

Justice for Jeleel | Pages 12, 13

## Town wants commemoration plan for Parliament Oak

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Town council wants to see a commemoration plan for the old Parliament Oak school before it considers

granting a demolition permit to the developer.

Council decided Tuesday night to request a plan from developer Two Sisters Resorts Corp. that ensures "preservation of the 1948 structure in whole or part at

its original location."

The motion, by Coun. Sandra O'Connor, passed unanimously.

It is unusual to see demolition permits at this stage of the development process without specific commemo-

rative plans attached.

This was pointed out by former councillor Clare Cameron, who spoke to council on behalf of the Niagara Foundation.

"We believe that the current request to demol-

ish Parliament Oak school is premature," she said, arguing the property is an important part of the town's heritage.

Developer Benny Marotta bought the school last October and wants to build a

boutique hotel in its place.

Cameron noted there had been no public meeting to discuss the proposed hotel, the rezoning request had not been approved yet and the

*Continued on Page 5*

## Simpson's Pharmacy purchased by SRx Health Solutions

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Simpson's Pharmacy, a venerable Niagara-on-the-Lake health care institution for more than 45 years, has been purchased by SRx Health Solutions Inc., a major Canadian health and pharmaceutical company.

Sean Simpson, who has been running the company started by his father Ward in 1977, will assume the title of pharmacy liaison.

He and SRx both said customers should expect to see no change in how the business operates. The stores' names and the Pharmasave affiliation will not change, he said.

"I am absolutely thrilled to be partnering with SRx to expand the services we are able to provide the local community," Simpson said in a news release Wednesday.

"Our family is both humbled and proud of the business that we have built here in Niagara-on-the-Lake

*Continued on Page 5*

## Rand demolition permits denied

Town rejects all Solmar requests during special meeting Monday



Michael McClelland, a heritage architect with SORE, speaks about the architectural history of the Rand Estate. EVAN LOREE

Evan Loree | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

The dispute between Solmar and SORE over the future of the Rand Estate is now in the hands of the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Almost 300 people gathered at the Niagara-on-the-Lake

Community Centre Monday night to watch the two groups butt heads over Solmar's request for permits to alter and demolish structures on the historic property.

Solmar Development Inc., the

Save Our Rand Estate advocacy group, interested residents and town staff spent almost four hours arguing the issue.

At the end of the meeting, council voted 4-3 to preserve all structures on the estate

and refuse Solmar's permit applications.

Voting in favour were Couns. Tim Balasiuk, Gary Burroughs, Sandra O'Connor and Maria

*Continued on Page 2*

## NOTL's Kaleb Dietsch drafted by Ottawa of the OHL

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Kaleb Dietsch spent last weekend celebrating a hockey dream come true – being drafted to the Ontario

Hockey League.

This weekend, he'll be in the nation's capital with other rookies chosen by the Ottawa 67's in the junior draft.

Dietsch, 16, and the other players chosen by one of

the league's most-respected franchises will be touring the team's facilities, meeting some of the staff and spending some time on the ice.

The talented 6-foot-2 defenceman, who began his hockey career with the

Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Hockey Association, had high hopes of being chosen by one of Ontario's major junior teams.

He was picked 46th overall, early in the third round of the Priority Selec-

tion draft, solidifying his credentials as one of the premier players in his age group.

Dietsch and his family were elated at achieving a



*Continued on Page 14* Kaleb Dietsch.



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# Crowd told to **stay quiet** after not keeping decorum

Continued from Front Page

Mavridis whereas Couns. Wendy Cheropita, Nick Ruller and Erwin Wiens voted against.

“The two previous councils were very different in views and composition but they both recognized the unique heritage of this property,” O’Connor said during the meeting.

“I do not wish to change lanes now,” she added.

Solmar will appeal council’s decision to the Ontario Land Tribunal along with the rest of its development proposal for the historic property, said Sara Premi, the lawyer representing Benny Marotta’s company.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa declared a conflict of interest on the issue at the start of the special council meeting because he lives near the estate.

Coun. Adriana Vizzari was absent.

Entering the meeting, town heritage planner Denise Horne had recommended approval for the demolition of three structures, including the pool garden, the Calvin Rand summer house and the old stable house.

O’Connor suggested council dismiss those recommendations and accept the rest, which were to deny any request from the Marotta-owned company to demolish structures.

Wiens and Ruller expressed concern about taking the matter to the Ontario Land Tribunal, which resolves land disputes.

“We’ve gotten almost everything we’ve wanted from Denise Horne (the town



Above: The crowd grew restless after being told to stop applauding. Below: Benny Marotta with his lawyer Sara Premi of Sullivan Mahoney. EVAN LOREE

heritage planner). I wouldn’t want to risk it at the (Ontario Land Tribunal) to get one or two more things at the risk of losing it all,” Wiens said.

The developer made changes to the demolition requests before the meeting in light of input from Horne and the municipal heritage committee.

“We heard the municipal heritage committee loud and clear,” Premi said.

The Solmar planning team revised its plan to demolish the carriage house on the property after the town’s heritage committee suggested moving the building.

Ruller said he found it “troubling” that council would be unwilling to support a staff member who had spent a “significant amount of time” putting the report together.

“There’s a part of me that feels we’re abdicating our responsibility as council,” he said.



Cheropita agreed, saying, “We’re dealing with an expert (Horne) who is giving us advice, who is part of our staff.”

Premi said there was a lot of “common ground” between the opposing sides.

“These are lands that are designated, zoned and intended for subdivision,” she told the crowd.

To Premi, the disagreement comes down to a difference in opinion over where the developer should build the access point to the proposed subdivision.

Solmar proposes to build a private access road into the development from the entrance to the estate at 200 John St. E.

SORE suggests building it at the entrance between 144 and 176 John St. E.

In fact, SORE and Solmar disagree on much more, including on how many units should end up in the final subdivision.

Solmar wants to build 191 homes whereas SORE proposes to build 71.

Catherine Lyons, a lawyer representing SORE, argued Solmar’s proposed access

point would result in the destruction of three trees, rather than the nine the developer would have to cut down to build its proposed access road.

Two weeks ago, at the meeting with the town’s heritage committee, the Solmar team defended its choice of access point on the grounds that it did not own the access point proposed by SORE.

But Lyons said the proposed access point is owned by another Marotta company, Two Sisters Resorts Corp.

“When it’s convenient for the Marotta properties, all four municipal addresses in the Rand Estate are available for his use. But when it’s not convenient, they’re under different owners and they couldn’t possibly be used as SORE is proposing,” she said.

This was met by applause from the crowd, which was quickly berated by Wiens, who chaired the meeting after Zalepa left.

He called the applause “unacceptable.”

“Oh yes, it’s acceptable,” a voice from the crowd said.

Wiens was concerned the meeting would become as unruly as a similar gathering five years ago.

“In 2018, it devolved into something that was unseemly and it’s not going to happen again tonight. This is important,” he said.

Rebutting Lyons’ assertion, Premi said the two municipal addresses were under two different corporate owners and that does complicate the access point.

“I have never understood how it would be appropriate on any perspective — on a

heritage perspective — to put a road between those two buildings. They are the jewel of the Rand Estate,” Premi said.

“Those are two properties that the Marotta family is committed to maintaining for heritage purposes,” she added.

Lyons also took issue with Solmar’s plans to build an emergency access point to the estate for fire trucks and other emergency vehicles.

“The fire department would never allow a little road to serve all those houses,” she said.

In her presentation, Lyons shared photos of Solmar clear-cutting trees on the Rand Estate in 2018.

“Before the new council was seated, the Marotta companies moved a number of pieces of heavy equipment on to the Rand Estate and in one single day engaged in a wholesale clear-cutting of a vast swath of the estate,” she said.

Premi argued the cutting was legal and town staff had been given notice of the company’s intentions.

“It is simply unfair, time after time after time again that SORE shows those pictures. That’s not relevant to what you’re determining tonight,” Premi said.

Concluding SORE’s arguments, Lyons said the power for council to make a meaningful decision was no longer on the table.

“Solmar has taken that ball away from council and given it to the Ontario Land Tribunal,” she said.

The land tribunal is scheduled to hear Solmar’s appeal starting in March 2024.

# Marotta’s lawyers **release statement** about \$10K ‘campaign donation’

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Police have closed an investigation into a \$10,000 cash exchange between developer Benny Marotta and Coun. Gary Burroughs and have found no grounds to lay charges.

With the investigation closed, the matter is still in the hands of Niagara-on-

the-Lake’s integrity commissioner Edward McDermott.

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s chief administrator Marnie Cluckie said she “reached out to the town’s integrity commissioner last week” to advise that the police investigation is complete and that they informed the town that there were “no criminal wrongdoings.”

“At this time, an investigation by the integrity commissioner has not commenced,” she said.

She said she didn’t have any additional information to share at this time.

The issue stemmed from a March 4 meeting at Marotta’s Two Sisters winery, during which he handed Burroughs an envelope containing \$10,000.

Burroughs said he wasn’t aware what was in the package until he arrived home later that day.

Eventually he took the money to the town after trying first to return it to Marotta.

An email to The Lake Report from Marotta’s lawyer Sara Premi’s office at Sullivan Mahoney said, “On March 4, Marotta

made the contribution to Councillor Gary Burroughs, instructing him to use the amount allowed for municipal campaigns to clear up any outstanding election debts, then donate whatever was left over to his church.”

It said Marotta hopes Burroughs’ name is cleared by the integrity commissioner, adding that “Me and

my family are committed to helping Niagara-on-the-Lake become a vibrant, growing community that not only preserves its character and heritage but enhances it for future generations.

“This is a jewel in Ontario and we only want it to shine even brighter. Sadly, some people don’t like others who have a vision.”



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# Parking meters in Old Town frustrate visitors, some business operators say

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

It's been three months since 57 parking meters in Niagara-on-the-Lake's heritage district stopped accepting any form of credit card payment.

And many people are fed up.

"It's horrendous what's happening here," said Gail Cunningham from the Butterfly Gallery on Queen Street.

She frequently encounters tourists who are unable to pay for parking due to data roaming charges and older visitors who don't know how to use the app.

The issue came up at Tuesday night's council meeting when Coun. Wendy Cheropita said she receives lots of emails about parking in Old Town.

She offered some possible solutions, such as providing visitors with free wifi.

But Coun. Maria Mavridis said free wifi in the heritage district would cost "upwards of a couple hundred thousand dollars."

She suggested the town work with the Chamber of Commerce to encourage businesses that offer free wifi to display a sticker in their windows informing customers that they are welcome to use it.

Chamber president Miner-va Ward said her organization has received "a lot" of complaints by email and people coming to the office to share feedback.

The only payment options are coins or through the Honk mobile app.

Beside each parking meter is a sign with a QR code users need to scan in order to download the app.

"I think it's proving to be very confusing for people coming into town who don't use their cellphone or don't have data," said Ann Froese, manager at Serendipity.

The meters no longer accept credit cards due to the aging infrastructure and newer payment protocols, the town's communications co-ordinator Marah Minor said in an email to The Lake Report.



Gail Cunningham, manager of the Butterfly Gallery, wants the town to install parking meters that accept credit cards. She says visitors have been frustrated by the current meters and worries about the town's reputation. SOMER SLOBODIAN

Only four machines, in the parking lot of the old NOTL hospital on Wellington Street, still accept credit cards.

Ward said she received an email from an American tourist who was upset after his recent visit to NOTL.

"I do not have a Canadian phone, do not carry 20 or more dollars in coins and your support number is Monday to Friday only, no help on the weekends when we can travel," the letter said.

The meters charge \$5.25 an hour and don't accept bills.

"In the past, the 'pay here' towers accepted our credit cards and was a pleasure to use, even with the high cost," said the visitor's letter.

"This is a great way to tell us Americans you are not welcome here," it added.

Ward is worried how this might affect the town.

"It's not a reputation we want to have," she said.

The town brought in more than \$2 million in revenue from parking meters in 2023, said Minor.

Ward wondered if the parking meters will cause visitors to spend less time on Queen Street than they did in the past.

