treat of some sort. This was a testament to how thoughtful and a kind soul that Tom was. He would do whatever he could for others. A member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire Department for over 20 years, he made many friends and helped many people. Dad loved to help people and would always be there if you needed anything. Friends and family are invited to Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake on Friday, June 6, 2025 from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. A funeral service to celebrate his life will take place at the funeral home on Saturday, June 7, 2025 at 11 a.m. Interment will follow at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Niagara Falls Humane Society or the Canadian Cancer Society would be greatly appreciated. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)

William ‘Bill’ O’Connor



O’CONNOR, William J. “Bill” —  
Passed away on Monday, May 19, 2025, at the Niagara Health – St. Catharines Site, following a lengthy illness. He was surrounded by the love of family and friends, who gathered at his bedside to share stories and say their final goodbyes, and Michaela and Jordan played guitar and sang softly.  
William leaves behind his beloved wife of 55 years, Marilyn, his sons John (Lori) and David (Terrena), six grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and his brother Kelly (Lenora). He will also be dearly missed by his nieces, nephews, and many friends. He was predeceased by his parents, William and Tancy O’Connor, his brother Frank, and his daughter Susan.  
Born on July 15, 1934, in Toronto, Ontario, William began his career in finance at the age of 19, working with Midland Doherty. He retired in 1989, after a long and successful career. In retirement, he enjoyed traveling and spending time on the golf course.  
Private family arrangements have been entrusted to Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake.  
In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer Society or Doctors Without Borders.  
Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com).

Comedy night to **fundraise** for Red Roof Retreat

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report  
Comedy and a cause are coming together for a night of laughs in Niagara-on-the-Lake this Friday.  
On June 13, NOTL comedian Joe Pillitteri will take the stage for a comedy night in support of Red Roof Retreat, which provides programs and services for individuals with special needs and their families.  
Every dollar raised will go directly to Red Roof.  
The fundraiser will run

from 7 to 10 p.m. at Pillitteri Estates Winery, located at 1696 Niagara Stone Rd.  
Alongside Pillitteri’s humour, guests can enjoy live music, raffle prizes and, of course, wine, with each \$75 ticket including two glasses. The evening will be spent on the Tank Farm Patio.  
Though the comedy night has sold out, there’s still a chance to attend — a waitlist is available for those hoping to snag a spot. Interested guests can add their names by calling 905-468-3147, ext. 250.  
[paigeseburn@niagaranow.com](mailto:paigeseburn@niagaranow.com)



Niagara-on-the-Lake comedian Joe Pillitteri is set to perform at the sold-out fundraiser for Red Roof Retreat on June 13 at Pillitteri Estates Winery. SUPPLIED

Have an opinion  
you want heard?  
Email us.





# Answers to some frequently asked questions from fellow gardeners



**GROWING TOGETHER** 

Joanne Young  
Columnist

As I meet with fellow gardeners, there are certain questions that come up frequently. I thought that I would share some of the questions that I have been asked this past week, along with their answers.

**When can I cut off the leaves of my bulbs that have finished flowering?**

Once the bulb has finished flowering, make sure that you remove the seed head, including the flower stalk only. It takes a lot of the bulb's en-

ergy to produce seeds — the energy that would have gone to the seed head is better spent elsewhere.

Let the leaves remain there until they have completely turned yellow and have gone dormant. While the leaves are still green, they are processing sunlight through photosynthesis and turning the sunlight into food for the bulb. This food is stored in the leaves for a time.

So, if you cut off the leaves while they are still green, you are robbing the bulb of much-needed food. Once the plant starts going dormant and the leaves start turning yellow, this signals that the food is now making its way back down into the bulb.

Once the food has moved down to the bulb, the flower buds and leaves are set in the bulb for the next season. If the leaves are cut off prematurely, it robs the bulb of the food that it needs, resulting in smaller or no flowers for the next year.

The more food that the bulb receives from the

leaves, the bigger the flowers will be. You can fertilize the bulbs with bonemeal once the bulbs have finished blooming.

**When can I prune my early spring blooming shrubs?**

Any early spring flowering plants (plants that bloom off old wood) should be pruned immediately after flowering and before leaves unfold, or as soon as possible after leaves unfold.

