

Fog of war engulfs fort for Field Day



Ready, aim, fire — billowing smoke emerges from the infantry's side after the fire of muskets during Saturday's Soldiers' Field Day at Fort George. **Story on Page 4.** DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Farmers say UN accusation of slavery is 'insulting'

Richard Wright
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A United Nations report that found Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program "serves as a breeding ground for contemporary forms of slavery" is insulting and completely untrue, say two growers who employ migrant workers in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"I found what was in the paper extremely offensive," said Palatine Fruit and Roses owner Eva Schmitz, referring to a story in the Aug. 15 issue of The Lake Report that outlined details from a report by Tomoya Obokata, the UN'S rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery.



Scott MacSween is one of many NOTL farmers who took exception to a UN report calling Canada's migrant worker program a "breeding ground for slavery."

Farmworkers speak out on Page 3. RICHARD WRIGHT

In Obokata's report he stated "Canada should end labour migration arrangements that foster exploitation by creating dependency situations that tie workers to their employers and give

employers control (over) workers' housing, health care and migration status."

Such programs "institutionalize asymmetries of power that favour employers and prevent workers from

exercising their rights," Obokata said.

Schmitz was almost beside herself with anger when interviewed by The Lake Report on Aug. 20, refusing to be silent in the face of assertions made by Obokata.

"That just pushed me over the top because I absolutely do not want to be associated with anything that has to do with racism and slavery," she said, adding that the migrant workers she employs are treated with respect and by the rule of Canadian law.

"If you hire someone and you pay the cost to move them and give them free lodging, that is part of a contract," she said, referring

Continued on Page 5

Committee rejects Queen St. severance

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The town's committee of adjustment has rejected developer Rainer Hummel's plan to divvy up the land of a heritage property that's occupied a part of Queen Street for more than two centuries.

At last Thursday evening's meeting, Paul Johnston was the only committee member to vote in favour of the amendment to sever land at 187 Queen St., site of the historic Crysler-Burroughs home.

Committee members

Angelo Miniaci and Eric Lehtinen voting against the application. Margaret Louter declared a conflict of interest and was not present for the presentation or vote.

This rejection comes after the controversial severance plan was officially defeated in a tie vote by council on July 30. The town's planning committee had approved it on July 16.

The proposal was quickly taken to the committee of adjustment for consideration. Hummel plans to appeal the committee's

Continued on Page 2

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Lord mayor says project **does adhere** to official plan

Continued from Front Page

rejection of the severance plan.

The latest decision followed extensive presentations by four residents. Nine letters also were sent to the committee.

The Chrysler-Burroughs dwelling, completed circa 1822, was the home of R.M. Chrysler, a successful merchant in NOTL and a member of Upper Canada's Chrysler family.

Resident Ian Gibson lives on Simcoe Street, just north of the property, and spoke out against the severance.

Gibson claimed that it seemed as though the developer is trying to "circumvent" the other municipal bodies in order to get the severance approved.

He said he believes the amendment is a deviation of the town's official plan.

"It is handing developers carte blanche to jam oversized, non-conforming, unwanted projects into our local landscape," he said.

Judy McLeod spoke as well, supporting a written statement from her husband Peter Howe.



Resident Ian Gibson, who lives just north of the property, says it seems the developer is trying to "circumvent" the other municipal bodies in order to get the severance approved. The developer, Rainer Hummel, says he's following the rules. JULIA SACCO

As the owner of a heritage property herself, McLeod said as long as she and her husband are around, their large property would not be severed.

"We feel quite strongly that we have these precious properties and that they should be protected," she said.

Gracia Janes, of the Niagara Conservancy, and Karen Taylor-Jones also spoke against the amendment.

Though not on the agenda, architecture columnist Brian Marshall and Coun. Gary

Burroughs also made presentations regarding why the property should be left alone.

Burroughs, who previously lived at 187 Queen St. and helped obtain its heritage designation in 2002, said the designation includes the entire property, all of which should be protected.

"We wanted the whole property designated because it made the whole place important to the history of our town," Burroughs said.

Marshall backed up these statements, emphasizing the

heritage value of the entire property.

He said 187 Queen was part of a survey done in NOTL more than 200 years ago.

"It is the only property (left from the survey) that looks onto the street, so that residents and visitors can actually see what an original property looked like and what it comprised," Marshall said.

"I'd argue that the property itself is intrinsic to the cultural heritage landscape."

In response to claims that the application violates the town's official plan, Hummel said that is simply untrue.

"If it would have not conformed to either the regional official plan or the town official plan, we would have had to do an amendment. We didn't have to do an amendment," he told The Lake Report.

The application meets the provincial policy statement, the Places to Grow Act, the growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, as well as the plan for the town.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa corroborated that in an interview.

"It lines up with our official plan and that is maintaining existing residential — it's actually expanding as well because it's going to be adding another accessory type dwelling to the main unit," Zalepa said.

During last week's meeting, two of three committee members were swayed by the resident presentations.

Johnston said he voted in favour of the severance because "heritage values will not be disrupted by this

severance," but subject to council and heritage committee assessment.

Miniaci said that based on what he heard during the meeting, he could not vote in favour.

"The reality of the situation is that I think we should allow the original appeal process to play through and then proceed from there," he said.

Lehtinen also voted against the amendment.

"I believe the property is a heritage property, the house is a heritage house. I believe the mature trees on the property cannot be replaced," he said.

"Severing this property would make it look like a number of other properties you can find anywhere in southern Ontario."

Jennifer Vida, who represented the developer, said a committee vote in favour would not change the fact that council had already rejected the rezoning.

Hummel has already filed an appeal application with the Ontario Land Tribunal and is awaiting a hearing date, she added.

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NOTL farmworkers miss families, want access to permanent residency

Workers say UN report's accusation of 'slavery' isn't accurate

Richard Wright
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake migrant worker Denver Cunningham likes the farm he works on, has a genuine level of respect for his employer and while here in Canada for eight months of the year he enjoys a well-maintained mobile trailer with internet access, full laundry services and the cool sensation of an air-conditioned home on a hot summer's day

His opinion of working in this country is a positive one and not reflective of a United Nations report that described the Temporary Foreign Worker program in Canada as a contemporary form of slavery.

When a reporter from The Lake Report dropped in on Cunningham and his housemates unannounced to seek their opinion on the report, they had quick responses when speaking about its main assertion — slavery.

"Our boss, Scotty, is a good boss," said Cunningham, referring to Scott MacSween of MacSween Farms. "He makes sure you are comfortable."

His house and workmate Rohan Thompson agreed.

"My employer is not a bad employer," he said.

"And the living conditions here are not bad. It is pretty good."

Both men have worked for MacSween since 2019.

MacSween, who had nothing to do with arranging the interviews with his workers and was not present for the conversation, stated in a separate interview that he and other farmers in the region strongly disagree with the UN report's conclusion.