Many tourists put enough time in the meters for an hour or two, but sometimes decide they want to stay longer, she said.

"It's easy to go put your card in and add more time," she said.

"When you have to look for coins to do that, it will not be so easy."

Decreasing visitors' time in town could mean less parking revenue for the Town of NOTL – and could hurt downtown businesses.

Not many people carry a large amount of change, so visitors often have to ask nearby shops to break a bill, said Cunningham.

People come into her store every day asking for change for the meter, she said.

"I can't supply change for everybody," she said.

Froese deals with the same issue, especially on weekends when it's busier.

"I have had to convert American dollar bills to coin," she said.

Last Tuesday morning, Cunningham said an older man came in asking for help with the parking meter.

"He thought he could just use his credit card. He didn't know how to download and all that stuff," she said.

Froese noted not everybody feels comfortable entering their credit card information on an app.

It also takes a while to download and put your information in, she said.

"It's a deterrent." Earlier this year, the town ranked second in TripAdvisor's 2023 Traveler's Choice "Best of the Best" Popular Destination in Canada awards.

"We're supposed to be one of the top tourist places in Canada. And we're treating tourists so terribly," said Cunningham.

The heritage district was ranked 35th among the top 50 attractions.

"We are going to lose this

prominent placement if the first impression a visitor has to Niagara-on-the-Lake is aggravation and frustration," said Ward.

Ward isn't sure how much it would cost to fix the machines, but said she heard it could cost upward of \$800,000.

At the very least, she said, the town should provide change machines so visitors can break bills.

It's not a permanent solution, but it's something for now, she said.

Chief administrator Mar- nie Cluckie told council the town is looking into pricing out this option as well as maybe moving the four machines that still accept credit cards to locations along Queen Street.

Minor said town staff is exploring various upgrades to restore the credit card payment option and will return to council with solutions.

Cunningham said she believes workers should be on hand to assist people with the meters so the burden is not placed on the businesses.

"There's never a person around to help these people, only to give them a ticket," she said.

Cluckie said staff are considering sending out bylaw officers to help visitors with the parking meters.

Both Cunningham and Froese think parking meters should accept credit cards, especially with the busy tourist season coming up.

"We've only got three or four months to really make our annual sales here," said Froese.

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Members of the Royal Air Force's 108 Squadron are shown in North Africa in 1942. At right, Albert Digby Cooper.

# THE MONUMENTS MEN

## Luck ran out for Pilot Officer Albert Digby Cooper

*It's been a century since Niagara-on-the-Lake's iconic clock tower cenotaph was erected. Then, in 1926, the Township of Niagara unveiled its own memorial in Queenston. In recognition of those who fought and died in two world wars and beyond, NOTL historian Ron Dale has been researching the stories of the people – all men – whose names are engraved on the two cenotaphs. This is one in a series of stories documenting and remembering the sacrifices of those commemorated on the municipal memorial in Queenston.*

Ron Dale  
Special to The Lake Report

Albert Digby Cooper led a charmed life until fate sought him out on June 16, 1944.

Born on May 29, 1919, in Niagara-on-the-Lake, he was the son of John Digby Cooper and his wife Lorena Elizabeth Burch.

Digby Cooper turned 20 just before the Second World War started and was working at the family farm after finishing school.

He wanted to enlist and hoped he would become a pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

In the summer of 1940, he enlisted in the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Regiment to receive basic training and he applied for

a position in the RCAF on July 4, 1940.

His application was accepted on Dec. 11 and he then went through several courses at a variety of British Commonwealth Air Training Plan facilities across Canada.

From June 9 to Aug. 20, 1941, he trained at an aerodrome in Calgary and earned his wings.

His instructors described him as "a high average pilot. Good service material as he is cool and a very sound pilot."

He was shipped to England in September and for the next several months was assigned to Operational Training Units to receive more training on a Wellington bomber to prepare him for combat.

Cooper was sent to North Africa to fly for 108 Squadron of the Royal Air Force, arriving in Cairo on April 23, 1942.

Between June 26 and Dec. 8, he flew 43 combat missions. Each time his twin-engine Wellington lifted off the runway there was a severe risk of not making it back from a mission.

However, through skill and luck Cooper always brought his crew safely back to base.

On Nov. 3, 1942, when returning from a mission, his aircraft developed engine trouble and lost altitude. It was a dangerous situation, but he was able to land the plane in the desert.

His crew suffered no injuries. The men had to walk back to their base, earning them an induction into the "Order of the Winged Boot."

This unofficial order honoured men whose planes were shot down or forced down and whose crews evaded capture and returned to base.

During the Second World War it was determined that the effectiveness of a pilot was compromised when a man had risked his life too many times.

In the RAF and RCAF, the crews were expected to complete one tour of duty, flying 30 missions and often a second tour of 20 missions, after which the pilots would be assigned to non-combat duties.

This was the case with Cooper.

In January 1943, with 43 combat missions under his belt, Cooper was sent back to England to take up new duties as a pilot instructor.

He reported to Number 10 Operational Training Unit to update his training on multi-engine aircraft and then to No. 3 Flying Instructor School in July 1943.

On completion of that course, he was commissioned as a pilot officer on July 30. He was assigned to Number 22 Operational Training Unit to train new pilots in the tactics used on bombing missions.

For the next year Pilot Officer Cooper flew Wellington bombers over the English countryside with crews including newly qualified pilots. They learned to improve their skills in formation flying, map reading, and evasive manoeuvres, all in preparation for flying combat missions over Europe.

On June 16, 1944, while flying a training mission out of Wellesbourne Airdrome in Warwickshire, Cooper's luck ran out.

Through a combination of circumstances, including an altered flight plan, navigational errors and incomplete meteorological reports, his Wellington flew into cloud, several miles from the correct course that the pilot believed he was following.

It is unknown if Cooper or a student pilot was at the controls.

As the crew reduced altitude to land at Crosby airbase, unaware that they were more than 40 kilometres off course, a high point of land known as Red Pike in the Cumberland Hills loomed in front of the plane.

It was too late to pull up and fly over it. The plane crashed just below the summit, killing all eight men on board.

Pilot Officer Arthur Digby Cooper lies buried at the Blacon Cemetery in Cheshire and is commemorated on the township war memorial in Queenston.

## Tiny Museum project lets participants create group exhibit

Terry Mactaggart  
Special to The Lake Report

Do you have collectibles, handicrafts, art, or other treasures that you have always wanted to show off?

Or have you ever wondered what goes into developing a museum exhibit?

Well, look no further – a four-part series, called the Tiny Museum Exhibition Program, offers a crash course on what it takes to be a museum curator.

It's one of the programs offered by the Learn & Live program that promotes living well in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Learn & Live: Enriched Learning for all Ages started in the fall of 2021.

It grew out of a recommendation made by the town's community wellness committee.

Lifelong learning is one of the nine recommendations that are important factors for maintaining a healthy life for all NOTL residents.

At the end of the four sessions (May 1, 8, 15 and 29, each from 6:30 to 8 p.m.) participants will create and install a group exhibit in the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum's Tiny Museum. A small opening reception will be held to show off their hard work to friends and family.

Space is limited to 15 participants, so call the NOTL Museum at 905-468-3912 to secure your spot today.

Until now all the Learn & Live programs have been at the NOTL Public Library, but the first three sessions of

the Tiny Museum program will be at the NOTL Museum at 43 Castlereagh St.

The final session will be at the community centre's parking lot where the Tiny Museum is stored.

By registering, you are signing up for all four sessions. Details about the Learn & Live program are also on the museum's website, notlmuseum.ca, under What's On and Calendar.

The schedule is as follows:

May 1 – Orientation: At the NOTL Museum, staff describe the Tiny Museum and review the stages of the project, including the basics of how the museum curates an exhibit. Participants should think about what they want to exhibit or display for the next workshop.

May 8 – Planning your exhibit: Museum staff will assist in the development of the exhibition and the selection of objects. Participants should bring with them to this workshop whatever they want to include in their display.

May 15 – Writing for the public: Participants will learn how to write for the public, with museum staff helping them draft information labels.

May 29 – Installing the exhibit: This session takes place at the Tiny Museum, in the parking lot of the NOTL Community Centre. The group will install their exhibit in the Tiny Museum's display cases under the guidance of the museum staff.



NOTL's Tiny Museum Exhibition Program is part of the Learn & Live series. SUPPLIED



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# Residents voice **concerns** about hotel plans

*Continued from Front Page*

developer had not provided a commemoration plan.

“The current list of materials proposed for salvage today includes nothing to represent the 67 years and generations of students who were educated in this building.”

Cameron worried the developer’s applications were part of a larger trend in Niagara-on-the-Lake where demolition was a “foregone conclusion.”

Going into the meeting, staff recommended the town ask the developer for more information, including a detailed commemoration plan, before moving forward with the demolition application, said chief planner Kirsten McCauley.

In addition to the requests from staff, Cameron asked council to “issue a notice of intention to designate” the site under the Ontario Heritage Act.

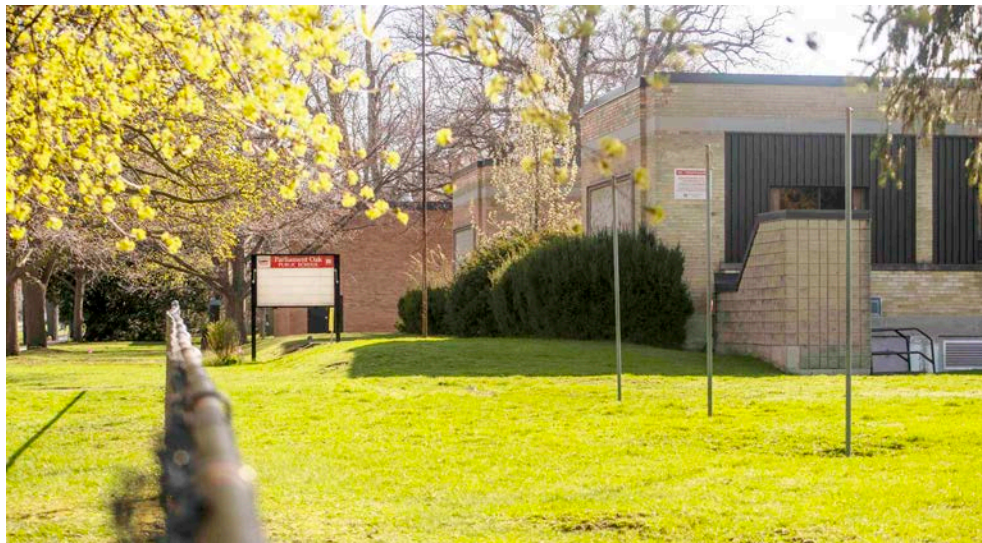
“Under the new rules of the Ontario Heritage Act, council would have 90 days from the date of the application being deemed complete to serve notice of intent to designate,” said Denise Horne, the town’s heritage planner.

She pointed out that the developer had completed its hotel proposal on March 3.

That gave the town until June 3 to decide whether to designate the property.

Horne said any plan to designate the site is separate from the demolition request.

While there was some discussion about designating,



Two Sisters Resorts Corp. proposes to demolish the Parliament Oak Public School to build a new hotel. The town wants to commemorate the former school. EVAN LOREE

council didn’t do anything about it.

Council’s request for more information follows rapidly on the heels of a public meeting held April 18 where residents got to weigh in on the hotel proposal.

At that virtual open house, resident Gracia Janes questioned whether tourists need another place to stay in town.

“What proof is there that we’re overloaded with people staying in our hotels, that they’re at capacity and therefore we need another hotel?” Janes said.

A team representing Two Sisters presented its site plans to almost 30 people who attended the online meeting.

Planner David Riley, with SGL Planning and Design, said the developer is “confident there is demand for a hotel here.”

One resident was excited about the proposal.

“My wife and I personally believe the proposed landscaping of the building is spectacular,” Fred Luk said.

He agreed with Riley that there is a need for an additional hotel and said he thought it could provide “a large commercial tax base for the town.”

Other residents criticized the proposed building’s height, parking capacity and compatibility with surrounding homes.

