

# Historic Royal George Theatre won't face heritage restrictions

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Royal George Theatre and 11 other properties will be exempt from Queen-Picton

Heritage District study restrictions after council approval, which will allow the 110-year-old building to undergo reconstruction after it closes at the end of this year.

The study enacted during

last week's council meeting implements a temporary restriction on property alterations in the district for a year following March 27.

Tim Jennings, executive director and CEO of the Shaw Festival, presented

to council why the festival should be exempt from the study.

"We're working toward rebuild of the Royal George Theatre on a very accelerated timeline," he said.

To begin construction on this timeline, Jennings wishes to make sure the organization won't be hampered by an "unintended consequence" of the bylaw, he said.

The Royal George is set

to close at the end of the 2025 season for a much-needed rebuild.

The theatre, located at 85 Queen St., has occupied a part of NOTL's

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## Average property tax set to rise \$112 in 2025

Evan Loree  
The Lake Report

After months of deliberation that began last fall, Niagara-on-the-Lake's council has settled on a 2025 operational budget of about \$17.5 million, up from last year's budget of \$16.1 million.

Property taxes will go up by 7.92 per cent, meaning property owners in town can expect to pay about \$112 more to the municipality than they did last year.

The increase is calculated assuming an average home value of \$546,000.

A vote was called at the last budget meeting on Feb. 26 and the motion to approve the budget passed — the final numbers will be presented at a meeting March 18 and rubber-stamped into bylaw.

Ballooning insurance costs, staff salaries and investments in infrastructure are the key drivers of the budget hike.

Town finance director Kyle Freeborn said staff

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# Wayne Gates soars to victory

## New Democrat wins in landslide over Progressive Conservative opponent



MPP-elect Wayne Gates is all smiles after winning the provincial election, leading his closest opponent by 11,000 votes. JULIA SACCO

Julia Sacco | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

New Democrat Wayne Gates painted the Niagara Falls riding orange last Thursday night.

In a quick, sweeping victory, incumbent Gates came out leading his closest competitor

Progressive Conservative Ruth-Ann Nieuwesteeg by almost 11,000 votes.

He earned 29,549 votes, 54.95 per cent of the ballots cast.

Runner-up Nieuwesteeg earned 18,569 votes for the Tories.

In Gates' victory speech at Chip n Charlie's Eatery & Bar in Niagara Falls, he said even during a snap election which was unnecessary and costly, volunteers came out and put up more than 2,500 of his election signs

across the riding.

"All I can say is thank you. Thank you to my team and the residents of this riding," he said.

With 25 per cent tariffs imple-

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# Seven NOTLers awarded King Charles III coronation medals

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Seven NOTLers were among those awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal Wednesday evening.

MP Tony Baldinelli awarded 22 residents in the Niagara Falls riding with the honour during a ceremony at Delphi Banquet Hall in Niagara Falls.

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents Steffanie Bjorgan,

Tony Chisholm, Lt.- Col. (Ret.) Al Magnacca, Joe Pilitteri, Dorothy Soo-Wiens, Arturo Viola and Peter Warrack were awarded, along with 15 others.

Bjorgan told The Lake Report most of the recipi-

ents didn't know about their award until the week prior.

"It was another nice surprise," she said.

Bjorgan is the executive director and founder of Red Roof Retreat, a NOTL organization that provides

service and respite care to children, youth and young adults with special needs.

Bjorgan said it was especially an honour to be surrounded by so many

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# Town finds \$930K in budget savings

Continued from Front Page

salaries and compensation for volunteer firefighters make up about \$1.2 million worth of the increased budget.

The budget, recommended with six other budgetary changes in a staff report, was stamped last Thursday afternoon at a three-hour committee meeting following a series of talks beginning in November.

Last March, the town approved a \$16.1 million operating budget and a 6.75 per cent hike to property taxes for the average resident.

An early draft of the budget, valued at about \$18.4 million in November, would have cost residents \$204 more each year in property taxes, almost double what the town has settled on this winter.

The staff report, signed by three senior staffers including Freeborn, broke down the savings, most of which came from reassessed revenue sources.

Up to \$500,000 of the saved money comes from plans to use more of the town's parking revenue and another \$300,000 comes from interest revenues.

The report said staff are saving another \$128,500 on vehicle repairs due to the hiring of an additional mechanic in 2024.

These and smaller savings helped cut the budget by \$930,000 from the early draft, it said.

The report also recommended using \$3 million from the sale of Niagara Regional Broadband Network to fund capital projects and surprise legal costs.

It suggested \$1.5 million be put into the town's capital reserves to fund future



Coun. Sandra O'Connor voted against the 68 per cent budget increase. FILE

infrastructure, another \$1 million go to council's strategic priorities and \$500,000 be set aside in a legal reserve.

Though Coun. Sandra O'Connor suggested it all be dumped into the capital reserve, she could not muster the support of her peers.

"We have legal fees that have far exceeded what we've budgeted in the past, so obviously we need to put money towards our legal," Coun. Tim Balasiuk said.

Putting away some funds for priority projects would make it easier to address pressing issues, like parking in Old Town, he added.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said putting it all towards capital investments could make it hard to use the proceeds for priority projects.

This was enough to tip Erwin Wiens to the other side, though he initially supported O'Connor.

The staff report also suggested savings could be made by leasing light vehicles instead of owning and maintaining them in-house.

Again, O'Connor was in the minority.

She wanted to see a staff report discussing potential savings from leased vehicles before committing to support staff's recommendations.

Council also approved a budget recommendation to spend about \$1.3 million from the town's room tax reserve on reconstruction along Mississagua Street in Old Town.

Balasiuk, who sits on a committee overseeing those funds, said it was a "great way to use the money" and that the lighting was a potential safety issue for road users.

The case for a town law clerk, also in the budget, was under scrutiny too.

The position would be salaried at \$122,000 a year and would help manage the town's legal burdens.

Acting chief administrator Bruce Zvaniga said the town is entangled in multiple legal matters but has no in-house expertise.

An in-house law clerk could prepare and organize legal files before calling the town's lawyers for legal advice.

This would reduce the hours the town is charged

for legal consultation.

"It's a smart way to drive down our costs," Zalepa said. Wiens, not quite sold, asked if the savings in reduced lawyer fees would cover the cost of the hire.

Though Freeborn could not provide definitive saving estimates, he said town lawyers charge anywhere between \$300 and \$1,000 per hour, whereas the clerk would cost about \$51 per hour, which would be much more cost-efficient for the town.