"All the tender fruit growers around here, we are all very upset with that," he said.



From left, Rowan Thompson, Denver Cunningham, Jason Moodie and Lenworth Green are farmworkers in NOTL who disagree with a UN report that said Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program is akin to a contemporary form of slavery. RICHARD WRIGHT

"It is the furthest thing from the truth. All of our workers, ask any of them, they are all like family to us."

What both Cunningham and Thompson, who are Jamaican nationals, don't like is that despite their hard work and time spent here in Canada, they cannot obtain permanent residency status.

As migrant workers, they must leave their families behind while they work in Canada. Their work permits here only pertain to the individual who is being employed, so that excludes their families.

The Canadian government has hinted at awarding permanent residency to farmworkers, however, it has never gotten beyond the discussion stage. Advocates, like the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, have been vocal about urging the government to act.

Being without his loved ones is just one of the social barriers to living as a migrant worker in Canada, but for Cunningham it is the biggest one.

"You will be more comfortable here because your family is here," he said.

"You won't have to be fretting about what, if anything, happened," adding that one of his biggest sorrows while in this country working is not spending quality time with his kids or being able to return quickly if there's an emergency.

To him, this seems completely unfair.

"It is difficult because I am not a part of their childhood," he said. "I don't know how my kids are being raised."

And this is happening as he and his co-workers actively play a role in the healthy upbringing of Canadian children and families by planting, nurturing, picking and packing many of the fruits and vegetables that find their way to tables across this country.

That makes them essential workers, said Cunningham, deserving of the same rights as any other Canadian.

Another housemate, Jason Moodie, agrees that more should be done to help those who are here in this country providing for so many others.

He points out that while his health care benefits as a migrant worker are valuable and appreciated, he would like to take care of his sick daughter.

"My daughter has meningitis," he said. "The medical care in Jamaica is no good. If she was able to come here, I think that she would get better health care."

For the men of this household, the way of life of a farmworker is a double-edged sword.

"The farm work here impacts us in a good way and a bad way," said Cunningham as he gathered

around the kitchen table with his friends.

"When we are here, we have work. But when we go back to Jamaica it is hard for an employer there to employ us for just a few months."

"We don't get any (employment benefits) from Canada in any way. We pay EI when we are here and when we are in Jamaica, we don't get anything. We have to be seeking around looking for a dead-end job and that throws us way off."

Still, Cunningham enjoys his time here because it is paying the bills back home. He simply wishes he could start a forever life in this country with the people he loves most.

And if that meant foregoing one of the big demands from migrant worker advocates here in Canada, he would gladly do it.

"They think, probably, that if we get our permanent residency that we are not going to want to work on the farm," he said, referring to a clause in the migrant worker program that binds employees to a single employer.

"So, what they should do then is sign a contract. We get our (permanent residency) and continue to work on the farm for five, six years. So you happy, we happy, everyone happy. The family is happy."

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Beemer fried on Ricardo

A BMW struck a hydro transformer box on Ricardo Street Sunday evening, causing an estimated \$100,000 in damage, according to Niagara Regional Police. The vehicle, driven by a 31-year-old man from Williamsville, N.Y., caught fire and was a write-off. Police estimated the car's value at \$45,000. Lauren Goettler, who lives across the street from the accident scene, said the young couple in the vehicle came into her home to recover after the crash. The man was assessed by paramedics and found to have not been injured. No charges have been laid. The crash knocked out power to the area for more than two hours, NOTL Hydro CEO Tim Curtis said. Navy Hall and Fort George were without power until Monday afternoon. LAUREN GOETTLER/DINA KALNS



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Crowds flock to Fort George's 25th annual War of 1812 field day

Paige Seburn
The Lake Report

The sounds of fife and drum corps and infantry units echoed throughout the fields of the Fort George national historic site this past weekend.

The fort celebrated the 25th anniversary of its Fife & Drum Muster and Soldiers' Field Day on Aug. 17 and 18 — and the music and drills of the War of 1812 era came to life for hundreds of spectators.

The Friends of Fort George and Parks Canada welcomed history enthusiasts and curious visitors for two days of informative and realistic demonstrations showcasing early 19th-century military traditions. Families and history lovers alike gathered to witness firing demonstrations, drum performances and other entertainment.

Visitor Daniel Crack, a book designer with a passion for history, attended because he appreciates any dedication to preserving the past.

"I worked on a book, around 10 years ago, 'Soldiers of the King.' It was basically a list of all of the British soldiers that died during the War of 1812. It was all put together by historians and such," said Crack, who has always had



Morgan and Michael Blum, two Americans, visit this side of the border from Texas. They loved learning more about the War of 1812 at the Soldiers' Field Day. PAIGE SEBURN

an interest in learning about this war.

Jennifer Chen, who also is interested in history, said she was thrilled to experience the field day in person.

She learned about it online and was instantly curious to go, she said, especially to see the firing demonstrations, since she's never witnessed anything like that before.

One of the musket demonstrations was by the Grenadier Company, representing the 41st Regiment Foot, which actually had a significant presence at Fort George, said Frankie Reid, who was hosting the demonstration.

Morgan and Michael Blum, visiting Canada from Texas, found the event to be a standout mo-

ment of their trip.

"We love learning about the War of 1812. In the U.S., no one really remembers it or talks about it. It's kind of a niche interest," said Morgan Blum.

They said they especially enjoyed the Fort George Fife and Drum Corps performance.

The demonstration included duty calls and ceremonial music, such as "The Roast Beef of Old England," used to signal mealtimes.

Peter Alexander, who conducted the performance, said it showed the drummers' roles, which are sounding the duty calls, keeping cadence during marches and performing ceremonial music.

He educated the audience about the history of the

instruments and practices in between musical demonstrations, including the historical significance of regimental uniforms and musical pieces.

The performances captured the essence of the era. For example, the drummers wore white coats rather than the regiment's red, a distinctive choice that highlighted their role and adhered to historical practice, said Alexander.

The prominence of the War of 1812 in the annals of Canadian history meant great excitement for the Blums in their trip to Canada.

"We didn't know that, for Canadians, the War of 1812 is really important. And you all really celebrate it and remember it," said Morgan.



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Farmers say staff are like family

Continued from Front Page

to a legal clause that states migrant workers can only be employed by the boss who signed their work visas.

“You don’t want that person to take the flight (to Canada) and then go to your neighbour for a few dollars more. This is absolute employment practice in Canada. There is nothing wrong with that.”

Schmitz employs seven workers from the Caribbean at Palatine.

Each one of them enjoys many of the social benefits that are afforded to Canadian citizens, she said.

“The only thing they do not get is employment insurance,” said Schmitz.

“If you are a Canadian and go to Jamaica in the winter you are also not getting employment insurance because you are out of the country,” she added.