Architect Peter Lesdow, who was hired to design the Parliament Oak Hotel, said the team is trying to achieve an “old world character” with their design, thinking it would “fit in with the nature of what Niagara-on-the-Lake is.”

Residents Marilyn Bartlett and Connie Tintinalli questioned if there would be enough parking spots to accommodate hotel guests, restaurant guests and service workers.

The hotel would have 129 rooms for guests, but, according to the floor plans, will also have seating for up to 700 people in the restaurant, patio and banquet halls.

Bartlett pointed out that diners and banquet-goers would need parking, too.

“I’m just wondering where all those people are going to park,” she said.

According to a parking review of the site plan, “a significant portion of the amenity capacity will be occupied by hotel guests, who will already be accommodated by the 129 general hotel parking spaces.”

Altaf Hussain, a transportation planner working with Two Sisters, said the team considered additional needs and concluded 197 parking spaces would suffice.

Residents will get a chance to share their concerns about the proposal at a public meeting with town council on May 9.

# Staff will **remain the same** at new pharmacy

*Continued from Front Page*

over the past 46 years, and are extremely grateful for the outstanding support we have received from all of our loyal customers and patients.”

He said the company and staff would continue “the legacy of care, service and community building that the Simpson’s Pharmsave name has become known for.”

Both the pharmacy on Niagara Stone Road and Simpson’s Apothecary on King Street were part of the purchase.

No purchase price was disclosed.

In announcing the acquisition, SRx’s chief operating officer Brock Clancy said, “We immediately felt a strong alignment with Sean and his team, who put their full hearts into what they do.”

The Toronto-based company is “fully committed to making this transition as seamless as possible for them and patients alike,” Clancy said.

“We would like the people of Niagara to know that we are committed to upholding

and delivering outstanding service to the community,” he said.

As well, the staff “will remain intact, with zero disruption to service. Likewise, Sean will remain a part of the pharmacy team and help build out key care (services) in Niagara.”

SRx, founded by its president Adesh Vora more than a decade ago, says its mission is to make health care simple, improve the wellness of Canadians and ensure access to equal, modern health services.

In its announcement, the company noted it operates across the country and offers “a full range of comprehensive health care services — from specialty pharmacies to specialty health clinics, nursing support to industry services, precision medicine and more — to address and fill major gaps in our health care system.”

It remains unclear how those services might be expanded in NOTL as part of Simpson’s acquisition by SRx.

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**Contributed by Patty Garriock**

“Even the wisest mind has something yet to learn.”  
- George Santayana

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## Crossroads students **dive** into Go Fish



Grades 1 to 3 Crossroads Public School students performed the musical “Go Fish” last Thursday. It focused on how everyone is different and everyone deserves a friend. The gym was decorated in an ocean theme and the whole school joined in to help. SUPPLIED

## Editorial

# Unfair taxation puts hotels at **disadvantage**

Richard Harley  
Editor-In-Chief

*Second in a series*

Last week we talked a little about how the town has already missed out on \$600,000 in revenue by not charging its accommodation tax fairly to all accommodation businesses.

And fairness is the key word here because, as it stands, legitimate businesses, like our town’s reputable hotels are at a disadvantage by being forced to charge a tax that the majority of short-term rental businesses (essentially small, unsupervised hotels) are exempt from.

It’s surprising that the hotels haven’t taken the town to court over it.

And it begs the question: Why the continued special treatment for short-term rental owners?

Could it be a result of the town’s short-term rental committee, the one that’s no longer active but was stacked with industry stakeholders?

That’s rhetorical.

One of those committee members and stakeholders is David Levesque, former president of the NOTL B&B Association, who recently

told The Lake Report that it’s too difficult for rental businesses to collect the tax.

We have serious questions about that suggestion.

Industry-leading booking companies like Airbnb and VRBO make it easy for operators to charge additional fees, whether it’s a flat fee or a percentage of the nightly rate. Some companies even work with municipalities to collect and remit those taxes.

As for other transactions, even simple payment software, such as Square, can include additional fees with relatively little training at all.

Levesque, who seems to understand some form of the tax is definitely coming for rentals, argues it should instead be a flat fee.

That could work but unless the revenue from that fee is equal to what would be generated by the accommodation tax, we see it as a desire for more special treatment.

It’s worth adding that the pushback to the tax is senseless to begin with, because the tax isn’t paid by the individual businesses – it’s collected from guests and doesn’t hurt the businesses’ bottom line.

Since it isn’t hurting the bottom line, it’s only affecting bookings, potentially. And since the tax isn’t applied across the board, it’s fair to surmise it might only hurting bookings at hotels. Therefore council is allowing short-term rental businesses to have an unfair advantage over hotels.

Picture this: You’re a guest staying in town and you find out the hotels charge you a tax that almost all Airbnbs don’t — which choice are you going to lean toward?

Again, it’s sort of staggering that there hasn’t been a lawsuit yet. That could be because the hotel industry wasn’t in favour of the tax and doesn’t want to be seen as promoting it.

Last week Lais Hotels executive Bob Jackson said he isn’t sure why the tax isn’t charged to all accommodation businesses. We agree with that sentiment.

But this argument is really just the tip of the iceberg and why it’s unfair to not make the tax apply to every accommodations business, regardless of size.

For example, how about rental operators who own more than one property in town through the same

company? Currently there’s a loophole for them. Technically the entire business might have a lot more than four rooms, yet, they’re not being forced to collect the tax because of the way the town classifies each rental.

And let’s not forget, the town doesn’t have any sort of temporary rezoning plan in place, so these businesses also do not pay their fair share of commercial taxes either — despite being full-fledged commercial operations.

And in case evidence is needed to support these rentals as being commercial businesses, one only needs to know how some owners just hire companies to manage them on their behalf. It’s undeniably an industry.

Not by coincidence, the owner of Niagara Holiday Rentals, a business that manages rental properties, was also on the town’s stacked short-term rental committee.

Is there a pattern here of favouring short-term rental stakeholders? Again, that’s rhetorical..

Next we’ll look at some easy solutions to even the stakes for all accommodation businesses in NOTL.

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# U.S. study shows speed bumps help protect children

The following letter to Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa was submitted to *The Lake Report* for publication.

I read your comments in *The Lake Report's* April 20 article, "Chautauqua parents worried about speeders on Shakespeare Ave.," concerning speeding issues in my neighbourhood.

Can you explain to me why you aren't a "big fan" of speed bumps and don't feel speed bumps are "effective"?

I'm not a big fan of my children's lives being at risk due to consistent careless drivers on our street.

How can we fix this in a timely manner? What do you need from me to make it happen?

I find it hard to rationalize how speed control bumps



Shakespeare Avenue children could be protected by a \$250 speed bump, says father Matt Finlin. He isn't happy with Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa's comment in an article last week, in which he questioned the effectiveness of speed bumps. A simple Google search shows they are effective, says Finlin. RICHARD HARLEY

would be ineffective in slowing down a vehicle on Shakespeare. Could you share with me research showing they won't be effective?

A 2004 matched case-control study in the United States evaluated the effec-

tiveness of speed humps in reducing child pedestrian injuries.

The simple and obvious results were: "Analysis showed that speed humps were associated with lower odds of children being injured within

their neighbourhood and being struck in front of their home. Conclusions: Our findings suggest that speed humps make children's living environments safer."

A quick Google search will certainly show the ef-

fectiveness of speed humps outweighs any negative outcomes.

Let's make this happen together.

I'm more than willing to help motivate and drive tangible action on this issue.

How can we explore this in a real way and make the right decision for our children and neighbours?

I look forward to your response.

**Matt Finlin**  
NOTL

## Town should make accessibility a priority

Dear editor:

We are a Canadian couple: Alexis was born in Canada, Sam was born in France and has since become a Canadian citizen.

Over the 17 years Sam has lived in Canada, we have welcomed countless first-time-visitors.

This has allowed us to see Canada through the eyes of an international audience.

The most remarkable as-

pect of their visit to Canada? Inclusivity. The feeling of being welcome, safe and valued.

We take these points of local pride for granted, but they are illuminated when contrasted with foreigners' own experiences back home.

Of Canada's many places to visit and sights to see, Niagara is the number 1 requested destination across

the board by our international guests.

As we see the world lean in to inclusivity, we hope that Canada will continue to be a North Star on the international stage. 2023 has seen milestone accomplishments internationally in the areas of inclusivity and access.

By comparison, as documented in *The Lake Report*, ("A single step is

a closed door," "March 30) "the lack of access to NOTL businesses, for those whom a step is a barrier, is more than an oversight.

We hope that town council will seize this opportunity to ensure visitors and locals alike feel welcome, safe and valued in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

**Alexis Smith**  
**Samuel Quartier**  
Toronto

## StopGap Foundation ready to help improve access

Dear editor:

I am the executive director of the StopGap Foundation.

We very much appreciate *The Lake Report's* recent coverage of NOTL's access issues and extend our thanks for helping raise awareness about the importance of accessibility.

Pamela TurnerSmith has done so much of the heavy lifting in order to provide the crucial educational element to those who need some support in understanding the value of having a space that everyone can access.

StopGap is ready and waiting to help get some ramps on the ground in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Part of StopGap's work

is raising awareness about the importance of using empowering language when referring to people with disabilities. Working in a more subtle realm, language can create barriers if used in a disempowering way.

So, whenever I recognize an opportunity to talk about this, I lean into it.

In your April 13 editorial, "Accessibility for all in downtown NOTL," those without disabilities were described as "able-bodied."

I am of the opinion that we are all "able-bodied" and I share this opinion with many advocates.

Our bodies are all able to breathe, digest, circulate blood, etc. A more empow-

ering alternative would be to refer to people with disabilities as "disabled" and those without disabilities as "non-disabled."

This small adjustment goes a long way in helping with a much-needed societal perspective shift.

Part of our awareness-raising includes education about the difference between the medical model of disability and the social model of disability.

The medical model focuses on those with disabilities as being the issue and works toward fixing people's "conditions."

The social model recognizes barriers originating from our built environment and our societal attitudes. It's the built environment

and attitudes that are disabling.

There are lots of great resources online that dive deeper into these two different models. There are also lots of great resources that put antiquated language beside more empowering alternatives.

When you're going down the rabbit hole just make sure that you are tuning in to the most recent content as this is an ever-evolving topic.

Thank you to *The Lake Report* team and all your readers for their support in helping raise awareness. I'm confident that our collective efforts will help create some lasting change.

**Luke Anderson**  
Toronto

**The Provincial Service Officer will be visiting the Thorold Legion, Branch 17, on June 7, 8 and 9, 2023.**

**Any Veteran wishing an appointment with the provincial service officer should contact the Niagara-on-the-Lake Legion Branch 124 office at 905-468-2353.**

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# An homage to the Greeks and **one couple's vision**



**ARCHITEXT**

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

During the 18th century in Europe, the scions of wealthy families would embark on what came to be referred to as a “Grand Tour,” a tour of classical historic locales to “expand their education.”

In the early days, classical was defined by all things Roman, but that would change by the second half of the century, mainly due to a book published in 1762.

Funded by the Society of Dilettanti, a club comprised of wealthy “grand tourists,”



The Slingerlands' beautifully restored “Winged Temple.” Columnist Brian Marshall says it's an example that should be emulated. BRIAN MARSHALL

English architects James Stuart and Nicolas Revett, went to Greece and accurately documented the ruins of Athens.

Upon their return, the pair wrote “Antiquities of Athens,” which fast became a must-have volume in the

libraries of the rich.

Towards the end of the 1700s, a fascination with ancient Greece had supplanted Rome as the centre of intellectual interest.

Unsurprisingly, this fascination migrated across the pond where the citizens

of the infant United States adopted the study and inspiration drawn from the “original cradle of western thought and democracy” with a passion.

New settlements in Upper New York State were given proud historic names like Utica, Troy, and Ithaca.

Architects of the period shifted their designs from the Roman-inspired Neo-Classical to the cleaner, more severe majesty of ancient Greek temples to develop the Greek Revival style.

That this architectural style resonated with the young country's aspirations can be seen in a tour of Washington D.C.'s public buildings constructed in the period.