Council also discussed and approved the capital budget, valued at \$17.2 million.

O'Connor and Coun. Gary Burroughs withheld support due to a steep, 68 per cent increase over the 2024 capital budget.

In favour of the increased capital budget, Wiens said they were just passing infrastructural costs to the next generation by choosing to keep taxes low every year.

"We have an infrastructure crisis," he said.

"We have to leave the place better than we found it."

The 2025 budget is expected to be passed at a council meeting on March 18.

# Eleven others exempt from heritage restrictions

Continued from Front Page

heritage district for more than a century and has been under the Shaw's ownership for more than four decades.

The exemption includes the theatre itself, 79 Queen St., 178 and 188 Victoria St.

"(They) are in part intended to encompass the footprint of a new Royal George Theatre site and to act as construction access," Jennings said.

Coun. Gary Burroughs said that the whole point of the motion is to "support Shaw."

"They have to go for funding and funding is



NOTL council has decided the Shaw Festival will be able to begin reconstruction of the Royal George Theatre without having to worry about heritage requirements. FILE

dependent on support from the town," he said.

Before approving the motion, Coun. Tim Balasiuk asked how many properties in the

existing study area have already gone through pre-consultation.

"There's a lot of people who have already gone through a bunch of

processes and outlined their projects and already spent money to get to this point," he said.

Kirsten McCauley, the town's director of community and development services, confirmed 11 properties that have some planning approvals in place or pending applications.

Council decided these properties would also be exempt from restrictions.

Councillors also agreed to delay the inaction of the study for 30 days, allowing property owners to submit building permits to the town.

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# Gates focused on helping Ontario amid tariff war

Continued from Front Page

mented by President Donald Trump on Tuesday, Gates told The Lake Report he is focused on advocating for interprovincial trade without barriers.

“We need a strong, effective retaliation plan to protect Ontario jobs from the tariffs,” Gates said in an interview.

Gates acknowledged the LCBO’s decision to remove American products from their shelves.

“Which is a necessary response, but I believe it cannot be the only response,” he said.

The LCBO should immediately restock shelves with Canadian-made products, Gates said.

“This is an opportunity to address the fact that we can ship from Ontario to BC with no barriers.”

Gates also said it is clear the NDP should be called back to legislature.

“We have sat for seven weeks in the last eight months. Absolutely disgusting that that’s how long we’ve sat,” he said.

Sitting at legislature



Wayne Gates and neighbour Bill Mitchell share smiles after Gates is announced as the winner. JULIA SACCO

would allow space to discuss how the provincial government can protect Ontarians at this time, Gates said.

“The best thing that we can do right now is to get back to the legislature. Let’s have these discussions. Let’s find out how we protect Ontarians, Ontarian jobs, Ontario

businesses, whether small or large,” he said.

Gates plans to reach out to mayors across the Niagara Falls riding to discuss a plan of action too, he said.

Discussions were had with regional chair Jim Bradley and MP Tony Baldinelli already, Gates said.

“It’s got to be a team Ontario approach, and we

should work with all levels of government.”

Other focuses this term include health care, the Greenbelt, education and housing affordability, Gates said.

“One that I’ve got to get done: too many men are dying from prostate cancer. OHIP’s gotta cover that test so we can save lives,” he said.

Gates said he was feeling wonderful about the win but his mind was “already running,” with things to get done.

In response to questions regarding how he has kept up so many personal relationships with residents in town over the last 11 years as MPP, Gates simply said it’s what he loves to do.

“I go to public schools and talk to the kids, I go to high schools and talk to the high school kids, I’m at the Fort Erie Meteor game, I’m at the Canuck game, I go watch the NOTL kids play hockey, I’m out and about,” he said.

Gates recalled an interaction earlier that day during campaigning where a woman pulled up next to

him with a three-year-old in the back seat.

“I ended up giving him a voter card and I said to him, ‘I know nine o’clock’s late but keep him up ‘til nine and he can cheer for me,’” he said

“That’s the type of things that I enjoy and that’s how I’ll continue to be. I’m just going to be me,” Gates said.

Along with prioritizing resident concerns, Gates said he wants to show residents politicians can be honest and show support.

“I’ll fight for all the needs,” he said.

At the Progressive Conservative election party at Delphi Banquet Hall in Niagara Falls, Nieuwesteeg told The Lake Report she felt incredibly supported and grateful for the love and encouragement from friends, co-workers and council members and called it an honour to be surrounded by such great people.

She said she will be running again in the future.

Nieuwesteeg said running against a long-standing incumbent was a difficult task but she has no regrets about

taking on the race.

She said the campaign helped her learned to appreciate the unique needs of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie. While she felt strong in Niagara Falls, she felt she didn’t have enough time to connect with the other two communities.

“All three are very unique, very distinct, communities,” she said. “That is probably the hardest thing, in terms of starting,” she said.

Other candidates were far behind in the polls.

Shafoli Kapur earned 3,398 votes for the Ontario Liberals, Gary Dumelie took home 870 votes for the New Blue Party, Celia Taylor garnered 837 votes for the Green Party, while Andrew Soifert of the Ontario Party and Independent Joedy Burdett took home 285 and 263 votes, respectively.

For the riding, voter turnout was 44.92 per cent of 119,693 registered electors.

Overall the provincial election ended with a majority for the Progressive Conservatives, with 81 seats.

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# 700 trees axed for Virgil development

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors approved a Virgil housing development requiring the removal of at least 700 trees despite resident concerns over impacts to the environment and low regional tree coverage.

As phase two of Konik Estates continues with the goal of building 52 houses and 102 townhouses, environmental protection bylaws failed to safeguard the site's mature pines.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor's motion to partially preserve the trees in a parkland within the residential development was defeated in 2024, with only two supporters.

"The regional woodland bylaw doesn't apply here because the site isn't a full hectare, and our urban tree bylaw only governs post-development changes," said O'Connor.

O'Connor brought up concerns from a Virgil resident who posted online Tuesday that coyotes have been spotted wandering



NOTL residents have mixed reactions over the removal of 700 trees to make room for a subdivision. BRIAN MARSHALL

urban areas around the formerly forested Konik Farms, north of Line 2 Road, east of Concession 6. Niagara-on-the-Lake's tree canopy covers 25.4 per cent of the town — the lowest in the region — with Virgil at just 19.3 per cent, far below the recommended 40 per cent minimum.