The difference, however, is that Canadian citizens have the option to stay in Canada to preserve their right to collect EI while migrant workers do not have that ability once their contract is over.



Palatine Fruit and Roses owner Rene Schmitz with employee Mario Whyte, a migrant worker from Jamaica. Schmitz and his wife Eva are upset with a UN report that alleges Canada’s migrant worker program is a “breeding ground for slavery.” RICHARD WRIGHT

They must leave the country, but can’t collect EI once they’re home.

That is one reason advocacy groups like the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change have long been calling for the Canadian government to award migrant workers permanent resident status.

Scott MacSween, who operates MacSween Farms in NOTL, also took exception to the UN report.

He believes that the migrant worker program, as it is operated in NOTL, is a win-win-win situation for employers, workers and consumers.

“The reason they have all come here is because we are getting that 15 to 20 per cent unemployed from their home country. And thank goodness our government allows them to come up here. Otherwise we wouldn’t have an industry, because Canadians won’t work in the orchards.”

And speaking on behalf of other employers he knows, MacSween said everyone feels like their employees are family and treat them that way.

That level of respect and appreciation was confirmed by a number of MacSween workers who were inter-

viewed separately and without warning when The Lake Report showed up at their place of residence unannounced.

All of the men interviewed repeatedly emphasized how good a boss MacSween is. One of the men, Denver Cunningham, told an interesting story that reflects not only respect, but trust.

“Scotty is a good boss,” said Cunningham. “Sometimes when we’re in Jamaica and guys might run short on cash, they can call on him and he will compensate them.”

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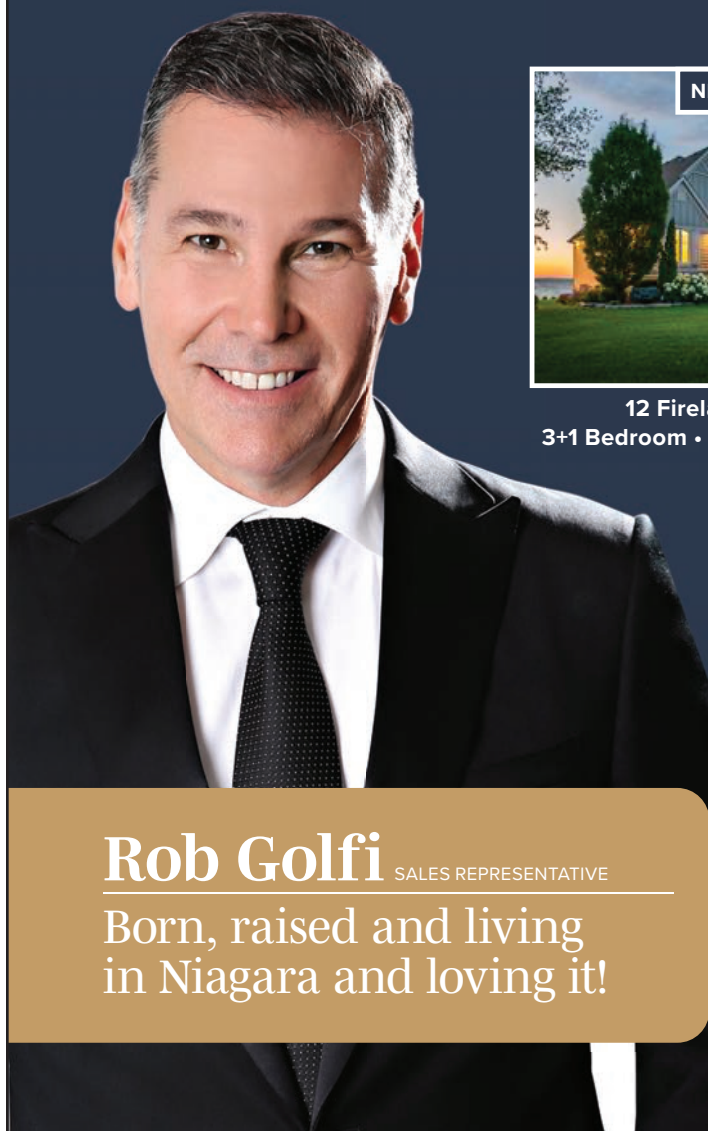


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Meeting Doc, a chance to **recapture** my life

JODEY'S JOURNEY

Jodey Porter
Special to The Lake Report

I've been mostly blind, most of my life. This past March I travelled to New Jersey to meet the canine companion that will enable me to recapture my life.

It's hard to imagine how a few hours of preparation can ready us to meet a new lifelong friend who is literally smart enough to change our lives. Each guide dog goes through a full year of instruction. But the last four months are super intensive.

Today, my instructor will select the dog for me in consultation with the rest of the team. The group has been observing me — from personality to physical capability.

I have no idea what breed or gender my dog will be, or how big, or cute, or interactive, or socially outgoing. So, everybody, hang onto the harness with me and let's see how this goes.

This is D-Day at the house. Doggy Day. Today we will meet our dogs.

In a very short time, we've



Doc, the two-year-old golden cross, at ease in the garden, has changed Jodey Porter's life. He's her guide to the outside world. COSMO CONDINA

been observed, judged, measured and digested.

We've learned the intricate mechanisms of our handmade dog harnesses.

We've walked all over Morristown, N.J., in the pouring rain and freezing cold. Through puddles and traffic and confusion. All to see how we are as walkers, communicators, survivors and how we deal with challenges.

The dogs are ready. We can hear them barking occasionally from their kennels across

the street from our residence. They want to work.

His name is Doc — not short for Doctor or Dock — just Doc.

He is a two-year-old golden cross. He's a good size, with short black fur, like a black lab.

He has long ears, a handsome face and big, brown eyes. He is a strong fast walker — which I am about to learn, firsthand.

Doc has spent his entire life since puppyhood, being assessed, measured, marked out, centered, adopted,

passed from place to place as his home, all readying him for service as a working dog for a blind owner.

At the age of eight weeks, he was taken from his puppy home, to a 350-acre property in New Jersey, where dogs for The Seeing Eye school all begin their journey to service.

At almost a year old, Doc is returned to the school's Morristown kennel to attend a four-month training. He joins a select few dogs chosen by the school to team up with a blind person.

These are not companions or pets but working dogs in every way. They have a different sense of themselves, a strong sense of identity, heritage, a relationship with other dogs, and other people that is different from just plain being a dog.

After I couple of weeks with Doc, I desperately wanted to know more about him. Here's how Docs first "parents" answered my questions:

Dog name: Doc; tattoo: 2022352; breed: lab/golden cross 3

"Doc was raised by our family of five in Pennsylvania. The two younger children raised Doc, with lots of help from everyone else."