This includes their porticos, colonnades and Greek classical orders, proclaiming their roots.

So too did the new houses of the time adopt the style.

For the wealthy, the Monumental expression of the style was all the rage.

Locally, one can see examples of this expression in John and Alexander Hamilton's homes – Glencairn circa 1832 and Willowbank circa 1834, respectively – on the Niagara River Parkway in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

A bit more afield in Haldimand's Ruthven Park National Historic Site, the elegant Thompson Mansion, circa 1845 to 1847, is a fine, albeit later, example of Greek Revival.

While the Monumental form might have been the exclusive purview of the wealthy, the style permeated house construction from the 1830s up until 1860.

It did so via the widely circulated pattern books of the time, amongst the most recognizable of which was Benjamin Asher's “American Builder's Companion” from 1827.

Directed at builders and carpenters, Asher's book contained sufficient information and drawings regarding Greek architecture and detailing to allow skilled artisans, lacking formal architectural training, to build in the Greek Revival style or appoint a more common building form with the style's detailing.

From these pattern books, together with the hands and minds of the builders, a more modest expression of the style evolved: the temple form.

Presenting its gable end to the street, the facade of these one-and-a-half or two-storey dwellings is elegantly simple.

An asymmetrically-placed main entry generally boasts a fairly heavy but classically clean built-up statement door surround.

A broad, undecorated moulding build-up wraps the eaves and rakes the gable end with returns which, taken together, combine to suggest a pediment.

Both lintels and sills of the window openings are commonly heavy blocks of rusticated limestone.

Narrow and deep, temple form houses are spotted across the historic communities of Ontario and the U.S. northeast.

A variant of the temple form, for those whose wall was deeper and their lot wider, was the winged temple, a standard temple to which single-storey wings were added on one or both side walls.

It is the winged temple which brings us to the home of Nancy and Monty Slingerland here in NOTL.

Forty-three years ago, looking for a larger home in which to raise their young family, the Slingerlands came across a sadly

neglected brick house on Queenston Road.

The plaster ceilings had collapsed onto the floors and “generations of critters” had left a major mess in their wake.

On viewing, Nancy's mother definitively proclaimed her grandchildren would not be raised in such a house.

The bones of the house were solid, the original trim and staircase were still in place and they could see what it would be when restored.

Undeterred by the challenge (although I imagine a little trepidatious) they bought the property, cleaned it out and moved on to the major restoration work required to make it liveable.

It took 9 months before they were able to move in and then the work continued.

Today, this wonderful circa 1830s house is a testament to long hours of work, careful sourcing of materials and skills learned through experience.

It is beautifully complete inside and out, presenting a classic facade to the street that underlines the Slingerlands' original ability to see the diamond in the rough.

The central massing is in all ways a stellar example of the temple, its main entry a textbook statement.

Each wing is proportionally balanced and pierced by original French doors.

While the gothic verandah pillars, brackets and details are not original, they also tell a story of the life of the house.

Theirs' is an example to be emulated.

Well done folks.

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

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Coun. Erwin Wiens asks bylaw officers to remove someone from the audience for clapping during Monday's special council meeting. EVAN LOREE

## Deputy mayor's actions at meeting were disappointing

Dear editor:

I am writing to express my deep concern about the disrespectful and bullying behaviour exhibited by the acting chair, Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens, during Monday's special council meeting at the community centre.

Regardless of one's position on the matter being discussed, it is never acceptable for those in positions of authority to use their power to intimidate and silence residents.

During the meeting, the acting chair repeatedly warned residents in a bel-

ligerent and authoritarian tone to refrain from showing any emotion, even on an important matter. This kind of behaviour is disappointing and undermines the democratic process.

Additionally, he abruptly stood and ordered bylaw to remove a resident who allegedly applauded a fellow resident expressing their views. This type of behaviour is unacceptable and shows a lack of respect for the opinions of others.

The acting chair's controlling and accusatory behaviour toward delegates was also concerning. It is impor-

tant for those in positions of authority to lead by example and exhibit professionalism, respect and civility when interacting with others, especially when dealing with sensitive or controversial issues.

It is my hope that the acting chair will undergo meeting management training and sensitivity retraining to improve their behaviour and communication skills. We deserve a council that is willing to listen and engage in respectful dialogue with residents.

**Allan Bisback**  
NOTL



Coun. Erwin Wiens did not let people disrespect council decorum by applauding during Monday's special meeting, which didn't sit well with some of the audience. EVAN LOREE

## Didn't like being told to respect council decorum

The following letter to Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa was submitted to The Lake Report for publication.

I am raising my objection to being read the "keep silent act" ie. no talking, no applauding, no display of approval or disapproval, which was read out by a

town representative at the special meeting council at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre on Monday, April 24.

It was as though we were a bunch of potential anti-social residents. It appeared that council only wanted an audience of muted observers.

We should have been welcomed to the meeting instead of being given instructions on how to behave – as if we didn't know any better how to conduct ourselves in public.

**Jean O'Malley**  
NOTL

## Don't OK Parliament Oak demolition before project is approved

The following letter was sent to the mayor and town council. A copy was submitted for publication.

You will soon be considering both an official plan and zoning bylaw amendment for one of Niagara-on-the-Lake's largest and most historic town blocks, and one of the last significant land parcels zoned open space and community use.

Your decision will be a watershed moment and will

set the tone for development throughout your term – and beyond.

The Niagara Foundation opposes the removal of this block from open space and community use, let alone the conversion to the commercial use proposed. We plan to submit comments to the May 9 public Mmeeting in this regard.

Further, we intend to submit comments with respect to the demolition permit application, and associated

commemoration plans, expected to come before council on April 25, which brings me to the subject of this letter.

Why, prior to your decision to permit or deny the change of use for such a large and important piece of property, would a landowner be permitted to bulldoze the structure? A structure with an almost 70-year history of serving this community as a public institution.

In our view, demolition

is, at best, premature as no work can commence on the site until after the official plan and zoning applications are adjudicated. The demolition seems to have one purpose only: to apply pressure on the town to accept the land-use change.

If permission to demolish is granted, it wouldn't be hard to envision an unkempt, hoarded-up worksite in the centre of Old Town, adjacent to residences and prime tourist areas. And

this could be a situation that lasts for years.

One doesn't need to look far for examples of where it has occurred or is occurring right now: boarded up entrance gates at the Rand Estate, derelict buildings and landfill at the former Mori Gardens site, and a prolonged closure of the Fan's Court complex adjacent to the Post Office on Queen Street.

Don't let Parliament Oak be the next example of this

landowner's modus operandi.

The Niagara Foundation strongly encourages council and town staff to complete their analysis of the official plan and zoning bylaw amendments before permitting demolition of this heritage building. We look forward to active and full participation in this process over the coming weeks.

**Lyle Hall**  
President  
The Niagara Foundation

## Laws needed to stop commercialization of residential real estate

Dear editor:

Further to your April 20 editorial, "Town needs to tax short-term rentals," residential real estate is being commercialized everywhere. It's not just with the short-term rental business.

More attention should be

brought to this practice and laws need to be developed to manage it. Huge companies are now buying up residential real estate and driving up prices.

Purchasing residential real estate for investment purposes has always been a practice

that drives up prices. Then it's just a matter of either financing the units through long- or short-term rental.

Short-term rentals remove units from long-term rental availability.

If Niagara-on-the-Lake wants to put more limits

on short-term rentals then it would be a much fairer solution to allow only one short-term rental per owner but not to insist that it be a principle residence.

That would allow the many people who plan to retire in NOTL (which is

another common reason to own a rental property) or who want to use their property as their "cottage" to use the short-term rental income to offset their expenses.

This is a practice that existed long before the commercialization of the

short-term residential rental business.

Laws are definitely needed to stop the commercialization of all residential real estate, not just short-term rentals.

**Jackie Bonic**  
NOTL



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The Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground on Mississagua Street. SOMER SLOBODIAN

## Still a long way to go to achieve real equality

Dear editor:

In a world where a totally innocent Black kid is shot by a homeowner without any provocation whatsoever, where a prominent Niagara citizen, thinking he was among a group of “like-minded” men, negatively describes a man in a case he was handling and then adds a gratuitous: “... and he was Black too!” – in this “world” it is clear that we still have a very long way to go for any real equality, be it economic, cultural, legal rights or racial.

That is why it is of the utmost importance that

all our heritage be made visible, be preserved and be celebrated for posterity.

So it is that the graves and gravestones of the American slaves who made it to Canada, often in fear of death if caught before crossing the border, are a hallowed reminder of a past that should never be repeated.

In fact, while I am not absolutely certain, I do believe Ontario has laws protecting graveyards and cemeteries, requiring that they have what is called “perpetual care.”

Not “perpetual care” for

the graves of “white people” but for all the dead, to honour their memory and keep our history visible.

Ontario, so so good in so many ways, however, has its own dark histories of racism and ethnic “cleansing” so we need to strive more than ever for common ground about how we preserve our heritage.

The gravestones in Niagara-on-the-Lake need to be dug up and reinstated.

The Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground needs to be reconsecrated as the resting place of people who found peace

and freedom here – at least we would like to think they did.

The history of the individuals hopefully identified by the gravestones should be traced as much as possible to understand the journey they were forced to take, right from Africa itself.

And, to be sure, the history of how these Black escapees from the United States were treated here in Ontario needs to be re-examined and rewritten as needed.

**Kaspar Pold**  
**NOTL**



## Lawyer disputes criticism of cyclists

Dear editor:

A friend drew my attention to the April 12 letter by Susan Pohorly, “Concerns about cyclists on the roads of NOTL.”

This letter penned following the death of Louise Leyland contains inaccuracies, long-debunked myths and rampant speculation. This does a disservice to communities already reeling in the wake of a terrible tragedy and cannot stand without reply.

Her letter says cyclists “speed past while I wait” to exit her driveway. As a licensed driver, I hope she is aware that her duty to merge safely with traffic extends not only to cyclists but also to motorists, those utilizing assistive devices and pedestrians.

The facts of the terrible collision that killed Leyland remain under investigation. As such, speculation about her chosen path, the view of the cyclist, their riding posi-

tion at the time, etc. is both inappropriate and puzzling.

To suggest cyclists are a “much bigger problem” than the behaviour of inconsiderate drivers, road design or maintenance is completely unsupported by data or by common sense. Anecdotal evidence of scofflaw cyclists “often not stopping at stop signs” has been comprehensively refuted, including by 2018 research by the University of South Florida.

The April 5 crash was an unmitigated tragedy. Leyland was killed and the as-yet-unidentified 64-year-old cyclist was injured.

Speculation and mischaracterization of the facts and context of this terrible event misinforms the public and does nothing to honour Leyland’s memory in the community that she served so passionately.

**Ian Brisbin**  
**Martin & Hillyer**  
**Associates**  
**Burlington**

## Historic Black burial ground deserves to be restored

Dear editor:

Given the considerable investment Niagara-on-the-Lake made to create its Voices of Freedom Park, I find the Town of NOTL’s apparent reluctance to fully restore and commemorate the Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground (formerly known as the Negro Burial Ground) somewhat surprising.

The burial ground dates from the 1830s. It is directly related to a significant and important period in the history of our town and region, when Niagara was a key stop on the Underground Railroad, which carried enslaved Black people to freedom in Canada.

If it was worth creating the Voices of Freedom Park to commemorate this time in the town’s history (one we should all be proud of as Canadians), surely it is also

worth protecting and restoring the Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground.

Clearly, the town needs to respect the laws and regulations that govern the restoration and preservation of graveyards, and I commend NOTL for following due process in this regard.

It’s important to ensure the work is carried out properly, in a way that respects the people whose remains are buried in the graveyard as well as their ancestors.

However, the town should not use this requirement as an impediment to undertaking the restoration project.

Instead, I believe NOTL should embrace the opportunity to commemorate and celebrate the historical role our town and region played in being a place where Black people could live in freedom.

Together, a restored burial ground, the Voices of Freedom Park and the William and Susannah Steward house on Butler Street, would tell a remarkable and valuable story, one we can still draw insight from today.