More than 700 of the site's 800 trees will be cleared, though 100 along the eastern boundary will remain due to recommendations from town staff.

Replacement plantings are required, but residents argue saplings cannot replicate mature trees' ecological benefits.

O'Connor criticized the decision to accept cash-in-lieu of parkland instead of preserving green space: "My objective was to maintain a portion of the woodland for the community's health ... I'm disappointed we couldn't save more, but that's democracy for you."

She hopes upcoming official plan reviews will strengthen environmental policies, particularly for areas bordering urban zones.

The development avoids Greenbelt land, as all projects outside NOTL's urban boundaries are prohibited from non-agricultural expansion.

"We're careful not to allow

Greenbelt development," said O'Connor.

However, she acknowledged that balancing the need to support local agriculture with commercial pressures remains challenging.

Residents previously expressed worries about lost bird habitats, drainage risks and traffic, but planners deemed the site's pine plantation exempt from woodland protections.

As of Feb. 5, Kassie Burns was welcomed by NOTL staff as the town's new climate change coordinator.

O'Connor is optimistic that Burns will be a focal point, working to improve environmental stability and protection in NOTL, in line with key priorities from the town's strategic plan.

"Now that we have [her], I'm hoping that we can bring these types of programs into action."

The approved subdivision will add sidewalks near Crossroads Public School and expand Homestead Park with developer contributions.

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## Medal is a 'great honour' for recipient Tony Chisholm

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notable Niagara residents at the award ceremony.

"It reminds you that we can be proud of our efforts and be good role models. To be standing next to people I've always admired — that's huge," she said.

Tony Chisholm, who was nominated by a neighbour for his volunteer efforts in town, said it was a great honour.

"I haven't done it on my own — there's dozens of other people working with me on many of these projects," he said in an interview.

"So, I'd like to think I accepted this on behalf of all the people who worked together to achieve what we've achieved."

Last fall, Chisholm was named the recipient of the Niagara Foundation's Living Landmark Award for 2024.

He spoke about his work as president of the Friends of Fort George and volunteer efforts on restoring the Upper Canada Heritage Trail, as well as the town's bicentennial celebrations for the War of 1812.

"The ongoing strength of the Friends of Fort George is something I'm very proud of, we've got a great board of directors who are working together to accomplish a



A group of 22 people, including seven NOTLers, were honoured with the King Charles III Coronation Medal Wednesday evening during a ceremony in Niagara Falls. SUPPLIED

lot," he said.

"The other thing I'm very proud of is the fact we've been able to continue the heritage trail further up the line. Hopefully, in 2025, we'll get as far as Line 3 or Line 4."

These achievements show the support of many NOTL residents, Chisholm said.

Soo-Wiens said she was "floored" to have been recognized with so many other notable recipients.

Soo-Wiens was recognized for multiple charitable efforts around town, including volunteering with Inasmuch House, quilt making with Newark Neighbours, NOTL Palliative Care, Cornerstone Community Church, the NOTL tractor parade and more.

During his speech, Baldinelli recalled Soo-Wiens

volunteer highlights and several leadership roles held around town.

"Dorothy embodies her philosophy that a community is built one thoughtful act at a time," Baldinelli said.

Soo-Wiens hopes her award will shine a light on community needs, she said.

"I would like the outcome of me winning this award to highlight the needs that are in our community," Soo-Wiens said.

"Every kind gesture that is done makes a bigger impact on your community."

Warrack was recognized for his work with Project Protect against human trafficking and Project Guardian against fentanyl trafficking, aiming to get the government and private sector to work together, he said.

"I'm just the tip of the

sphere, who's privileged to receive the award on their behalf," Warrack said.

His receipt of the award was very timely, Warrack said.

"Given the reason for the tariffs — Canada has been doing good work in that field for a number of years now," he said.

Baldinelli acknowledged each recipient in a media release.

"I am so pleased to have been able to present these medals to individuals within our riding, who have made a real difference," Baldinelli said.

"Their dedication to making the lives of their neighbours and our communities better in so many ways deserve to be recognized, honoured and celebrated."

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Goldberger celebrates new album and book

NOTL musician Steve Goldberger sings at the Old Winery with Serena Pryne on Feb. 28, during a launch party for his new album and book, both titled “In a Life.” DAVE VAN DE LAAR



Opinion

How to fight Trump? Try a little love



THE TURNER REPORT  
Garth Turner  
Columnist

The damsels who work at Beau Chapeau, on chichi Queen Street, took some time from stroking Cody to comment on the customers of late.

“So many Americans. It’s really remarkable.”

Yup. Even in the late dregs of winter when snow was up the wazoo, they were streaming into town.

Are we getting a glimpse of the traffic that will materialize all summer when one greenback is worth a loonie and a half? Or are these people just escaping from America — at least for a day or two?

We’re part of the Border Alliance now, a string of dozens of cities and towns that lie within miles, feet or (in our case) a decent swim from the USA.

As we all know, the American president has been getting more aggressive, strident and demanding. When he and his

attack dog VP shellacked the Ukrainian president last Friday it was evident this White House is scary. Unpredictable.

Watching that was like going live to Dec. 10, 1813. That’s the day the Yanks torched NOTL, including the house I currently live in. It’s been more than 200 years since a U.S. president got the munchies for more territory — and here we are with Trump talking constantly about the 51st state, “Governor” Trudeau and the fact Canada “is not a viable country.”

This time we don’t need to worry about muskets, frigates and pyrotechnic troops. Now it’s tariffs, economic coercion and how we deal with our former bestie across the river when he goes rogue.

The town recently hired an economic development czar (Ashleigh Myers) because, according to our Lordly Mayor, the issue of jobs “is becoming more important with the threat of tariffs.”

Indeed. It looks like 700 of them could be wiped off the payrolls of at least 80 local businesses which will be whacked. Across the region, more, since 70 per cent of Niagara exports go south. Needless. Punitive. Illogical.

The American administration thinks a vast revenue



Kathy Weiss, interim executive director of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce. GARTH TURNER

stream can come from tariffing imports to finance domestic tax cuts. “You wanna trade with us?” says Trump. “Then pay up.”

What happens now?

“On both sides of the border this is going to mean people losing their jobs,” says Kathy Weiss, head of the local Chamber of Commerce. “So, discretionary spending is going to drop, while Canadians are also boycotting American goods. It’s a dangerous combination.”