"He had a backyard, with no fence, but lots of trees and grass. We play with him in the backyard by throwing a ball for fetch. Sometimes he brings it back and sometimes he just wants to run around. He loves this."

"Doc had a dog friend named Gracie, age 11, an English goldendoodle. When he gets too rough, she scolds him and he backs off. We notice when Gracie isn't feeling well he will lay next to her or lick her face. He is very sweet and sensitive."

"Doc is a real gem. He is so sweet, sensitive and

always wants to please. He loves to snuggle in and be close. He is very attentive to someone's mood and tone of voice. He seems like a wise ol' pup."

"Doc gets complimented wherever we go on how well-behaved and calm he is. We have loved raising him!"

"When it comes to toys, the bigger the better. He is a big chewer. He needs a chew toy or he will go looking for something."

"And Doc loves a sunny spot on the floor. He will keep moving himself into the sun as it moves along the floor so he can have full coverage. Doc at a young age seemed to play nicely with himself and his toys."

That's my boy. By the end of our first two days together we are both exhausted. And happy. Ready for what was to come.

Next: Just some of the thousands of things I need to learn (and still need to learn) to keep up my end of the guide dog partnership.

NOTL resident Jodey Porter is a former provincial assistant deputy minister of health and member of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Her story is told in collaboration with writer Tim Taylor.

Athlete and coach honoured at Wall of Fame ceremony

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

For Doug Groen, his dad being honoured on the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sports Wall of Fame was a good reason to make the trek from California.

On Friday, NOTL welcomed two new inductees to the Wall of Fame housed at the Meridian Credit Union Area.

Groen's late father, Wyland Groen, died in 2010 and was honoured during this year's ceremony as a life-changing basketball coach.

With the family no longer in the region, Groen made the long trek from California for the first time in more than 15 years to celebrate his father's achievement.

"It was amazing to see the street names that my friends lived on, Gale's gas station still exists," Groen told The Lake Report.

Following remarks from MPP Wayne Gates and



Left: Doug Groen and Don MacDougall, unveil the portrait of Wyland Groen that was added to the Sports Wall of Fame. Groen, son of late basketball coach Wyland Groen, made the trip from California for the ceremony. Right: MP Tony Baldinelli with inductee Katherine Smith, holding up her certificate. Smith is the first lawn bowler to hold a spot on the wall, which is located at Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Coun. Erwin Wiens and an introduction from Don MacDougall, Groen accepted the honour on behalf of his father.

"For (my dad) to be recognized by you is incredible. Remembering his actions from what is now decades ago is amazing. Thank you so much," Groen told the crowd.

MacDougall compared Wyland Groen's career as a coach to that of the movie "Hoosiers."

The 1986 film follows a coach through the course of a year in which he overcomes a number of issues and ultimately leads the team to win the state championship.

"Wyland Groen did that

32 times," MacDougall said. "The movie only tells one story, of one year, of one team."

He said that when Groen first arrived to teach at St. Davids Public School, it had no gym, but with dedication and work he was still able to teach students effectively. "For years, he was the person my family and my

kids really looked up to," MacDougall said.

Along with Groen, national lawn bowling champion Katherine Smith also was inducted to the Wall of Fame.

Supported by some of the NOTL lawn bowling team members, Smith is the first lawn bowler to grace the wall.

She thanked and recognized all 26 of her fellow lawn bowlers who helped her win district and provincial pins during her career.

"I cannot thank these people enough for what they have done for creating in me, not only a passion for the game but a passion for the competition," she said. juliasacco@niagaranon.com

Native Centre's **summer picnic** celebrates with friendly fun and togetherness

Paige Seburn
The Lake Report

It was a full-circle moment for Christine Pritchard outside the Niagara Regional Native Centre on Saturday.

Pritchard, the centre's Indigenous women's health worker, was one of many there on Aug. 17 for its community picnic.

"I used to be a camper here when I was a little child," she said. "So now that I'm an adult, and my daughter's here, it's full circle for me."

The picnic, held from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. outside the centre at 382 Airport Rd., is a way to give thanks to the community for its steadfast support and unity, Pritchard said.

The grounds buzzed with excitement as families enjoyed a variety of attractions on Saturday: kids raced into the inflatable water slip 'n



Roxanne Buck, the Native Centre's vice-president, and Sean Vanderklis, board president, serve up hot dogs at the picnic on Saturday. PAIGE SEBURN

slide, played with various toys and crafts and tried their hand at an inflatable archery range.

The aroma of barbecue filled the air as on-site grills sizzled with food, complemented by coolers of ice-cold beverages and plenty of seating for everyone.

The picnic also included a community survey for the centre's strategic plan, with a prize draw featuring an iPad, Apple Watch and AirPods.

Sean Vanderklis, the board president, said the picnic is their chance to show appreciation — while having a good time.

"Historically, we get bombarded with the daily life of work and stuff like that. It's a reminder to sit back, have fun and enjoy ourselves," he said.

"Very rarely do we get to come together and usually when we come together, it's to conduct a business."

Overall, he said that the

day was all about community spirit and good old-fashioned fun.

"It's a good reason to come to the centre and just enjoy our beautiful property," said Vanderklis.

Elly Thomson, who has lost count of how many of these picnics she's attended, said that each year leaves a lasting impression, further deepening her already-strong appreciation for the centre.

"The Native Centre has helped me through my whole life, my little sister too, and my parents," said Thomson. "Between rides, grocery cards, connections, programs, all of it."

She said that celebrations like these fill her with hope for her children's future.

She values the opportunities they provide for kids to enjoy a fun day, create positive memories and connect with the people in her circle.

The Lake Report

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

"A house is not a home unless it contains food and fire for the mind as well as the body."
 - Benjain Franklin

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Baby bird

Hot on the heels of last week's photo of a black-crowned night heron, this is the juvenile of last week's bird. A striking difference in colours from its parent. Photographer Frank Hayes captured this show at the same pond on Line 9 and Concession 3 roads on Aug. 20

Opinion

You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
 Columnist

More than three million people come to this town each year. They love it. So do those who live here. Until they have to sell their house.

The latest stats are in. They underscore what a unique place Niagara-on-the-Lake is and why leaving it has become more difficult in 2024.

First, we're swimming in listings. It's a record — in fact, the number of available houses is more than 60 per cent above the 10-year average

Meanwhile sales are 22 per cent below the same average. And half those offers are conditional on buyers being able to sell their existing digs. Good luck with that.

So if supply is over-

whelming demand, shouldn't prices be crumbling?

Of course not, silly. This is NOTL. We have black horses pulling white wagons driven by comely girls in top hats. We hold supercar shows on the main drag. We sell two ounces of gelato for seven bucks. We have flower gardens the Babylonians would envy. Plus wineries that look like Tuscan castles and airport terminals. How can we not be special?