They offer the potential to enhance public understanding of our town’s rich history, boost tourism, and, I hope, help Niagara-on-the-Lake to be an even more inclusive, welcoming community.

In retrospect, it probably would have made sense to combine the Voices of Freedom Park project with the restoration of the burial ground.

Think of how much stronger a statement the displays in the park could have made if they had been appropriately placed among the restored headstones in

the burial ground. But that’s past history.

The way forward is challenging, given the costs purportedly involved to uncover and restore the headstones in the burial ground.

I’ve already voiced my concerns about what seems to be a significant increase in municipal taxes for 2023, given the high rate of inflation and economic uncertainty that persists in Canada and around the world.


From this perspective, the phased approach the town is taking toward the restoration of the burial ground makes sense. But I believe the project is one that the municipality should ultimately get behind and support.

**Terry Davis**  
**NOTL**

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# A-frame signs once again **banned** in the heritage district

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has reinstated its ban on A-frame signs on Queen Street.

In a news release, the town notified heritage district business owners in the Queen-Picton zone that the sign bylaw will be enforced again.

A-frame signs, also known as sandwich boards, were temporarily allowed in 2020 to help struggling businesses through the pandemic.

The town's sign bylaw has been in place since Oct. 9, 2012, and the A-frame restriction began at that time, town spokesperson Marah Minor said in an email to The Lake Report.

Ruth Aspinall from Art Space 106 says businesses along Queen Street don't need A-frame signs, but businesses along the side streets do.

"I think they should be permitted for side-street businesses only," she said.

"We need help on the side streets," she added.

She said she doesn't get nearly the amount of traffic



Ruth Aspinall says the town should allow shops on side streets to keep their signs. The signs have increased revenue for many businesses on the side streets. SOMER SLOBODIAN

as her other store, Serendipity, which is a few doors down from Art Space 106.

Art Space 106 is technically at 106 Queen St., but its entrance is down Victoria Street.

She has a weighted sign that the town previously approved at the corner of Queen and Victoria pointing toward Art Space.

Since it's weighted, it doesn't blow over.

Her sign is not in the

A-shaped and might be considered a mobile sign.

But the town's website states mobile signs are also illegal in the Queen-Picton zone.

The town's news release says if any business in the Queen-Picton district has an illegal sign owners can be fined \$350.

"Every day I expect the town to come along and confiscate it," said Aspinall.

A-frame signs fold out

into the shape of an A, or like a sandwich, and can be moved easily. Mobile signs are considered ones that can be easily moved from one spot to another without the use of a vehicle.

Aspinall said she sees a lot of people walk down Queen Street, but few turn down the side street where her store is.

"That's just typical of side-street businesses, anywhere. It's not peculiar

to Niagara-on-the-Lake," she said.

Still, she believes the town needs to do something to help out businesses that may be hidden from view.

Businesses like Art Space 106 are taxed the same as businesses along Queen Street, even though the latter get much higher foot traffic.

She'd like the town to approve proper, professionally made signage that shops along side streets can put out on the corners.

Every business also needs a heritage permit and a sign permit prior to display, except temporary signs, which require a sign permit only, the town statement said.

The town says A-frame signs are a tripping hazard.

"Such signage has the potential to pose a safety hazard to pedestrians, especially during busy seasons when sidewalks and surrounding areas are quite crowded," said Minor.

Coun. Maria Mavridis agreed A-frame signs could be a potential safety concern.

"Almost 25 years ago, somebody actually fell over

one and hurt themselves," she said.

According to Minor, the town has not received any recent calls about tripping incidents as a result of A-frame signs.

St. Catharines resident Simon Koop pointed out that anything could be considered a tripping hazard.

"Businesses should be able to advertise if they're not on the strip," he said.

The town also wants to make sure the heritage district keeps its natural streetscape and doesn't become cluttered with signs and distract visitors from the area's heritage elements, said Minor.

Mavridis noted it's important to keep the streets looking clean and clear.

"Sometimes you get three or four on one corner," she said.

However, Mavridis wants to see something other than the arrows indicating that there are "more shops this way" on the poles at the corners of the side streets.

The signs are small and are easily missed.

"We need help," said Aspinall.



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# A never-ending battle for former migrant

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

It's been 15 years since farmworker Jeleel Stewart was injured on the job in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Today, friends and family say he's just a shell of himself.

"He was such a dynamic personality," farmworker advocate Jane Andres told The Lake Report.

In Jamaica, Stewart, is known as John but to his friends here in Canada, he is Bushman.

Andres and fellow farmworker advocate, Jodie Godwin, met Stewart at a Sunday church service back in 2007.

"He's the guy out there singing at the top of his lungs," said Andres.

She remembers him up on stage singing and dancing as if he was the only person in the room.

"He caught your attention just by his level of enthusiasm," she added.

His laugh would fill a room and he brought positivity wherever he went.

"He was a person that drew people to him," said Godwin.

Stewart, now 49, came to work at Mori Nurseries in NOTL when he was 33. He was hired through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

At his bunkhouse, "he was kind of like the mother hen," said Andres.

He would take care of his co-workers by cooking meals for them. He did the same for his wife and, at the time, four children back home in Jamaica.

Today, he has five children.

He took the job in Canada to provide for his family.

But everything changed on May 12, 2008.

While he was working, his left hand was crushed by a forklift. The tendons and nerves were severed.

He had just arrived from Jamaica to begin his second year in the program.

"It was a Sunday. I called and I couldn't get through to him. So I was very upset because normally that wasn't him," his wife Suzan told The Lake Report by phone from Jamaica.

On her way to work on May 12, she



Jeleel Stewart and his wife, Suzan, before his accident. Stewart hasn't been able to work and is constantly in pain since his hand was crushed by a forklift in 2008. He's been fighting with WSIB for full compensation for his injury for 15 years. SUPPLIED

received a call from her husband — he had been in an accident.

In a YouTube video by Andres, Stewart said he tried to slide along the gravel, but his hand got caught by the forklift and pinned him down.

He had to cut the glove off his hand piece by piece, he said.

He went through a three-and-a-half-hour surgery and then spent many lonely days at his bunkhouse by himself while his co-workers were working.

Andres tried to drop off meals and groceries for him, but was told by his liaison officer and a human resource worker from Mori Nurseries at the time that she wasn't allowed to be there.

"They were very angry that I brought him food. They said, 'He doesn't need it,'"

said Andres.

He went back to Jamaica that August, only three months after his accident.

Suzan said she urged him to return home, "so I could take care of him."

She didn't think 15 years later he'd still be in excruciating pain with no use of his left hand while still fighting with the Workplace Safety Insurance Board for proper compensation.

Stewart's caseworker from the Industrial Accident Victims Group of Ontario, David Arruda, is working to get the compensation Stewart deserves.

The WSIB has determined that Stewart's full body impairment is as high as 44 per cent, said Arruda.

"He should be determined to be competitively unemployable and he should be

granted loss of benefits until 65. That's our argument," he said.

He is waiting to bring Stewart's case to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal.

Andres and Godwin have been supporting Stewart and his family emotionally and financially since he was hurt.

"If it wasn't for those two ladies, I don't know how I would manage," said Suzan.

Andres said his health has been deteriorating over the years due to stress, diabetes, lack of proper nutrients and the pain caused by his injury.

He can't afford proper nutrients because he can't work and WSIB hasn't fully compensated him, she said.

"I'm not a doctor, so I can't say to what degree the lack of earnings has played

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# Migrant worker Jeleeel Stewart

current condition, but the WSIB's decision to cut his loss-of-earnings benefits didn't help," Arruda said in an interview with The Lake Report.

Stewart has been in the hospital about seven times this year. As of last week, he had been admitted again.

Stewart is scrambling to get by and make ends meet, assisted by us, but we can only do so much," said Godwin.

Stewart's fluid in his lungs that is pressing on his heart and has made its way down to his foot.

On National Day of Mourning for migrant workers this Thursday, Andres wants to remind people about Stewart and his ongoing battle.

Stewart is what we're facing. He's now going to die. And this is a time people need to give up," she said.

Stewart still can't grip with his injured hand and the pain has gone up his arm.

Stewart's daily activities like changing his clothes are now a two-person job.

Stewart said she and her kids often massage his hand to ease his pain.

Stewart just has to help him until he tells her to stop," she said.

Stewart said watching him go through this and slowly deteriorate is painful.

Stewart tried to work and support his family, but he worked too long, (he'd have to give up), she said.

**Stewart has been fighting with WSIB for 15 years**

At the beginning of his recovery, he was positive and hopeful, said Godwin. His motto was "never lose hope."

Stewart received payments from WSIB and went to physiotherapy three times a week. He received physiotherapy, he had to go for his transportation to Kingston, Ontario, and back to his rural home. It cost upward of \$400 a month.

Stewart would reimburse him, but sometimes it would take several months to get reimbursed," said Andres.

Stewart in October of 2010 he got an email that his loss-of-earnings benefits were cut.

Stewart deemed that he was able to use his hand and work as a cash bar attendant at a gas station in Niagara Falls. The Lake Report has a copy of the letter

sent to Stewart.

Migrant workers get 12 weeks of full loss-of-earnings benefits through WSIB if they are unable to return to their pre-injury job, said Christine Arnott, the agency's public affairs manager.

WSIB then determines a worker's post-injury earnings "based on employment that is identified as suitable and available for them in the Ontario labour market."

When The Lake Report asked specifically about Stewart's case, Arnott said she could not provide detailed information for privacy reasons.

Stewart lives in Jamaica, is not a Canadian citizen and getting a job as a gas attendant in Ontario was not an option — but it's the only option WSIB gave before ending his benefits.

This process, called deeming, happens often to injured workers.

"They look at it as, 'OK, well, you know, you were injured in Ontario, and therefore, we can evaluate it as if you were in Ontario,'" said Arruda.

Arnott said between 2017 and 2021, there were 7,724 allowed claims for migrant workers in the agricultural industry, including 2,884 for COVID-19.

"This represents approximately 1.5 per cent of all allowed WSIB claims from 2017-2021," she said.

Andres and Godwin have been by Stewart's side throughout his injury and have seen first-hand how hard it is to deal with WSIB.

Andres said the insurance board is "designed that way for people to give up or die."

## Andres and Godwin watched as Stewart lost weight and sank into a depression

Three of Stewart's five children had to drop out of school as a result of their financial situation because he hasn't been able to work.

Over the years the physical and psychological pain Stewart endured started to take its toll.

"What starts to creep in is a sense of discouragement and (a) gradual erosion of hope," said Godwin.

In 2012, Andres remembers listening to a message from Stewart that frightened her.

"He was just calling to say goodbye. He couldn't do it any more. But he wanted us to know how much he loved us," she said.

They thought he was going to end his life.

His wife had to keep a close eye on him after that, said Andres.

In October 2016, after a documentary came out called "Migrant Justice," the WSIB re-evaluated its 2010 decision and came to the conclusion he was not able to do any work.

"Essentially because of the severity of his psychological injuries," said Arruda.

Stewart was granted retroactive loss-of-earnings benefits from September 2014 to October 2016, then he got benefits until April 2019, he said.

Stewart lost his benefits again in April 2019. That's the last time he received any form of payment.

"They said that in 2019 his psychological injuries have recovered to the degree that they were going to recover and that his recovery had plateaued," said Arruda.

Suzan says the WSIB doesn't care about farmworkers and, if one gets hurt, another one will be sent in their place.

"We are the ones that end up with either a body to bury, or an injured farmer to take care of the rest of our life or the rest of our husband's life," she said.

In 2021, the WSIB decided Stewart needed physiotherapy on his right hand to try to strengthen his non-dominant hand so he could start working again.

That treatment hasn't happened yet.

Arruda said they've hit some roadblocks since Stewart needs a referral from a physician before he can start physiotherapy.

His health also took a turn for the worse and he needed surgery for a heart stent in April 2021.

Andres and Godwin just want to see Stewart receive full compensation before it's too late.

"Gosh, the system really is not working, and Jeleeel is just a shining example of that," said Godwin.

"I wish this story could have been told and dealt with and that he would have been able to have some dignity in his life," she added.