It sure is. Niagara has a big investment in grapes, cars and tourists. All three sectors stand to be pummeled by tariffs of any kind. The region’s working group now says 30,000 people overall could lose their jobs if the rogue American president doesn’t cry wolf

once again.

Meanwhile uncertainty is the enemy of investment, which may be why Lina-mar’s shiny new auto-parts plant in Welland is up for sale.

How should we respond? Especially to average Yanks on their way here for a carriage ride, a gelato and an overdose of quaintness?

“Our messaging needs to be telling Americans they are loved and welcome,” says Weiss. “I see on social media that regular people are fighting against each other and that is such a sad state of affairs.”

So, the chamber is going on the offensive. A new media campaign will come, in mainstream and social media, radio and TV, targeting close markets — like Ohio, Pennsylvania and Buffalo.


Is this a pivotal moment?

“The whole world is in a pivotal moment. It could be a dangerous time. Absolutely,” she says. “We are not sure where things are going. You know, the 51st state talk. I am hoping that does not happen. But we have no control over things, and none of us want it to happen.”

It won’t.

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


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## LETTER OF THE WEEK

### Let's honour Chris Allen's dedication to NOTL

*The following letter was sent to Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Coun. Erwin Wiens. A copy was submitted to The Lake Report for publication.*

This letter is to propose a special NOTL acknowledgement of Christopher (Chris) Allen.

Should anyone not know the name immediately, Chris, a lifetime resident and businessman of NOTL, is probably responsible for more summer days photos

of Old Town's Queen Street by our annual influx of tourists than anyone else. His dramatic horticulture floral displays, while not limited to his plantings on the corners of Queen and Victoria are a major contribution the NOTL's "Prettiest town in Ontario" status.

The proposal is quite simple but quite meaningful: Naming the corner of Victoria and Queen streets "Chris Allen Corner."

Perhaps with a framing

of the sign and an engraved floral enhancement as an indication as to why this designation was given. A positive consideration would give significant reward for his past efforts and enthusiasm for future displays throughout town.

I and many other daily walkers of old town's prettiest street support and look forward with anticipation to a positive outcome.

**Sarah Sampson**  
NOTL



Chris Allen spends many of his days helping to beautify Queen Street. FILE

### Canada's choice – compassion and care or extremism

J. Richard Wright  
Special to The Lake Report

What hath time wrought? Canada's neighbour is suddenly ruled by a remotely-diagnosed malignant narcissist. His ketamine-fuelled, right-wing, billionaire minion is dismantling the USA's hard won institutions while funneling wealth into his own pocket. And the duly elected, Make America Great Again (MAGA) president is romancing Russia while flushing a nearly 250-year-old experiment in democracy by the dawn's early light.

Land of the free? Not for long, bucko. Home of the brave? With a good south wind you can hear Republican congressional teeth chattering all the way from Washington. Meanwhile, Canadians weep for America.

Indeed, as global right-wing extremism grows, Canada faces its own crisis. With a federal election looming, the positive polling of Conservative Opposition Leader Pierre Poilievre signals the birth our own brand of extremism via a campaign filled with lies and deceit.

So who is Mr. Poilievre? Let's find out through the lenses of his record.

To start, does he believe women should have control over their own bodies? Poilievre's record illustrates he has voted to undermine women's right to choose more than once.

He claims support for veterans? Under Stephen Harper, Mr. Poilievre voted to cut one third of all Veterans Affairs employees, closed nine veterans' offices and fought veterans in court. Quick with platitudes and salutes, the Conservatives are Houdini fast to hide the purse when

Canada's veterans need more than hot air.

Mr. Poilievre voted against workers' rights by using procedural tactics to derail and block the Sustainable Jobs Act (Bill C-50) and anti-scam laws (Bill C-58) aimed at restoring fairness in collective bargaining for workers.

He also voted against initiatives to make housing affordable in 2006, 2009, 2010, 2013, and 2014. As Housing Minister in Mr. Harper's government, he sold 800,000 units of affordable housing to developers and built – wait for it – six new ones.

Remember when Mr. Poilievre voted to raise the age of eligibility for OAS and CPP to 67. He hopes you don't.

Mr. Poilievre voted against the National School Lunch Plan for poverty stricken children in Canada. Seriously, who does that? Particularly as he smacks his lips with pleasure in the subsidized Parliamentary Dining Room.

And, Mr. Poilievre shamelessly voted against a much needed free trade agreement with Ukraine.

His attack ads criticise possible Liberal Leader Mark Carney for the carbon tax though Mr. Carney announced its demise.

Mr. Poilievre has also publically refused to support a national universal pharmacare program under development by Liberals and the NDP. When asked repeatedly if he would keep the Canada Dental Plan (CDP), he scurried away into the dark. Sounds like he's busy mixing cement shoes for the CDP.

A declared admirer of President Donald Trump, Mr. Poilievre has vowed to wield the "Notwithstanding Clause" if elected. Can you

spell "Executive Order?"

While introducing an anti-vaccine mandate bill, Mr. Poilievre brought donuts, coffee and love to the idiots in the Trucker Convoy occupying Ottawa. Seriously? He doesn't believe in a vaccine that halted a disease that killed eight million people worldwide? Indeed, Mr. Poilievre, break out the eye of newt, toe of frog and wool of bat.

Mr. Poilievre also stated he wants Canada to be the "Blockchain and Crypto Capital of the World." So, trade the Canadian dollar for a cryptocurrency with no intrinsic value? Cue the head scratch.

Sadly, Mr. Poilievre is following Trump's doctrine of lies and more lies. For instance he accused Mr. Trudeau of causing inflation knowing inflation was global and Canada had one of the lowest inflation rates in the world. He lied saying Mr. Trudeau caused interest rate hikes though knowing the Prime Minister has no power over the Bank of Canada.

And, he lied saying air pollution fines were the main drivers of inflation in Canada.

Mr. Poilievre has clearly indicated he will impose massive spending cuts. The fattest target will be healthcare. Welcome to US-style privatized medicine with shareholders snapping their suspenders, chewing their cigars and growling for more profit over quality care.

Incidentally, Canada is seventh in the world in quality of medicine while the US ranks 19.

Conservatives hate regulations and Mr. Poilievre is no exception. For a glimpse of deregulation, look south where regulatory watchdogs are being fired, regulations ripped up and the eerie dawn of chaos streaks the horizon.