Yes, we are. And the housing market reflects that. Good and bad.

Prices have barely budged even as inventory piles up. In fact, among current MLS listings 65 per cent of all those in NOTL are priced over a million bucks. Almost a quarter are asking more than \$2 million.

And a staggering 12 per cent are \$5 million or greater. (Compare that with the entire GTA at 48, 16 and three per cent respectively. Now you know where the "other" people live.)

But wait. High prices bring issues. Veteran local broker Doug Rempel is now calling it a "logjam." Agent Andrew Perrie says buyers are "fatigued" and "want a deal."

So while it takes, on average, just over 40 days to sell a house across the entire Niagara Region, in NOTL that soars to an extreme 102 days. For places over \$2 million, that's actually been running at over 300 days. For the two houses book-marking my street (both at \$4 million), those for sale signs may well decay before a buyer shows up.

Have we priced ourselves out of the economic reality in which most Canadians live?

Of course. Special, remember? We have that regal lord mayor. We had an actual war, with cannonballs, brigs and schooners. And every weekend we bow down to the god of a different tender fruit.

"There's no doubt this can be defined as a buyer's market," says Rempel, "but in my opinion, once the logjam breaks, demand will absorb the inventory and in 2025 supply and demand is likely to move us into a more balanced market and potentially increased prices."

And what about mortgage rates? The Bank of Canada has chopped twice. Mr. Market is predicting a third drop in the central bank rate just after Labour

Day and then again before Christmas. Home loans are already available in the four per cent range and by this time next year should be three per cent. Maybe even a tad less. Won't that bring the buyers flocking to town?

"Honestly, I genuinely believe the next cut will make a big difference," says Perrie. "Buckle up!"

And all the realtors have the same seller advice. Yes, this place is pricey, unique and atmospheric, but it's not Manhattan or Soho. Be realistic.

"Just because you've owned your home for a couple of years," cautions Perrie, "doesn't automatically award you a couple hundred thousand in equity."

Good message. But few are listening. Prices are stuck on hold — with a few exceptions. New listings are valued like we're back into that crazy pandemic funk. Reductions are rare.

If the interest rates keep falling, sellers figure, buyers will come. Who doesn't want to dwell in paradise? Just bring cash.

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

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LETTERS OF THE WEEK

The Lake Report's Aug. 15 editorial by editor-in-chief Richard Harley, "Poilievre is truly great — at pandering," has garnered attention from coast to coast. It also struck some nerves — with people who object to the Conservative leader's habit of embellishing, exaggerating and twisting the truth, and with supporters of Poilievre, who felt the commentary was unfair, inaccurate and just another case of the so-called liberal media bashing a right-wing political leader. The editorial has been written about in some conservative circles, been widely circulated on social media by members of the Liberal government and been reprinted or shared by many others. That resulted in a torrent of emails and letters to The Lake Report, some of which are published here and on Page 12. Unfortunately, many who wrote, on both sides, declined to have their comments published, fearing a backlash from those who hold different opinions.



Leaders should do what is **best** for the country

Dear editor:

Last week's edition of The Lake Report was enlightening.

At first, on the front page I noticed a picture of federal Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre and extensive coverage of his visit to Niagara-on-the-Lake listed on four pages.

It was easy to presume that the paper was endorsing the leader.

Then I read the editorial by editor-in-chief Richard Harley, "Poilievre is truly great — at pandering." My presumption was in fact an inaccurate assumption.

Mr. Harley clearly shows the style of politics this current leader endorses — confuse, mislead and keep to a message determined by discussions among them-

selves and those who think like them.

This is not becoming of a potential Prime Minister, who must rely on the advice of his bureaucracy.

As it happens, the opinion piece by Garth Turner with his explanation of a relationship with Rory, on the preceding page, provides a supportive explanation for the current Conservative leader's confusion and misinformation.

One's truth is not something that can be seen clearly by everyone.

Today's leaders should consider what is best for the country, not what they personally believe to be the truth.

*Derek Insley
Glendale*

Government subsidies erode trust in news organizations

Dear editor:

I read your Aug. 15 editorial, "Poilievre is truly great — at pandering."

Unfortunately, it wasn't compelling for me.

In my opinion, the sooner media organizations like yours stop accepting government subsidies, the sooner you'll regain the trust of the general public, whom I assume you would like as clients.

No matter how many rationalizations you dream up, accepting government

subsidies creates an inherent conflict of interest.

In my opinion, rather than complaining about those folks who want to stop the subsidies, your time would be better invested working on options for achieving a sustainable business model.

I hope you are able to figure something out. Local news is great; however, it needs to stand on its own feet.

*Kirk Morrison
Calgary*

Thank you for editorial

Dear editor:

Thanks for the excellent dissection of Canada's answer to Don Rickles, (Editorial: Poilievre is truly great — at pandering, The Lake Report, Aug. 15).

*Nick Swift
St. Catharines*

Editorial on Poilievre was **refreshing voice** of common sense

Dear editor:

Incredible editorial on Pierre Poilievre.

Thanks for being what may be the first voice of actual common sense.

Cheers and thank you again.

*Korey Schaefer
Toronto*

Accurate and careful assessment of Poilievre

Dear editor:

How refreshing to read a media analysis of Pierre Poilievre's public statements that finally does an accurate and careful assessment of what he actually says, ("Poilievre is truly great — at pandering," The Lake Report, Aug. 15).

It's exhausting to see the spin he delivers without any media pushback, by and large (also because he carefully avoids any media that might try to really question him).

Thank you for the public service you have provided, which I saw only because someone who I follow posted it on Twitter. You have made my day.

Keep up the great journalism.

*Sue Lott
Ottawa*

Good job by editor debunking Poilievre

Dear editor,

Thank you so much for your editorial on Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, ("Poilievre is truly great — at pandering," Aug. 15).

You gave a much-needed lesson to Canadian journalists on debunking Mr. Poilievre's crap.

It was especially powerful considering you also published three news stories reporting on his visit to the area.

*Reid Maltby
St. Catharines*

Editorial was **best** I've read in a while

Dear editor:

I just read your editorial, (Editorial: Poilievre is truly great — at pandering, The Lake Report, Aug. 15).

Thank you for one of the best news-related opinion pieces I've read in a long time. I wish more journalists and editors wrote as clearly as you did.

Wishing you and your team success.

*Nauman Anwar
Calgary*

Legacy media needs to **adapt** to the new world

Dear editor:

I'm no fan of Pierre Poilievre: I think he's trite, divisive and shallow.

But since we're long past the expiry date of the Liberals, I'll hold my nose and vote Conservative in the next federal election.

My criticism of your Aug. 15 editorial ("Poilievre is truly great — at pandering,"), though, isn't that you flailed Poilievre, but rather that you misrepresented the business model of Google,

Meta, etc. in your defence of the Online News Act.