But she's not giving up on Stewart — and says neither should anyone else.



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.  
Category: THE ICKIEST OF THE "ICKY"

**A fussy baby who cries excessively is often described this way.**

Last issue:

Category: POTPOURRI

Clue: In the Disney film he's alphabetically last of Snow White's seven dwarfs

Answer: Who is sneezy?

Answered first by: Claudia Grimwood

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Margie Enns, Becky Creager, Marjory Walker, Pam Dowling, Jane Morris, Nancy Rocca, Margaret Garaughty, Wade Durling, Sylvia Wiens, Jim Dandy, Sheila Meloche, Al Brockway

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# Next step is preparation for tryouts and getting stronger

Continued from Front Page

goal that many elite young players aspire to.

The days immediately afterward were “pretty surreal” as it all started to sink in, he said in an interview Sunday.

The junior draft is conducted online and live streamed – but there apparently was a glitch when Ottawa was announcing its third-round pick.

Sitting at home with his mom Natasha, dad Paul and older brother Liam, there was a brief lag in the web broadcast on their TV and Dietsch didn't know he'd been drafted.

“I got an Instagram notification first. And it said, ‘The Ottawa 67's want to follow you. They want to become friends.’ “

So, he realized, “Oh wow, it must be now. I looked at the board and it said ‘Ottawa selecting now.’ “

Then he got a call from a team official telling him they were choosing him at that moment. And finally, he saw his name on the draft board so the celebrating could begin.

Going into the draft, held

Friday night and Saturday, while he had spoken to 17 of the 20 OHL teams, he had no idea who might pick him.

But Ottawa was the first team that interviewed him a while back and both Dietsch and his family were impressed.

“They did a really excellent Zoom presentation, talking about their facilities, their excellent education side and all the things they offer their players, including what high school he'd attend if he ends up cracking the lineup,” said dad Paul.

“We were impressed right away,” he added. “It really set the bar high and we were thrilled that it was Ottawa who chose him. It's obviously a great organization.”

His mom Natasha said she's really excited for her youngest to head off to Ottawa if he makes the team.

“He's worked really hard for it,” she said.

The whole family has helped him along the way and if he's playing for the 67's next season, she said they'll be attending a lot of the team's games.

Paul and his brother Matt co-own the popular Sand



The Dietsch family – mom Natasha, son Kaleb, dad Paul and big brother Liam. KEVIN MACLEAN

Trap Pub & Grill on Mary Street and since the draft and The Lake Report's story on it was posted last Friday night, people have been rallying to offer congratulations.

“Everyone that sees me there is congratulating us, so it's a nice community feeling. They're standing behind him” and celebrating his success.

The online story liter-

ally got thousands of likes, comments and views as people celebrated Dietsch's accomplishment.

He's also happy that six other members of his U16 Southern Tier Admirals AAA team were drafted – including three other defencemen.

That's a reflection of the talent on the Admirals, who were Ontario Minor Hockey Association finalists in the

U16 AAA division this season.

They competed in the prestigious OHL Cup showcase in late March and Dietsch was one of just 24 defencemen invited to the OHL combine evaluation camp in Oshawa the weekend before the draft.

The next step is doing his best to prepare for the tryouts, continue to work on his game and improve his

skills. His goal is to make the team.

“The opportunity has presented itself, now it's time to work hard,” said Paul, adding his son needs no external motivation.

“As soon as he got drafted, the next morning he was working out at our home gym here and saying, ‘Well, the hard work's gonna get harder now. So I gotta get going here.’ ”



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# Pair of NOTL runners complete London Marathon

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Most people travel to England to see the sights and soak in the history, but two Niagara-on-the-Lake runners separately were there last weekend to run 42 kilometres in the London Marathon.

As Margot Devlin wryly noted, she and NOTL's John Bobrel are very different runners.

"It was a bit like the tortoise and the hare, with me being the tortoise. But I made it," she said after Sunday's run.

Bobrel completed the course in 4:07:25, about two hours behind the near-record run of race winner Kelvin Kiptum of Kenya.

Devlin doesn't talk about race times. "I'm very slow," she said previously.

But for most marathoners, it's not about speed. The goal is to start – and finish.

Bobrel made it to the



Margot Devlin crosses Tower Bridge during Sunday's rainy London Marathon. Right: NOTL's John Bobrel with his wife Debbie Whitehouse after the race. Bobrel completed the 42-kilometre race in just over four hours. He aims to complete the world's top six major marathons. SUPPLIED



finish with his wife Debbie Whitehouse lending support and said via email that he was "feeling pretty good after the race."

Devlin said the cheering crowds were "amazing. I was so emotional."

But, "the weather was terrible. It poured on us at

the beginning and there was a cold wind, but the sun came out at the end."

For Devlin, this was her fourth London Marathon (two virtually during the pandemic) and her 14th career marathon. Her husband Shaun is on hand to provide support on her

running adventures.

"Now I am getting ready for the New York Marathon, which will be my 15th, but my 11th New York Marathon," she said.

It was Bobrel's first time running the London race, but his 20th marathon.

He also is aiming to

achieve a unique milestone – completing the world's top half-dozen marathons.

London was "my fourth race in my quest for top six in the world," he told The Lake Report.

"I have completed Boston, Chicago and New York. I hope to run Tokyo

in 2024 and Berlin in 2025. There is a special medal for the top six marathons in the world."

It's called the Six Star Finisher Medal and is considered one of the most exclusive race prizes in the world, according to Canadian Running magazine.

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## Kings, queens and queens consort

# What's in a name?

Linda Fritz  
The Lake Report

As the media begin to roll out story after story about the May 6 coronation of King Charles III, questions have been raised: What should we call his wife, Camilla?

Sometime before the accession of Charles, it was reported by the ubiquitous palace insider that Queen Elizabeth II would allow her daughter-in-law to be referred to as “queen consort” when Charles became king.

Now, much of the media insists on this title.

The only thing is, since Tudor times (1485-1603) all but one of the wives of Britain's kings have, in fact, been queens consort.

The other type of queen is the queen regnant. These are the women who came to the throne in their own right. There have been as many as 30 queens consort. Indeed, Henry VIII provided six.

However, England (later Britain) has had only six queens regnant.

Of the six, three were married to princes consort.

They were Queen Anne (who reigned 1702 to 1707), married to Prince George of Denmark, Queen Victoria (1837-1901) to Prince Albert of Saxe-Cobourg and Gotha, and, most recently, Queen Elizabeth II (1952-2022), whose husband Prince Philip was originally styled as a prince of Greece and Denmark.



Stores like Fortnum & Mason in London has begun stocking commemorative souvenirs as the coronation of King Charles III looms on May 6. SEAN MACLEAN

Then there were the two Queen Marys, who were both married to kings.

The first was Henry VIII's elder daughter, who became Queen Mary I. She reigned from 1553 to 1558 and married King Philip II of Spain. They had no children.

Mary predeceased Philip. Because the male gender takes precedent, it is surprising that Philip did not continue to reign in England in his own right after Mary's death.

It's true, he had many other, sometimes rebellious lands to govern. Perhaps he decided England wasn't worth the effort.

The next queen regnant was also a king's wife – Queen Mary II (she reigned 1689 to 1694). She was the daughter of King

James II by his first consort, Queen Anne.

Mary married William of Orange, who became King William III (who reigned from 1689 to 1702). The couple were invited to share the throne of what was by this time Great Britain.

Unlike his predecessor Philip, after Mary's early death, William continued to reign alone. King William III, then, was the only British king not to have a queen consort.

Since the couple had no children, he was succeeded by Mary's sister, the previously mentioned Queen Anne.

And then there was Queen Elizabeth I, who reigned from 1558 to 1603.

King Philip II of Spain decided to court Elizabeth. She refused him,

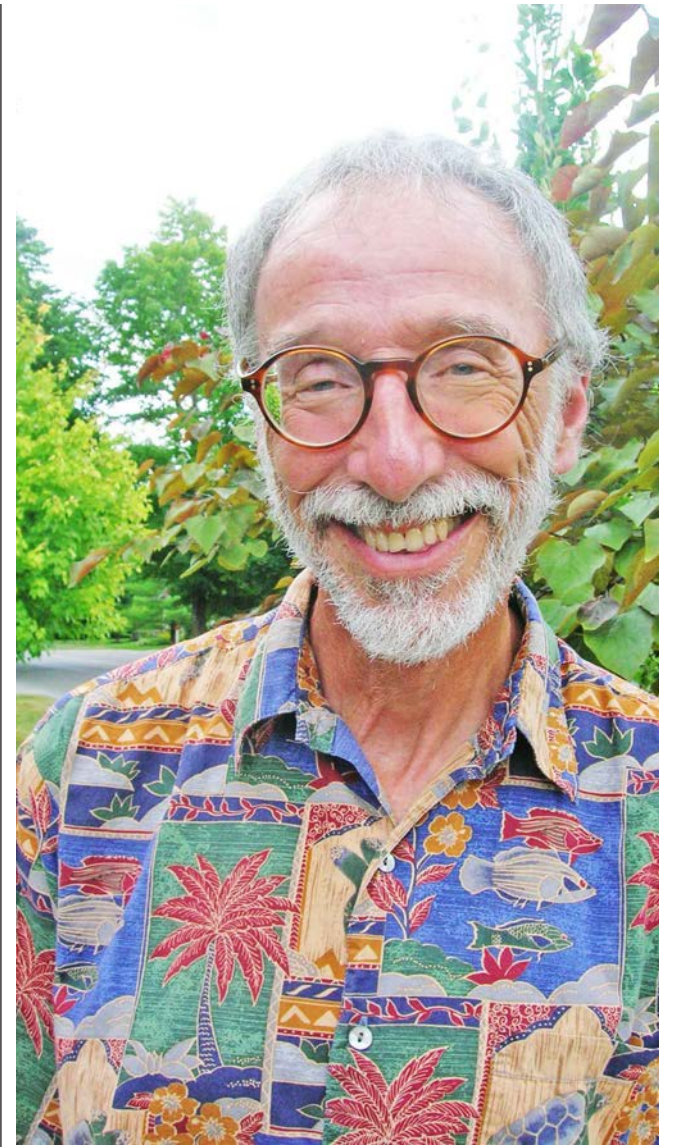
which isn't surprising when you remember why Elizabeth's mother became the second queen consort to Henry VIII.

Henry said his reason for divorcing Mary's mother was that she had been previously married to Henry's brother Arthur and his marriage to Queen Katherine was therefore illegal.

Perhaps it wasn't Philip's wisest strategy to court his former wife's half-sister.

Many others courted Elizabeth, always unsuccessfully, allowing her a long and glorious reign.

This is far from a definitive history of the female monarchs of England and Great Britain – it is merely an overview. There are plenty of books available to follow up on these women's lives.



NOTL resident Terry Davis' book "The Pale Horse" has been shortlisted in the 2023 Crime Writers of Canada Awards of Excellence competition. SUPPLIED

## NOTL author's crime novel shortlisted for major award

Staff  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake author Terry Davis will be at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Library on Wednesday, May 3, to sign copies of his novel, "The Pale Horse," which has been shortlisted in the 2023 Crime Writers of Canada Awards of Excellence competition.

"Just making the shortlist is a thrill," said Davis, who writes under the nom de plume T. Lawrence Davis.

"It says that my book is well-crafted and a good read, which means a lot to me as an author. But I'd also like to see it be widely read and enjoyed, so the next step on my publishing journey will be to promote 'The Pale Horse' and get it into bookstores."

Davis's mystery/thriller is shortlisted in the Best Crime First Novel award category.

Kirkus reviews previously described the novel as an "engrossing whodunit" and declared "this intense, gripping racetrack drama is a winner by a nose."

The book signing is from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Set primarily at Woodbine Racetrack in Toronto and in nearby Oakville, "The Pale Horse" tells the story of the racetrack vet's efforts to clear the name of a childhood friend who has been charged with committing a gruesome murder.

His personal investigation is complicated by the fact his new wife is the inspector leading the police murder investigation.

"I worked as a groom at Woodbine and other racetracks when I was in my 20s," said Davis.