Mr. Poilievre is against gun control and vowed to roll back Mr. Trudeau's laws banning more than 1,500 models of large caliber/assault rifles. Consider that the US had 288 school shootings from 2009 to 2018. Canada had two.

Also, consider the US was home to 488 mass shooting last year with firearms being the leading cause of death for teenagers.

Mr. Poilievre states he will defund the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Is he ignorant of the role the CBC plays in uniting Canada through national information sharing? How about providing opportunity for Canadian artists who, otherwise, have little chance against the monolith of American entertainment.

More and more Mr. Poilievre casts himself as a victim of elites and the media, though he actually represents the elite. Indeed, echoes of America's oddly-coloured president claiming perpetual victimhood.

What Canadians have to ask is: Do we want a Trump Mini-Me leading Canada? An elitist posing as a populist? Or do we want a leader maintaining a country characterized by caring and compassion with fairness our mantra and honesty a prime and valued virtue?

Consider that, of the Top Most Respected Countries in the world in 2021, Canada ranked number one and continues to occupy a leading position.

Let's not throw it all away. J. Richard Wright has authored three novels, more than 50 TV and Radio shows, and was a corporate editor and writer. His adventure novels: "The Plan," "Tornat" and "Final Approach Menihek" are available on Amazon and at the NOTL Public Library.



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

**Monuriki, an uninhabited island of Fiji, became a tourist attraction after the release of this Tom Hanks film.**

Last issue: SCIENCEY STUFF

Clue: A spiraling football is an example of an object displaying the angular type of this.

Answer: What is momentum?

Answered first by: Sue Rautenberg

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Mike Gander, Lynda Collet, Wade Durling, Jim Dandy, Sheila Meloche, Hedy Wiebe, Marla Percy, Tuija Johansson

Email answers to [editor@niaganow.com](mailto:editor@niaganow.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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# Grey Forest Homes vs. Virgil’s coniferous forest



**ARCHITEXT**

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

It was my intention to continue our examination of the heritage designation process, however, a couple of occurrences have transpired over the last few days that have “bumped” that article to next week.

About seven days ago, men and machines descended on Virgil’s coniferous forest.

Located on several acres owned by a developer, the forest had somewhere between 700 and 800 mature conifers that delivered multiple environmental, health and aesthetic benefits to local village residents, the broader town and the region (see: “Arch-i-text: All about green infrastructure,” Dec. 19, 2024).

But, the developer, Grey Forest Homes Ltd., saw none of the benefits of the forest and applied for per-

mission to clear-cut it so a strip of nondescript townhouses could be built on the land it occupied.

Town planners agreed and in 2024, the application was brought before council to decide.

Despite the fact that Niagara-on-the-Lake has the lowest level of tree canopy coverage in the region and multiple eloquent delegations were presented before council in opposition, the majority of councillors endorsed clear-cutting this important environmental feature.

So, at a juncture in history wherein climate change initiatives are generally considered by both governments and voters to be a high priority, most of the members of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s elected council apparently don’t give a damn — only if it stands in the way of development.

And, while the trees of Virgil’s “green lung” fall to the developer’s axe, the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake was proudly announcing the hiring of a new climate change co-ordinator who will “play a key role in several environmental initiatives” including a first level focus on “natural assets (rivers, wetlands, forests and more).”



While individual property owners are denied the right to remove dangerous and invasive weed trees, council gave the OK for a developer to clear-cut 800 trees in a conifer forest for the construction of nondescript townhomes.

One wonders if someone like the new climate change co-ordinator — promised in 2022 but not delivered until 2025 — might have made a difference in council’s decision vis-à-vis Virgil’s coniferous forest.

Call me cynical, but given this council’s “develop at any cost” record to date, I doubt it.

That said, I wish her, Kassie Burns, well on an uphill battle and will publicly applaud her “wins” as such transpire.

As a final note on this topic, one must question what appears to be a double standard — private landowners versus developers — by town staff concerning tree removal.

I am personally aware of at least half a dozen permit applications by private land-

ing what is likely the last surviving commercial fishing boat, the Teenie H, that plied the waters of Lake Ontario during the heyday of the industry.

His vision was to establish an interactive display in the Docklands that would provide a window into the history and pivotal economic role that commercial fishing played for well over 100 years in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake — an industry which at its peak shipped out somewhere between 30 and 40 million pounds of fish per year.

Without his knowledge, the town acquired title to the Teenie H and it was placed in outside storage on town lands.

But, our intrepid visionary personally paid for a custom-made cradle and industrial tarp to protect it from the weather while preserving the integrity of the hull.

Still, he continued to present his vision — at times appearing to gain traction and at others slipping backwards.

Meanwhile, years passed and, ignored by the town, the protective tarp mouldered away threatening this irreplaceable historical artifact.

An alarm was raised with town staff and, in response,

a couple of employees were sent out to evaluate the artifact. Note, these employees had no specialized knowledge in marine preservation or restoration, they were simply two folks who happened to own boats.

To my knowledge, no subsequent action (i.e. replacement of the tarp) has been taken.

After 20 years in the trenches and well into his senior years, our champion has been forced, in the interest of his health, to walk away.

Terry Boulton is an unsung hero in the ongoing battle to preserve NOTL’s history and heritage. When you walk the path along the river from the foot of Ball Street to Delater, remember it was he who conveyed those lands to the citizens of the town.

The Teenie H must be saved and Boulton’s vision realized — it is an integral part of our shared heritage.

Just blue skying, it might be a fabulous project for the members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sailing Club to undertake — it would fit right in with their historic clubhouse and marine tradition.

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



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# Should we prepare for invasion? Two wrongs don't make a right

Dear editor:

In NOTL we are less than two miles from the U.S. border. Fortunately, the “border” here is a deep chasm through which flows the Niagara River, so almost impervious to American carpetbaggers trying to gain a foothold in a country they think will soon be theirs ... but not totally secure, no.

I have family in the U.S., relatives on my wife’s side, who was Trinidadian, so all Black folks. My wife has passed away, so she will not have to experience the literal shit-storm that is the orange turd named Trump.

Every day I fear for all my family in the U.S., this fear beginning with the Trump’s first term, when attacks on and wanton killing of Black people by police and militias and just about anybody at all, were oh so “kindly” “forgiven” by the American judicial system, and murderers literally allowed to go free.

This kind of idiocy and blatant murderous racism pervades the usa and all such people in the usa, and there are many many many, who again feel emboldened by this so-called “president” who is openly racist and sexist and anti-immigrant, just for openers.