It's not only Google, for example, that benefits from surfacing Canadian media links in its search results. They do, of course, because of the ad revenue it generates for them.

However, what it surfaces, are headlines, with links to the articles on the publisher's website. When a user clicked on those links, the website (e.g. Niagara Now) can make money by showing ads.

Every time someone clicks a link surfaced through a Google search, the website that published the article can earn revenue.

Many media outlets are reporting that they're losing a significant percentage of their web traffic and the ad dollars that went with it since the Facebook and Google bans. If Google, Facebook, et al., really were harming Canadian news media, shouldn't their ban have made Canadian news

media money?

Oh, but Google etc. make so much money, they can afford to pay. Is that the argument?

The financial straits of Canadian news media (specifically legacy print media) stems from the loss of classified ad revenue, so blame Craigslist or eBay, if you must.

Or better yet, do what all other businesses need to do. Adapt or perish.

*Kevin Leicht
NOTL*

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

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We can protect heritage — if we want to



Brian Marshall
Columnist

On Aug. 15, the committee of adjustment voted to defeat the application to sever the heritage property located at 187 Queen St.

This, despite the warning by the applicant's planner that, "If the consent were to be turned down, we would like to consolidate this application with the zoning application at the OLT (Ontario Land Tribunal) as one package," to be appealed before that provincial body.

And, there is no question that both the defeat of the rezoning application by council and the rejection of the severance application by the committee of adjustment will be taken before the Ontario Land Tribunal — the applicant's planner clearly stated that the paperwork requesting an appeal on the former decision had already been filed.

So, while members of the committee of adjustment listened to and weighed the presentations made against this severance overture by various Niagara-on-the-Lake's residents, the applicant remains steadfast in his determination to ignore the wishes of the community and proceed with his plan to erode — or, more accurately — sacrifice this precious piece of Old Town's cultural heritage landscape and history for financial gain.

No surprise there, considering his statement in an interview by David Burket published in Pelham Today ("The Conversation: A whistleblower blows," July 5, 2017) wherein he said, "Does somebody want to pick a fight with me? Because ask around, you really don't want to do that, because I don't back down."

But, to be clear, this issue is not about Mr. Hum-



An example of affordable housing in another small town on the other side of the country, Whistler, B.C., which Brian Marshall wrote about in a column in February. He says affordable housing is possible in NOTL, too. WHISTLER.CA

mel as an individual or a businessman.

No one achieves the success he has enjoyed without a singular focus on crossing the finish line first. And I should know, having spent decades of my life as a successful serial entrepreneur.

This pivotal historic property at Queen and Simcoe represents a rubicon — a line in the sand — which, if crossed, may very well be the tipping point that spells the end of a decades-long tradition of respecting and preserving the heritage of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

In the multiple, highly questionable planning applications this council has approved during its tenure in office, a couple of which are far larger (but design/planning permission still remains a question), it can be easy to forget that a modest property like 187 Queen St. can be that "single straw that breaks the camel's back."

There is a lesson to be learned from Save Our Rand Estate (SORE) — citizens can come together, utilize the incredible professional expertise of our residents to present and fund a successful overture before the land tribunal.

I know this town has the expertise, but do we collectively have the will to save this vitally important heritage asset?

That's up to you, dear readers.

Moving on, the town's

urban design committee has, with the recent resignation of one of its members, lost the minimum threshold of seats required to review and make recommendations on applications which will come before council.

“The town needs the committee back to functioning status in short order. It's my guess there is going to be a back-log of conditions contained within approved applications — not to mention new applications — which will be waiting to be addressed.”

Now, we must first understand that this committee's recommendations have been under attack by certain councillors and staff for the last year (see: "Arch-i-text: Questions about role of town's urban design committee," Aug. 17, 2023).

And, two volunteer members — both of whom possess recognized academic and experiential qualifications vis-à-vis architecture and/or design — were suspended and/or seemingly dismissed: decisions that

would seem to have been made behind closed doors.

This censure appears to have been based on comments by the individuals staff have apparently loosely characterized as "obstructionist."

However, in reviewing various "livestream" urban design committee meetings, the statements that staff appeared to take exception to were most often focused on respecting and predicating their recommendations through the primary screen of the town's official plan.

Apparently, from staff's perspective, the suggestion that the town's official plan should form the foundation of its review of applications as opposed to an obstacle that can safely be only peripherally referred to or ignored completely is contentious and obstructionist.

In any case, unless the two individuals in question are reinstated — and they choose to continue to serve — the urban design committee cannot perform its important mandate on behalf of the town and its residents.

Alternatively, the town could call for new volunteers to fill the vacancies.

In this case, the selection process needs to be open and transparent to the citizens of this community to ensure their best interests are represented by the new members of the committee.

In fact, it is my opinion that selection of volunteers

for any and all of the town's committees — normally done once every four years shortly after the municipal elections have been completed — should be equally open and transparent as opposed to the current practice of appointment behind closed doors.

That aside, the town needs the committee back to functioning status in short order. It's my guess there is going to be a back-log of conditions contained within approved applications — not to mention new applications — which will be waiting to be addressed.

On another front, I was very gratified to read Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa's comments in the "Home Sweet Home" series of articles in The Lake Report — particularly with respect to the utilization of excess town-owned properties for redevelopment ("Home Sweet Home: Mayor says he understands need for seniors housing," Aug. 15, 2024).

Specifically, wherein he suggested that, "The redevelopment could include a joint venture, a full sale, partial development or a land lease."

As regular readers of Arch-i-text may recall, in this column over past two years we have visited each of these concepts and provided examples of successful models underwritten the approaches both in Canada and the United States.

Put simply, when the cost of the land is removed from the total expense of development, the completed dwelling units are significantly more affordable.

And, on fallow land, this is truly where a land lease — properly formulated — combined with a joint venture really shines.

The town retains ownership of the lands in its portfolio, sets a minimal annual cost on a 50-year land lease, while the joint venture partners provide financial, legal and development services (etc.) that are facilitated by pre-established — based on clearly defined criteria for the property — municipal planning and permitting processes.

All of which creates the opportunity for the development of affordable housing and has been proven time and time again across North America.

This is why I find the lord mayor's assertion that NOTL housing won't be "affordable" somewhat questionable.

I suppose, if by "social housing" he is referring to the failed 20th-century model of "subsidized housing," he may be correct.

On the other hand, should he be suggesting that affordable housing — based on the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's 30 per cent of gross household income criteria — I would beg to differ.

As has been pointed out in this column before, (see: "Arch-i-text: More trouble, and potential solutions, to affordable housing crisis," Feb. 8, 2024, and "Arch-i-text: Rebuilding community with affordable homes," Jan. 19, 2022), it is eminently achievable provided the will and the vision is in place.

We can create places that our children, those employed within the town and our seniors can afford.