Plants that bloom in early spring set their flower buds in late summer or early fall, for the following spring. So, pruning these shrubs or trees in summer, fall or early spring will remove their flower buds for the next season.

Some examples of these plants are magnolia, forsythia, wisteria, serviceberry, lilac, quince, bridal wreath spirea, redbud, most viburnums and purpleleaf sandcherry.

Trees such as maples (including Japanese maples), flowering dogwoods, birch

and elm will bleed if pruned in late winter or early spring. A better time to prune these trees would be mid-summer.

**Is it true that it takes ants to open up the flower buds of peonies?**

Even though ants and peonies seem to go hand in hand, ants are not required to open up the flower buds.

Peony buds secrete a sweet nectar as they are opening. This sweet nectar is what attracts the ants to the peonies. The flower buds will open just fine without the ants being there.

The ants do not harm the plant in any way. In fact, the peony may benefit from the presence of ants as they can ward off some pests that might otherwise damage the flower buds.

**How often should I be fertilizing my lawn?**

You should wait at least six weeks after the last time you fertilized your lawn before applying more fertilizer.

The best times to fertilize your grass are early spring,

late spring, early fall and late fall. It is best not to apply fertilizer to your lawn in the heat of summer.

**When do I start spraying my boxwoods to control box tree moth?**

If you have boxwoods, you are probably already aware of the box tree moth. It is a relatively new insect in this area (the last five to six years) that has been causing damage or killing boxwoods at a fast pace.

Some of the signs that box tree moths are present are extensive defoliation, fine webbing on leaves and branches, and greenish frass (caterpillar poop) on plants. Severe infestations can kill the plant.

It is the caterpillars that cause the devastating damage. The caterpillars are yellowish-green with black stripes and spots. They can grow up to about one and a half inches long.

The best time to control this insect is when it is in the caterpillar stage. Regular inspection of your


boxwoods will help you determine the best time to control.

The box tree moth has three generations a year, so repeat spraying is necessary. BTK is an effective biological control for young caterpillars.

The best time to treat is during the early stages of infestation, typically in late spring (mid-May to mid-June) and early summer (mid-July to mid-August or early to mid-September), when caterpillars are actively feeding.

Spray the plant as soon as the caterpillars are seen, ensuring thorough coverage of all foliage. Reapply BTK every seven to 10 days during the feeding periods to maintain control and prevent re-infestation. Regular monitoring and timely applications are essential for effective management of the box tree moth.

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



**Upcoming Public Information Session**  
**South Landfill Phase 2 Environmental Assessment**  
**Wednesday, June 18, 2025**

Walker Environmental Group (Walker) is conducting an Environmental Assessment (EA) under the *Environmental Assessment Act* as part of the planning process for the next phase of its South Landfill (Phase 2).

The South Landfill (Phase 1), an essential component of Walker's integrated Resource Management Campus in Niagara Falls, is nearing its final capacity. Walker is proposing to develop the next phase to continue to provide safe, affordable, and reliable waste disposal services. Phase 2 will also supply renewable energy to the community and will sustain over 500 jobs in the Region.

**Walker is hosting a public information session to:**

- Introduce Walker, its current landfill operations, and provide an update on the South Landfill Phase 2 EA
- Review the comparative evaluation process and confirm the recommended method
- Confirm the methodology for the upcoming detailed impact assessment of the recommended method

**Stay informed by attending the public information session or review the material via our virtual information session option:**

In-Person	Virtual
<b>June 18, 2025</b> Drop-in anytime between <b>5pm - 8pm at Club Italia</b> 2525 Montrose Rd, Niagara Falls, ON L2H 0T9	Available <b>June 18 - July 7, 2025</b> at <a href="https://southlandfillphase2.com">southlandfillphase2.com</a>

Walker is committed to providing safe, reliable and affordable waste management solutions at its Niagara Resource Management Campus.

For more information, contact [info@southlandfillphase2.com](mailto:info@southlandfillphase2.com).

June 5, 2025

[www.southlandfillphase2.com](https://www.southlandfillphase2.com)



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