While my wife was alive we were invited to spend the winter months in Florida with her relatives — no more.

So I have no need to go into the U.S. at all, and that’s how matters remain; I

have no wish whatsoever to visit the U.S. for any reason whatsoever, though I live right by the border and there are attractive cross-border shopping options that locals around me have always taken advantage of.

In grocery shopping, I deliberately check labels for origin and do not buy anything from the U.S. even if that is the only thing available in what I am looking for.

I can get cheaper flights from Buffalo Airport in the U.S. only 30 kilometres from my house and I used to do that, but no more: never again. I will go to Pearson Airport in Toronto even though that’s a two-hour drive and costlier.

In any and every other kind of shopping, also I check for U.S.-made labels and never buy them.

I have a small rural property in Niagara just under an acre and have built a small greenhouse on it and am in the process of starting seeds of all kinds.

I patronize local small stores, not American chain stores, for all my needs. I do not care if doing so costs me more money: Better that than kowtowing to U.S. commercial and Trumpist interests.

All my life I have hated guns, and have found the American “gun culture” to be absolutely horrific and insane.

However, given what is happening today and what might transpire in the near future

(Trump has only the next four years to do his “thing”) I am about to buy some guns — if only to stop the carpetbaggers from swarming my house when Trump “gives the order” for Americans to consider Canada as an American “state.”

Perhaps the only other thing I might contemplate doing is just harassing Americans still so ignorant of our sensitivities as to try to visit Niagara for our fine wines and world-class restaurants geared to food/wine pairings.

I mean, I might follow them and flash my lights and blow my horn, and then I would tell them the closest best place to eat and have some really good wine — because you see, those Americans who come here to genuinely enjoy being here for many reasons including food and drink, cannot be all bad.

They are probably not Trumpists.

They often stop to photograph my heritage stone home dating back to the 1840s and I offer them a refreshing cool rose in the summer.

For despite Trump, and his racist, war-mongering cohort, there are still a lot of people in the U.S. and Canada who see each other as friends and allies, not as “others” to always be exploited.

**Kaspar Pold**  
**NOTL**

Dear editor:

Tariffs are an immoral trade restriction — full stop. It doesn’t matter if they’re retaliatory they should never be used by governments. They are a penalty imposed by the government upon its citizens.

That said, we are seeing 25 per cent tariffs imposed by Trump on Canadian exports — so what should we do to help Canadians being affected?

We shouldn’t ban American products from our shelves. Please, Premier Ford, abandon your plans to take American wines off our shelves. Canadians should be free to purchase American products even at a time when their president is restricting American’s freedom to purchase Canadian products.

We shouldn’t impose Canadian tariffs on American goods coming into Canada. Implementing a tariff in retaliation to another country is like punching yourself

in the face and expecting the other person to feel it. President Trump doesn’t realize it — because he’s economically illiterate — but he’s about to cripple the American economy with these 25 per cent tariffs. Countless American business’ cost of goods sold will soar because of these tariffs and as such Americans will be far worse off than Canadians.

We shouldn’t block exports to America. This would be worse than tariffs because it would be a complete violation of our right to trade freely. For example, Alberta oil exports. Albertans are not to blame for President Trump’s poor choices. As such, we should not penalize Albertans, nor, any Canadian in response to his bad trade policies.

So what should we do? We should condemn President Trump in the harshest of terms. All levels of government and the Canadian people should condemn his actions publicly. And, to stress the unjust nature of his trade policies we should lead by example and remove any tariffs Canada has in place on American exports to show what a proper trade policy looks like.

Should we buy Canadian? Not necessarily. We shouldn’t mindlessly buy Canadian products because of some misplaced sense of duty to the collective. We should, however, proudly buy Canadian products that are equal to or superior to American products and fortunately we have the best wine in the world. So this weekend buy some superior Canadian wine and raise a glass to the condemnation of President Trump. I know I will be.

**Alexander Evans**  
**NOTL**

## Proposal for a park at Parliament Oak

Dear editor:

My name is John Foreman and I live on Regent Street a few houses down from the Parliament Oak site.

Like my neighbours, I oppose the plan to build a large hotel in the centre of our historic residential community. However, despite abundant feedback and protests against this development, it appears that it cannot be stopped.

If it is destined to go forward, I would at least like to see some action taken to reduce the damage being done to our neighbourhood. I am proposing that the developer of the Parliament Oak site should carve off a small piece of the property to create a public parkette on the edge of the property.

Specifically, I would like to suggest moving the wall that is planned on the Regent Street side of the property back about 25 feet and dedicating the land on the street side of the wall as a parkette (Parliament Oak Parkette?).

By my rough calculation, the proposed parkette would require a donation of less than 6 per cent of the total Parliament Oak lot.

I make this suggestion because I am concerned that placing the planned 450-foot-long wall directly beside the sidewalk on the Regent Street side, less than 10 feet from the road, will make for a very bleak and imposing streetscape.

A public parkette would make for a much more attractive avenue, especially with the addition of some park benches and perhaps flower gardens.

This parkette would also provide a resource for the neighbourhood and a much more pleasing experience for visitors to our town who are walking or driving along Regent Street.

In addition, this would make an excellent location for displaying the historic

plaques from the old Parliament Oak School. Instead of an eyesore, this parkette would be an asset to the community.

I have made this suggestion to council, to the lord mayor specifically and the town’s planning department.

My suggestion has been forwarded by the town to the developer and I have also sent a letter directly to the developer’s agent, but have received no reply or acknowledgement from them.

I would like to ask the developer again to consider my proposal. I believe that creating a public parkette would be a move to beautify the streetscape, provide an asset to the neighbourhood and would be a meaningful gesture recognizing the concerns of the residents impacted by the Parliament Oak Hotel development.

I hope someone is listening.