It has been and is being done elsewhere — why not here?

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


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Ford has legislature on a 19-week summer holiday



Wayne Gates
Special to The Lake Report

It has now been 11 weeks since the Ontario Legislature has sat at Queen's Park.

Doug Ford chose to start the summer break early — on June 6 — and he isn't going to have us return until Oct. 21, nearly two months from now.

That means for 19 weeks — more than a third of the year — MPPs will not have sat at Queen's Park.

I think this is utterly disgraceful.

Don't get me wrong, while I am not at Queen's Park, my work as your MPP continues. I am in my constituency offices every day, meeting with residents and working with my staff to solve problems and address concerns.

I am also out in the community, supporting local

events and celebrating the opening of new businesses right here in our community.

Just recently, I have been to such great local events as the annual Peach Festival on Queen Street and the St. Vincent de Paul Parishioners Peace Festival, the Past is Present Heritage Festival at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum and the St. Davids Lions Carnival.

But as we enjoy the company of neighbours at these community events and we celebrate all communities from St. Davids to Virgil to Old Town, we know that both here in Niagara and as a province, we face a series of serious challenges.

And as provincial legislators, that means we must be up at Queen's Park in the legislature, debating these issues, introducing bills and amendments, questioning the government where appropriate, and highlighting the concerns of residents.

Take two major issues we face as a community: housing and health care.

We have made some progress on the health



MPP Wayne Gates says it's time to get back to business, since Ontario Premier Doug Ford decided to take an early summer break and not return until Oct. 21. MIDJOURNEY

care file, as I was able to work collaboratively with Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and town council to get a nurse practitioner back practising in town earlier this year. But we know we have a lot more work to do, particularly when it comes to primary care.

We know that that percentage of physicians practising family medicine has dropped from 77 per cent in 2008 to 65 per cent in 2022, and that 2.3 million Ontarians don't have a family doctor.

About 36 per cent of NOTL's population in 2021

was 65 years and over — almost double the provincial average — and we know seniors have more complex health care challenges. And, as of earlier this year, close to 8,000 residents in Niagara-on-the-Lake are not registered to receive services through the Niagara North Family Health Team.

We must do more as a province to recruit and retain physicians to communities such as Niagara-on-the-Lake, and we must fund our publicly delivered health care system appropriately to address these growing challenges. And, to speak frankly, the solutions to these problems can only be dealt with at Queen's Park.

Then there are issues regarding housing, particularly for seniors in our community. We know there is a growing demand for seniors housing in NOTL that allows seniors to age in place.

Seniors want to stay in the community they love in their golden years and that means the province must invest more retirement, long-term care and assisted living facilities that can

provide appropriate housing for seniors.

The province must also work proactively with municipal governments like NOTL's to invest in infrastructure that can support this type of housing.

Additionally, passing my motion to create a caregiver support benefit — a direct financial benefit for unpaid — will take some of the burden off our long-term care and retirement home system by allowing more seniors to age in place with supports from their families and loved ones.

A caregiving benefit of just \$400 could save the province close to half a billion dollars.

We must be back at Queen's Park as soon as possible to address these problems and work proactively and collaboratively to find solutions.

I'm calling on the Premier to do the right thing and have us back at the Legislature immediately to get back to work for the people of Ontario.

Wayne Gates is the NDP member for the provincial riding of Niagara Falls.

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Government shouldn't subsidize media

Dear editor:
I'm trying not to vote for Pierre Poilievre, but when small-l liberals express views like the ones in The Lake Report's editorial, it's hard not to, ("Poilievre is truly great — at pandering," Aug. 15).

Because, you see, only liberals are the arbiters of truth.

They couldn't be wrong and the Online News Act couldn't be immoral, a law literally designed to force companies to pay Canadian media for the crime of, what? What egregious sin have they committed? Increasing the reach of Canadian media exponentially for free — the horror.

Elon Musk alone is owed a debt of gratitude by The Lake Report for the dissemination of its editorial on X to millions of people who normally wouldn't have read it or heard about our little town.

But, like most things in Canada, our government lets no good deed go unpun-



Alexander Evans says news agencies should simply charge money for their journalism, instead of accepting subsidies.

ished. And while The Lake Report has the temerity to blame Meta for standing up to a government bully because it won't be coerced without a fight, I commend Meta.

You'd think that all hope is lost for Canadian media in today's technological age, but the editorial — completely objective, of course — also conveniently leaves out the simple and effective free market solution to this "problem:" paywalls.

Finally, while the federal

act might not be "a censorship law, full stop," the outcome of the government's intervention naturally leads to censorship.

By forcing Meta's hand, the Liberals have restricted Meta users from seeing Canadian media because to do so would lead to the government violating Meta's shareholder's rights. So, yes, while not technically a censorship law the outcome is the same.

The Local Journalism Initiative, well, Canadian

media outlets are struggling, and you must help, they must be subsidized. This is the rational viewpoint, don't you know?

A rational person couldn't believe, as I do, that government shouldn't subsidize any industry, especially journalism. Because maybe, we worry about incentives. We worry that the government inserting itself into the economy will lead to negative, unintended consequences.

I think what motivated me most to write this letter is the word contained in the editorial's headline — "pandering."

While I'm sure Poilievre is great at pandering, he's a politician. Let's not pretend liberal media isn't great at it as well.

What makes liberal media worse than Pierre are their claims to hold the moral high ground. Fortunately, people are starting to wake up to the fact they don't.

Alexander Evans
Virgil

Great editorial on Poilievre. Local journalism is important

Dear editor:

I want to compliment you on and thank you for your great Aug. 15 editorial "Poilievre is truly great — at pandering," not just for your fact checking of what Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre said, but for your explanation and defence of local journalism.

I grew up in Burford, a small village in southwestern Ontario, and the weekly Burford Advance was an integral part of our community. Sadly gone now, so there is no source of local news.

I also worked in NOTL for a few years back in the 1980s at Shaw and I always read the local paper. I wasn't a resident, but I worked in the town for 10 months of every year.

I wanted to know what was going on in the town, especially with the town council, because it might affect me and my job. I also wanted to know when and where the garage sales and bake sales were happening.

I agree with your comments about "citizen journalists." Like many, I studied my trade at university, put in my 10,000 hours to hone and perfect my skills. I have a dim view of people who think they can pick up a camera (or a hammer, in my case) and claim the same title I worked so hard to earn.

Thanks for your wonderful editorial and keep up the great work. It's appreciated.