"That experience and the knowledge I gained assisting vets as they treated animals in my care when I ran a thoroughbred horse farm, gave me the background fodder to create a realistic backdrop for my mystery. I think it makes the book more compelling."

Davis will have copies of his book available for purchase at the book signing. Cost is \$20 for softcover and \$30 for hardcover.

It also is available through Friesen Press, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Chapters/Indigo as well as in e-book formats through Kobo, Kindle, Google Play, Apple Books and Nook Books.

## King's coronation souvenirs prove popular

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

If you can't make it to Buckingham Palace in time to get your coronation souvenirs, look no farther than Queen Street.

The Scottish Loft has items in stock celebrating the May 6 coronation of King Charles III.

The souvenirs, including tea towels, spoons and small plates, were shipped from suppliers across the pond.

Owner Simon Bentall said the merchandise is selling quickly, with people calling daily asking him to hold items for them.

"There's a lot of fake stuff out there but this is the genuine stuff from the U.K. that we brought over. I can't speak for everyone



The Scottish Loft has coronation souvenirs like tea cups and towels available for purchase. JULIA SACCO

around the world, but us personally, being a royalist family as well, we want to make sure our customers get what they can," he said.

When deciding what items to order in, Bentall said he looked at what was in highest demand in the U.K.

"We could get the dinner plates, but they don't sell any more. Back in the '30s and '40s everybody wanted the dinner plates but the side plates are much preferred now. So we've got things like side plates, tea cups, spoon, etc."

"We also got memorabilia of the Queen's celebration of life," he said.

Those interested in taking home a commemorative trinket can visit the store or call to reserve their desired items.

Because of the shop's direct connection with a broker from the U.K., Bentall said he has more products than many other stores and he's grateful he can provide what customers want.

"Or else they'll have to pay a thousand dollars for a flight to get a plate!"



# Transit drivers vote on **union certification**

## Niagara's OnDemand workers claim U.S. contractor is exploiting them

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Drivers who work for the region's NRT OnDemand service are speaking out against what they say are poor working conditions, sometimes leaving them without breaks for nine hours at a time.

The workers voted this week on a proposal to unionize the service's 51 employees, who work under Via Transportation, a private U.S. company contracted by the Niagara Transit Commission.

The voting started at noon on Tuesday and was open for about 24 hours. Results were not known by press time.

On Monday, the Amalgamated Transit Union held rallies outside town halls in Niagara-on-the-Lake's and Grimsby in support of the OnDemand drivers.

Union local president Chris Byford said in a news release that Via Transportation is "using taxpayer dollars to fund union-busting campaigns and Toronto law firms."

Officials with the union claim the workers are being exploited by Via Transportation, which was contracted by the Niagara Transit Commission to supply shared ride services in parts of Niagara, including Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Via Transportation disputes the union's allegations and on Monday held all-day meetings at the Holiday Inn on Ontario Street in St. Catharines with its drivers and lawyers from Littler Mendelson, a prominent U.S. firm known for its so-called union-busting expertise.

Leah Tracey, a spokesper-



Amalgamated Transit Union members rally in Niagara-on-the-Lake in support of OnDemand workers. The union says OnDemand workers are treated poorly and they currently have no recourse. SOMER SLOBODIAN

son for the Niagara Transit Commission, wouldn't comment on the dispute.

"What I can tell you is that the Niagara Transit Commission has a contract with Via to deliver OnDemand service until Dec. 31, 2023, and we meet regularly with them to ensure they are meeting their contractual obligations," Tracey wrote in an email to The Lake Report.

She said the transit commission will conduct a full service review later this year.

Byford said the union is trying to organize the workers "because they're in transportation."

Jeff Fereracag, one of

the OnDemand workers, said, "The last six months, it's been awful."

Fereracag said lack of employee breaks and safety concerns were among the workers' issues.

He said the tires on some of the vans are so worn down that they'd slide through stop signs during the winter.

Sometimes, he said, he doesn't get a proper break during his shifts.

"We could drive seven, eight or nine hours without a break," he said. "No time to eat our lunch. Use the bathroom. Nothing."

Workers' contracts allow the company to suspend

them for minor reasons, Fereracag claimed.

And if there's a customer complaint, drivers face being suspended with no pay.

"Some of them will get suspended from renting (the van) for a week," said Byford.

Drivers are paid \$40 an hour, but must pay \$18.99 plus tax daily to rent the van provided through the car rental company, Avis.

Occasionally, Byford said, shifts would be suddenly cut and drivers would only receive \$40 pay for a day of work.

Fereracag said only six vans have been on the road between west Niagara, Port

Colborne and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The region is contractually obligated to have 18 vans on the road, according to a news release from the union.

A woman in Port Colborne who required a wheelchair-accessible van was recently left waiting for a week before receiving transportation to her appointment, said Fereracag.

"We had one wheelchair van for the whole area," he said.

Many customers have voiced complaints about having to wait up to two hours for service, said Fereracag.

He doesn't blame them for being frustrated, but said OnDemand workers bear the brunt of the anger, "because we're the face."

An employee from Via Transportation declined to answer questions from The Lake Report.

The Niagara Transit Commission wants to bring its OnDemand service in-house within the next two to three years, said Byford.

But that's a long time for transit workers to go without any sort of job security, he said.

"The key is that they have some kind of security over the next few years till it is brought in-house," said Byford.

As part of the certification process, the union submitted a list of 51 OnDemand employees to the Ontario Labour Relations Board last week.

Via countered with a list of 107 employees.

The point of this, said Byford, is so that Via can come back and say "that we didn't do our due diligence and account for every driver."

However, Byford said some of the people on Via's list haven't worked since 2020. Some have even been suspended.

He said Via is "union busting" and trying to inflate the numbers and convince previous workers to vote against forming a union.

If workers vote in favour of unionizing, then they will become part of the Amalgamation Transit Union, said Byford.

"Our end goal was to get the majority to vote yes and to start to represent them and get them a fair contract," he said.

# Queenston Women's Chorus marks **20 years** together on Saturday

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

The Queenston Women's Chorus is celebrating 20 years together as a singing group at its annual spring choral concert this Saturday evening, April 29.

Conductor Lisa Brillon said the choir will be performing a collection of songs it has sung in the past two decades, plus some popular hits from over the years.

"It's rather light music, songs from musicals, songs

from films," said Brillon. "We're doing 'Let It Be' by The Beatles and we also have a small ensemble group from the choir doing a medley of 'Pitch Perfect.'"

The concert will take place at St. Catharines' Trillium United Church, starting at 7 p.m.

Brillon founded the Queenston Women's Chorus in 2003, then called the Queenston Ladies Choir until 2021.

It began as a gathering

of Brillon's friends who shared an interest in singing and wanted to join a choir.

Today, it consists of over 35 members, performing several forms of music, such as classical, jazz, musical theatre, pop and more.

"The choir is made up of women of all walks of life from all over Niagara," said Brillon. "We like to have fun and connect and socialize through music."

The winners, Alexandre Brillon from Queenston,

and Emily Draper from Welland, will each give solo performances.

Proceeds raised from the night will go towards commissioning a composer to write a piece for the choir alongside another group in Oxbridge.

A reception will follow the main show, including cookies and tea, as well as memorabilia and photos.

Tickets for the show will be available at the door at \$20 for adults and \$15 for students.



The women of the Queenston Women's Chorus rehearse on Tuesdays at St. Davids-Queenston United Church. FILE

**EXPLORING PHOTOS**  
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## A league of their own – Niagara style

The Blue Jays just had their home opener and baseball season has begun for all the fans out there. Did you know that the local Shepherd Boats company sponsored a women’s baseball team? The team played between 1948 and 1950, and consisted of players from Niagara and Virgil. They played games in Lincoln County and their home games were at the Legion Ball Park. In 1949, this team became the Lincoln County champions when they defeated the Grimsby Peach Queens. The coach of this team was Dave Roebuck and the bat boy was his son, Herb. It looks like these women had quite the following with all the young men hanging out in behind the photo.



Steve Steele leads a walk in 2020. FILE/BRITTANY CARTER

## Museum’s neighbourhood walks almost sold out

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Throughout the month of May, NOTLers will be able to take a walk through history with the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum.

Starting May 5, the museum’s Neighbourhood Walk series will return with both familiar and new walks through different pockets of town. Almost all the walks are already sold out, however.

“This year we’re focusing on four different tours,” said museum spokesperson Amy Klassen.

The first walk in the series, titled Voices of Freedom, is a Black history tour led by volunteer Jan King-Watson. The is in high demand, with only a few

spots left.

The following week’s themes include the Commons, a returning walk led by Richard Merritt; architecture with new walk leader Brian Marshall, and finally the popular Chautauqua walk led by Rick Meloen.

All walks are sold out aside from Voices of Freedom, which takes place Friday, May 6, at 6 p.m. Limited tickets are available for purchase in advance at \$15 by calling the museum.

Klassen said that those unable to make it to the walks but who still want to learn more can find relevant virtual lectures and content on the museum’s YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@NOTLMuseum>.



  
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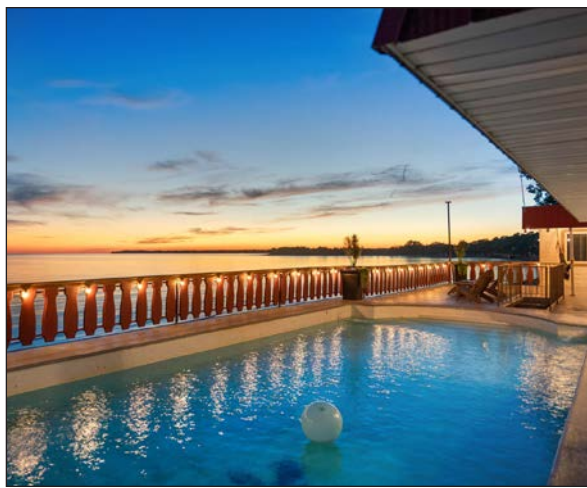
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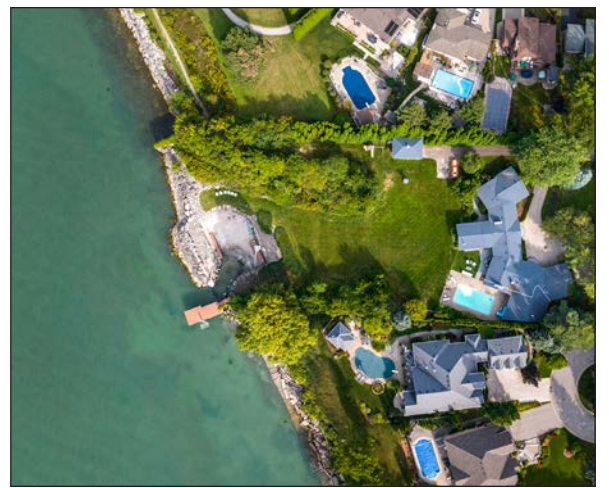
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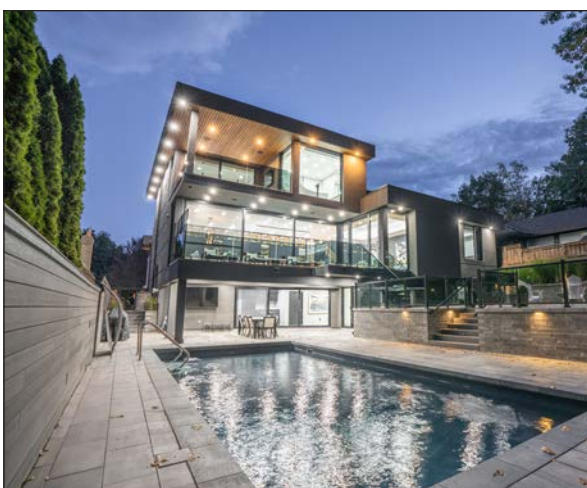
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\*\*RANKING ACCORDING TO MLS STATISTICS.