**John Foreman**  
**NOTL**

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- Across
8. Precision (8)

9. Freezing compartment (6)

10. Baste (3)

11. Drown Aunt Enid in a fluster (8)

12. Former U N leader --- Annan (4)

16. Tuscany province (5)

19. Out of shot (3,6)

21. Throughout the world (15)

22. Perceptive (5-4)

24. Pigment made from cuttlefish ink (5)

27. Gets the point (4)

31. Drive out (8)

33. US Confederate general (3)

34. Fine plaster (6)

35. Postponing (8)
- Down
1. Scrutinize (4)

2. Hit the sack (4,2)

3. 200 milligrams to a jeweller (5)

4. What I normally see in a mirror (6)

5. Fruit-bearing Chinese vine (4)

6. Hit this to get going (4)

7. Dance (4)

11. Inborn patterns of behaviour (9)

13. Venn diagram common area (7)

14. No matter what (2,3,4)

15. Twits (6)

17. Far-out (7)

18. First light (6)

19. One end of a fallopian tube (5)

20. Cooked in oil (5)

23. Beneficiary of primogeniture (6)

25. Unfold (6)

26. Posed (5)

28. Corrodes (4)

29. Fortified white Spanish wine of old (4)

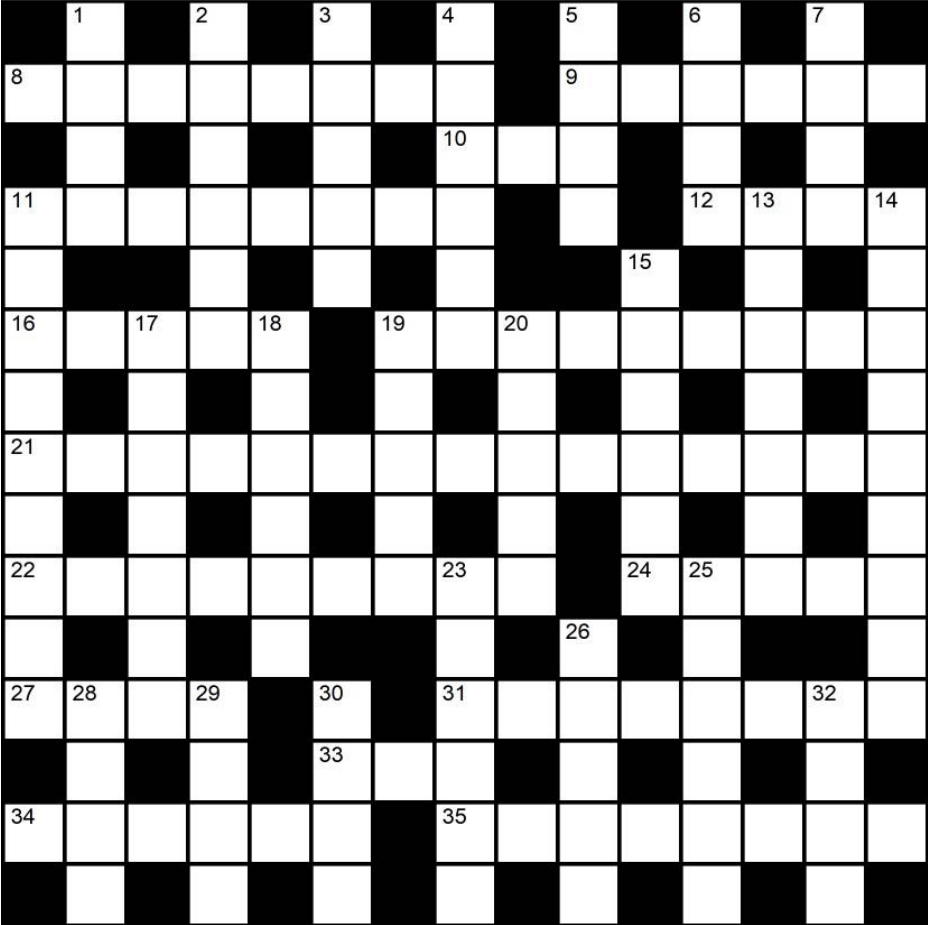
30. Drama framework (4)

32. Characteristic carrier (4)


Have some fun

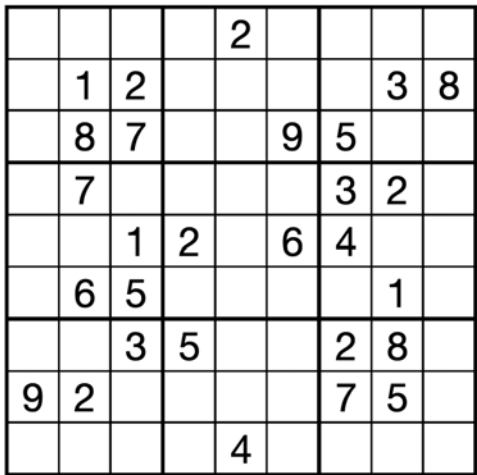



Crossword Puzzle



Last issue's answers







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\*\*Source: Google Trends and Google Reviews    †Source: RE/MAX LLC rankings for Large Team Residential, 2024.    ††Source: REDATUM Agents by units -  
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**Kent House,  
177 Victoria St.**

This one-and-a-half-storey clapboard house was built by John Wilson in 1816. It was part of the rebuilding that took place here following the burning of Niagara in December 1813. Wilson was a successful farmer and merchant. He was also the owner of the Exchange Hotel, formerly on Queen Street, which was where the Upper Canada Law Society was first formed.

John G. Williams was a local artist who completed many pencil and charcoal sketches of scenes in St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake. Born in Brighton, England, as a young man he worked as a photographer and a librarian. In 1911, he came to Canada, working as a photographer during the Welland Canal construction. In 1917, when work on the canal was halted due to the Great War, he began a job as a tax collector for the city of St. Catharines, a position he held until retiring in 1949. The sketches in the collection of the Niagara Historical Museum we completed in the 1950s. John G. Williams died in 1960.



**NOTICE OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT STUDY AREA BYLAW**

TAKE NOTICE that, on February 25, 2025, the Council of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake passed **By-law Number 2025-010** to designate a portion of the Old Town as a Heritage Conservation District Study Area under Section 40.1 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The by-law comes into effect on March 27, 2025.

The boundaries of the Study Area are shown on the map found at <https://www.notl.com/heritage-planning/queen-picton-heritage-conservation-district-study> or by scanning the QR code.



**Explanation of Purpose and Effect of By-law**

The By-law prohibits alterations to and the erection, demolition and removal of buildings or structures on properties in the identified study area for a period of one year. The purpose of the limitations on changes to properties in the study area is to allow time for the Town to conduct a review of the cultural heritage value of the area and determine if it should be considered for heritage district designation under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, and to protect the potential heritage value of the area in the interim. The By-law does include exemptions and outlines the types of alterations to property that would be permitted while the By-law is in effect.

**Notice of Objection**

Any person who objects to the By-law may, within thirty days after date of publication of the Notice of Passing of the By-law in The Lake Report, appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal by giving the clerk of the municipality a notice of appeal setting out the objection to the By-law and the reasons in support of the objection, accompanied by the fee charged by the Tribunal, in accordance with Section 40.1(4) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Grant Bivol, Town Clerk  
The Corporation of the Town of Niagara on the Lake,  
1593 Four Mile Creek Road, P.O. Box 100, Virgil, ON, L0S 1T0  
Dated this the 6th day of March, 2025.  
Contact: [Heritage@notl.com](mailto:Heritage@notl.com)





David Austin roses are renowned for their outstanding health, reliability and vigour.

# David Austin roses: Old-world charm, same pleasant aroma



GROWING TOGETHER

Joanne Young  
Columnist

Although all flowers are beautiful, you must admit that roses seem to capture our attention. There is something about them that draws us in. It is hard to walk by a rose bush in bloom without stopping to take in its beauty and to breathe in its fragrance. One group of roses that stands out above the others is the David Austin English roses.

David Austin, the late British plant breeder, began developing his award-winning English roses in 1961. Today, David Austin Jr. carries on his father's legacy in cultivating these roses.

It was very important to Austin that his roses maintain the same wonderful fragrances of antique roses, with the wider colour range and repeat-flowering nature of modern roses. They are hard to beat for sheer exuberance of flower and scent.

As a group, David Austin roses are renowned for

their outstanding health, reliability and vigour. English roses are remarkably adaptive plants. Their graceful, shrubby habits make them ideal for mixed borders in traditional rose gardens. Many varieties can also be trained as climbers or used to create fragrant, flowering hedges.

The form of the flowers of David Austin roses is much different than our traditional hybrids. They may be cup-shaped or in the shape of a rosette, often with numerous petals giving them a much fuller look.

Some flowers will have petals that turn downwards, to provide a more dome shape. These roses have been bred not so much for brilliance of colour, or even for excessive flowering capacity, but for the delicate charm and the fragrance of their individual flowers. Most varieties are strong, repeat flowering throughout the summer.

English roses have more of a natural shrubby habit, which makes them ideal to add to mixed borders. Most of the David Austin varieties will grow to be four to five feet high, although there are some shorter growing ones and some that are a bit more upright, making them suitable for climbing types.

The foliage of the David Austin roses is glossy and dark green, which still adds to their attractiveness even when not in bloom. English roses are fast gaining

a reputation for excellence. They are known for being more resistant to black spot and powdery mildew.

English roses are not only notable for the charm and beauty of their flowers and their elegant growth but also for their rich and varying fragrances. In this way, they are undoubtedly second to none.

Among them, in the different varieties, you will find not only the beautiful old rose fragrance but tea, musk, myrrh, fruit and a whole variety of other fragrances. No other flowers can rival these roses when it comes to fragrance.

So, if you are one of those romantics who cannot resist the beauty of a rose or their fragrance brings back a slew of memories of days gone by, then David Austin English roses are a must-add to your garden this year.

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

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

## Obituaries

### Shirley McKeown



McKEOWN, Shirley Helen —  
It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Shirley McKeown (nee McKellar) of Niagara-on-the-Lake. She passed away peacefully on Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2025 at the age of 96.  
Devoted mother of Robert McKeown (Kathleen Mundy) of NOTL and Ann McKeown-Green (Rob Green) of Palmdale, California. Adored grandmother of Matt (Justine), Dan, Nancy (Albert), Stephanie, Amy and Jenny, and Great-Grandmother to Ava and Mya.

Known as "Grandma" to many, she lived a full and joyous life filled with laughter and adventure and was an inspiration to all who knew her. She was deeply committed to Grace United Church and was always seen with a smile and offering fellowship to all. Her love of theatre was evidenced by her support of the Shaw Festival and was a past-president of the Shaw Guild.

Summers spent at Muldrew Lake in Muskoka were cherished times, although we did question her euchre bidding strategy on occasion.  
Her memory will last in the hearts of all who knew her.  
Cheers, Grandma!

Private family arrangements in care of Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake. As an expression of sympathy those who wish may make a memorial donation to Grace United Church, 222 Victoria St., P.O. Box 211, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0.



### Sharon Tiessen



Sharon Lee Tiessen (Connolly)  
Dec. 9, 1952 – March 2, 2025  
It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Sharon Tiessen, daughter of the late Norm and Joyce Connolly. Beloved and true love wife of Dave Tiessen of fifty-three years. Loving Mother to Chris (Julia), Trevor (Cheryl) and Kelly (Darren). Much loved sister to Gary (Leslie). Cherished Grandma to Logan, Zach, Adelyn, Cameron, Reagan, and Amelia. Treasured Aunt and Great Aunt to Oliver (Erin) (Arthur), Lara (Geoff) (Claire).

Sharon was born on Dec. 9, 1952, in St. Catharines, Ontario and was raised near the old town of Niagara-on-the-lake. In 1971 she married her high school sweetheart Dave Tiessen and raised a family in the farming community just outside of Virgil. Sharon was a much beloved school bus driver of fifteen years with a reliable smile to all the adoring children she picked up every day. Sharon moved on and worked at Penner's Home Hardware where she oversaw the paint department and was fondly known as simply "the paint lady."

After Sharon's retirement, she enjoyed thrifting in St. Jacob's, antique stores searching for the perfect piece for her next project. Sharon would delight in spending time with her close friends while enjoying a good glass of white wine, coffee, laughter, or tears. She was everywhere in our community, the local florist, restaurant, market, hockey arena always with kindness to everyone she met but her true love was in her home with her family and her grandchildren. Sharon's pride, joy and love were her six precious grandchildren. She put her endless love into every detail of every plant, every cookie she baked, every gift she wrapped, every occasion she planned, every photo she put up, every hug she gave – her love was enduring.

Sharon will be forever dearly loved, adored, and missed. Our world and community is a better place because of her kindness, empathy, and compassion. May she rest in peace.  
A visitation will be held at Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-lake, Ontario on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, from 3 to 7 p.m. In honour of her strength as a brave breast cancer survivor, we kindly request that, in lieu of flowers, donations made to Breast Cancer Canada. Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)



Let us help you share memories of your loved ones.  
Email [megan@niagaranow.com](mailto:megan@niagaranow.com) for pricing options.



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- Abundance of knowledge in all aspects of real properties (waterfront, residential, agricultural, commercial and leases)
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