# Have some fun



**Across**

- 1. Sheets and blankets (10)
- 7. Unfortunately (4)
- 9. Partly unrelated female sibling (10)
- 10. Grain husks (4)
- 11. Investigate closely (5)
- 12. Of no value (9)
- 14. Dog-houses (7)
- 16. Altar cloth (7)
- 18. Cases (7)
- 20. Implore urgently (7)
- 23. Inflammation of the stomach (9)
- 25. Wading bird (5)
- 28. Form of wrestling (4)
- 29. Beyond the power of Man (10)
- 30. Hay store (4)
- 31. The lot (10)

**Down**

- 2. Qualify (7)
- 3. Managed (5)
- 4. Leave out (4)
- 5. Frankfurter (3,3)
- 6. Small fish (5)
- 7. Vehicle for injured people (9)
- 8. Formerly the world's fourth largest lake (4,3)
- 13. Stop up a hole (4)
- 15. Wee Willie Winkie's attire (9)
- 17. Grass (4)
- 19. Sea north of Australia (7)
- 21. Hanging cloth (7)
- 22. Baby's feeding bottle cap (6)
- 24. Point in question (5)
- 26. Not easily broken (5)
- 27. Salver (4)

## Crossword Puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9						10	
11			12				
14		15			16	17	
18	19				20		21
23			24			25	26
28			29				
30			31				

## Last issue's answers

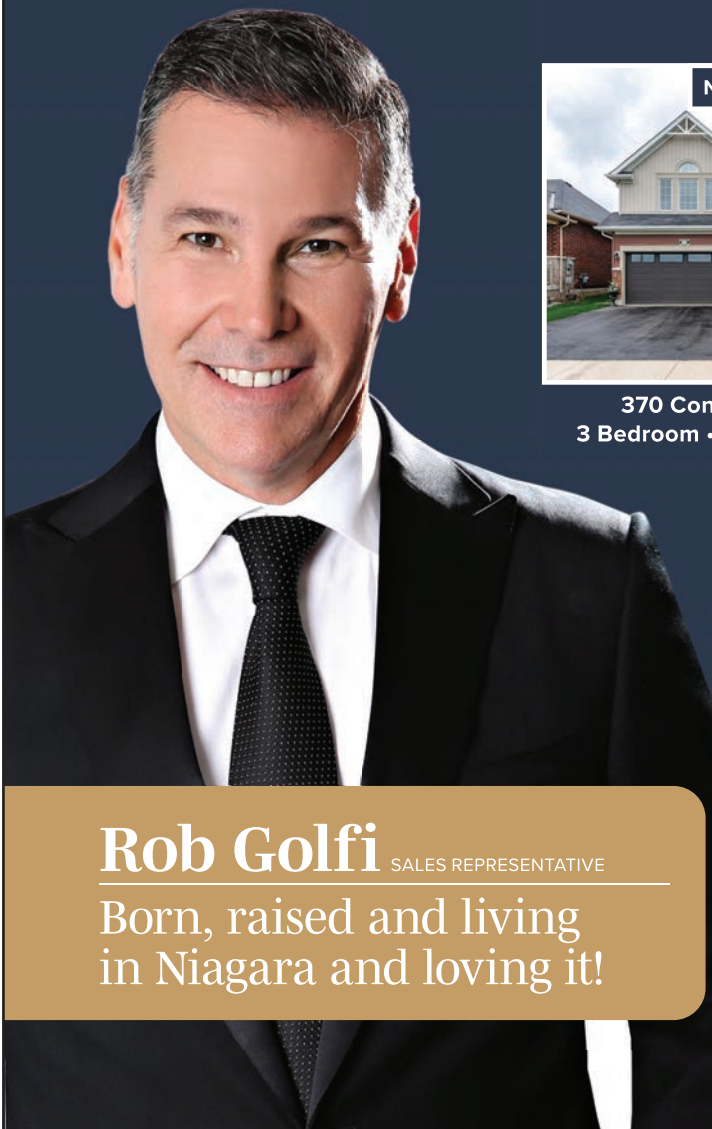
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8			6	3		9	
9		1	4				3
	4				6		
			3			6	8
1			2				7
6	9			5			
		7					1
4			3	7			6
	2	9	1				4



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# Helter skelter hockey emotions – and oh **those Leafs**



## Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

As a former hockey player and hockey fan whose interest has been dwindling for several reasons, I have been unable to resist the excitement of this year's first-round NHL playoffs.

The last week has deposited me right in the middle of playoff fever.

The Leafs from across Lake Ontario laid an egg in Game 1, but captain John Tavares was everywhere in Game 2. Why isn't such a highly paid athlete "all over the ice" every game? He's making over \$8 million per season!

Then, two thrilling one-goal wins, including coming back from a 4-1 deficit

to win Game 4 in overtime on the road in Tampa.

Butler's Sports Bar was rocking and I hope the Leaf fans will allow me to take a place on their bandwagon for the rest of the playoffs. I will have to practise my exhortations to fit in. "Come on boys!" and "Here we go!" and "This is it!" seem to be the most popular call-outs.

My hockey emotions have been up and down like a toilet seat. At a mixed party.

In the midst of the excitement, there was not one mention of gambling in the bar. There was much profanity, in fact an amazing amount of naughty language, but no one seemed to care about the over-under or any parlays.

There is an exhausting amount of gambling advertising by big name stars and Wayne Gretzky (which is very weird) before, during and after the games, but who is doing all the actual gambling?

One generation ago, there was almost no advertising in and around the rinks. Now, the ice surface resembles a Glidden Paint billboard and



Evan McCaughey in his Leafs sweater in front of Butler's Sports Bar, where an excited crowd watched the Leafs win Game 4 of the first round of the playoffs Monday night. ROSS ROBINSON

the boards have scrolling ads. Pepsi and Canadian Tire are spending piles to show their logos in a 360-degree fashion.

These ads, shown on the Canadian television feeds, are joined by "Purex, the official laundry detergent of the NHL." Maybe Ivory soap should become the of-

icial "wash out your mouth with soap" soap for cursing hockey fans in NOTL.

My mother would be appalled, as were two families having dinner in the side room at bar.

Now, just asking:

Do we still think good punch-ups are a necessary part of our fast and exciting

game? Goodness me, New Zealand rugby players don't chuck knuckles. And their game is tough.

Why do team owners and coaches allow star players to fight? Auston Matthews and Steve Stamkos? Those four hands are worth millions of dollars.

Curiously, Leaf star

forward Ryan O'Reilly still plays without a protective shield or cage. Just last week, an NHL star was cut for 75 stitches so close to his eye, by a razor-sharp goalie skate during a skirmish in the crease.

I am loving this Toronto Maple Leaf playoff run, but may I ask what happened to the talking heads "expert panel?"

Each game, a hockey savvy, well-spoken and intuitive female hockey star provided insight.

Now she is gone and the panel has been joined by, wait for it, Derek Lalonde, whose claim to fame seems to be that he is the coach of the Detroit Red Wings. He layers on the usual off-heard cliches and the other four talking heads nod in agreement.

The Leaf playoff games promise to thrill us. Let's think about the whole package.

This may make me seem like an old fuddy duddy, but I don't think Mitch Marner and his mates should be looking at an iPad or tablet when they are on the bench.

Go Leafs go!

# BARREL HEAD

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Clockwise from top left: Dividing sedum. Joanne Young says to dig out plants prior to dividing them. She also says to add bonemeal before replanting. Dead centres are signs that a perennial needs to be divided. JOANNE YOUNG

## Multiply by dividing your perennials



**GROWING TOGETHER** 

Joanne Young  
Columnist

These are all signs that the plant is losing its vigor and needs to be dug up and divided in order to thrive again. Unfortunately, there is no set formula as different types of plants require dividing at different times. For some they may need it every three to four years and for others it may be longer. The key is to examine them early spring to see if they are thinning in the middle.

**Size control:** If you have ever grown Black-eyed Susans before you will know that some perennials will just spread wildly year after year and you need to control the size of the plant before it takes over the entire garden. Some perennials grow much more aggressively than others. By dividing the clump into smaller sizes you can keep the plant size under control.

**Propagate:** Dividing perennials is an easy and inexpensive way to increase the number of plants in your garden especially new areas. It is also a great way to share plants with friends, family or neighbours.

With that said, there are a few perennials that do not like to be divided at all such as Baptisia, Bleeding heart, Butterfly Weed, Christmas Rose, Lavender and Poppies.

Now that we know why we need to divide perennials, the next question is: when is the proper time to divide?

The general rule of thumb of when to divide is:

- Divide spring and summer flowering perennials in late summer or fall. E.g. Irises, Salvia

- Divide late summer and fall blooming perennials in early spring. E.g. Sedums, Coneflowers and Mums.

**Here are the steps to follow when dividing your perennials:**

- If you can, divide your perennials on an overcast day with showers in the forecast — it will greatly help the plant recover from the roots being damaged. It would also be helpful to thoroughly water the plants a day prior to dividing.

- When dividing in the spring, wait until new shoots are about one inch tall.

- Using a spade or garden fork, dig into the soil about four to six inches beyond where the shoots emerge. Dig all around the clump then pry up on rootball. Dig up the entire clump entirely before dividing and sit it on top of the ground or on a tarp. When you do it this way, you have no way of knowing how much root you

will be getting and could be wasting parts of the plant.

- Using a sharp spade or knife, gently cut through the roots, dividing clump into as many pieces as desired. Each division should have at least three to five vigorous shoots and a healthy supply of roots. If the centre of the plant has died out, divide the living, outer portions into smaller clumps and throw out the dead, centre portion.

- To help get the new clump off to a good start, enrich the soil in the new planting areas with compost, composted manure or triple mix before planting the new divisions. Fertilize new plantings by scattering a handful of bone meal in the bottom of the planting hole. Bone meal is high in phosphorus which will help stimulate root growth.

- Fill in around the plant roots with triple mix or compost. Make sure that the plant is in the soil at the same depth that it was previously then water well.

Keep your garden flourishing by dividing your perennials when needed. Remember, it is only in gardening that you can multiply by dividing.

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



Students at Royal Oak hung handmade bird feeders in trees across school property for this year's Earth Day celebration. SUPPLIED

## Royal Oak students clean up Simcoe Park for Earth Day

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Students at Royal Oak School had classes in the great outdoors to mark Earth Day 2023, learning lessons from nature and helping to keep it tidy.

Classes were led on a trip outside for the day, which ended with a garbage cleanup and scavenger hunt at Simcoe Park.

Teachers also taught

the students how to make compostable bird feeders out of pine cones, lard and bird seed.

"We hung those up around the school property in the trees," said Julia Murray, Royal Oak's head of school.

It was also an opportunity for the youngest students to spend time with their student mentors, the oldest students, as part of the school's mentorship program.

## Yellow Door recruiting kids for musical camp

Katie Ryan  
Special to The Lake Report

Yellow Door Theatre Project is in search of a new cohort of young theatrical talent to put on its production of "Mary Poppins Jr." this summer.

The performing arts group is recruiting children for its summer program, culminating in two live performances of the musical in July.

The two-week camp will happen at the FirstOntario Performance Art Centre from July 3 to 15 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., ending off with two performances on July 15 at 2 and 7 p.m.

The theatre is seeking kids between eight to 18 years old who will receive training in dance, music, and stage performance.

Sixty spots are open for registration in this performance, with no auditions necessary.

The final performances will take place in Patridge Hall, the biggest stage at the performance art centre.

In a media release from Yellow Door, Andorlie

Hillstrom, artistic producer for Yellow Door, said this opportunity makes it a "wonderful experience" for its young participants.

The program started in 2016 with an in-house production of Alice and Wonderland Written by Robert Harrison.

"We chose to do more commercial types of pieces," Hillstrom said. "For example, Aladdin, The Lion King and Shrek, ones that were familiar. It was an opportunity for people who don't know Yellow Door that well to say, 'Oh well, I know that show.'"

Parents of participating kids feel more comfortable with Disney shows, Hillstrom added, which lead Yellow Door to continue producing Disney musicals.

"We do the junior versions of shows so that the shows are shorter," she said. "This is helpful because we only have two weeks to get that show up."

Tickets are \$17 and can be purchased from the FirstOntario Performing Art Centre box office.

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