Stewart Jeans
Ottawa

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Gated community is not exclusionary or pretentious

Dear editor:
Ross's Ramblings ("An extremely busy weekend in our wee town," Aug. 15) sound more like rumblings and again, as a resident of George Manor, I feel obliged to enlighten him.
Residents often choose to live in a gated community because they can no longer physically manage to maintain a pleasant living space and have elected to pay for their real estate to be looked after by professionals.
Our average homeowners do not regard our street as being exclusionary or pretentious but simply because we cannot rely on the town to enforce parking restrictions, we must have some semblance of order.
Motorist still drive on our private road despite the signs and occasionally attempt to park in our area allocated for visitor parking without giving a thought



A photo at Royal Albion Place warns people that only invited guests are welcome. FILE

about the fact that we must maintain it and keep it in good order.
Even the lampposts that line the street are our community's responsibility. We pay for their maintenance, including the light they provide.
We must also keep our road clean and pay a private company to plow George Manor in the winter. We must have the sewers along

the street cleaned regularly and maintain the greenery at each end of George Manor.
Thanks to our accommodating neighbours at both ends of the street, we have managed to agree on an arrangement that benefits everyone.
Whatever aspirations I had for Ross when he first talked about the exclusionary nature of George Manor, have melted with the snow.
I now see that Ross chooses to see only the surface and fails to dig deeper. Our patron saint he is not.
But, if he thinks he can convince the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to take over our street, my February 2023 offer of erecting a statue of him at the entrance to George Manor still stands.
*Norman Paraschuk
NOTL*

Canadian government must stop selling weapons to Israel

Dear editor:
On Aug. 20, eight Mennonites from area local churches — including three people from Niagara-on-the-Lake — joined a national day of action calling for a two-way arms embargo on Israel and an end to the arms trade.
Canada continues to use taxpayers' dollars to fund and arm the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people.
Tens of thousands have been killed, nearly 100,000 have been permanently disabled and orphaned, and millions have been displaced.
Just last week, the U.S. Congress approved the purchase of 50,000 highly explosive mortars made in Quebec as part of a weapons package for Israel.
As Mennonites, we strongly condemn the weapons industry and those who profit from arms manufac-



A group protests the selling of weapons to Israel outside St. Catharines MP Chris Bittle's office on Tuesday evening.

turing and sales. It's our responsibility as members of historic peace churches to speak up about injustice and oppression whenever and wherever we encounter it.
We envision a world that places people before profit. That's why we joined the Niagara Palestine Coalition at MP Chris Bittle's office on Aug. 20 to call on the federal Liberal government

to cease the import and export of weapons, components, and military technology to Israel.
There is no bomb that can create peace. There is no act of genocide that can lead to freedom.
We are all connected and an injury to one is an injury to all. We all deserve to live.
*Kit Andres
NOTL*

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NOTLers rally against weapon sales

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Some Niagara-on-the-Lake residents are standing up for Palestine — and they hope more people will get involved.

Kit Andres is known for working with the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change and is also an organizer with the bi-national group Mennonite Action.

“As a Mennonite, it’s my duty and my responsibility to speak up against injustice wherever I see it and right now there’s an ongoing genocide in Palestine,” Andres said.

Andres was joined by a group of about 50 participants outside Liberal MP Chris Bittle’s office in St. Catharines Tuesday afternoon.

Participants gathered to question Bittle about why Canada is continuing to sell weapons to Israel that will be used in Gaza.

The gathering, organized by the Niagara Palestine Coalition, displayed the Arms Embargo Now letter, signed by 44 members of Parliament, none of whom are from the Niagara Region.



Kit Andres, pictured here protesting outside of St. Catharines MP Chris Bittle’s office on Tuesday, says the Canadian government is effectively supporting genocide in Palestine by continuing to sell weapons bound for Israel. JULIA SACCO

Participants calling for an arms embargo gathered in the MP’s office parking lot, chanting, holding signs and donning Palestinian keffiyehs and flags.

John Rempel was among the other NOTLers at the rally.

“The goal of today is to get a higher profile in terms of what’s going on,” Rempel said.

He said that confirmation of Canada manufacturing arms for Israel raised the urgency for government action.

“There was a recent discovery on the very spe-

cific documents in terms of what’s going on regarding Americans sending arms to Israel that were made in Canada. That was suspected but not known before,” he said

Rempel is involved with the Niagara Palestine Coalition and also recognized attendees from Grace Mennonite Church in the crowd.

Both Andres and Rempel hope more NOTL residents will get involved in the stand for a free Palestine.

“It’s a situation that is so extreme, where a whole nation is being destroyed. My question is why aren’t there

more Canadians demanding that the government adhere to its decision that it would press for a ceasefire?” Rempel said.

Andres said it’s easy to get involved.

Following the Niagara Palestine Coalition in its website or at @905palestine on social media is a good first step. The group has events and rallies most weekends.

“Events like today are a great example of the community coming together, raising our collective voice for peace and to end a genocide,” Andres said.

Shred-it fundraiser supports palliative care

Paige Seburn
The Lake Report

Practical service with a personal touch, plus an opportunity to support a heartfelt cause? Not a bad deal for the folks at the annual Shred-it fundraiser this past Saturday.

Community members arrived at Simpson’s Pharmacy the morning of Aug. 17 with boxes full of confidential documents, which were taken from their cars by volunteers with the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care and moved into Shred-it trucks.

Then, they were shredded inside the trucks and, later, transported for secure disposal.

The palliative care group’s annual campaign, which ran from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, helps raise funds to support its programs, which provide those living with a serious illness both the medical and quality-of-life support they need.

Saturday’s shredding raised \$6,037.40, said Bonnie Bagnulo, executive director of the palliative care service.



A volunteer unloads a box of papers from a car while another dumps the papers into a bin that will be loaded into a Shred-it truck. PAIGE SEBURN

What started as a modest program has grown into a significant, large-scale operation, said Bagnulo.

It was initially started by the women’s auxiliary of the old NOTL hospital and Meridian Credit Union as a safe and convenient way for people to dispose of sensitive documents, she said.

Over the years, as the community’s support grew, so did the group’s resources, she said. It now has multiple Shred-it trucks to ensure everyone is taken care at the

fundraiser.

“We want to make sure that nobody gets turned away, especially after they’ve saved up all their confidential papers, knowing they’re going to shred them and make a donation to our organization,” said Bagnulo.

With more trucks on-site, and the support of sponsors like developer Rainer Hummel — who provided an additional shredding truck and covered the cost of cardboard disposal — she said

that they were able to keep prices low and ensure it ran smoothly and efficiently.

Disposal cost \$8 for one box of papers or \$20 for three boxes.

The group usually has about 25 dedicated volunteers for the fundraiser, making it all possible, said Bagnulo.

Volunteer Marlene Bridgman, who has been a dedicated part of the Shred-It campaign for several years, said she is delighted with its continued success.

“It’s just amazing that so many people come and support this. And it’s amazing that they keep coming back every year,” she said.

It’s heartwarming to see the community’s support and unity, said Bridgman.

Shred-It employee Chris Dahmer, a familiar face at the fundraiser for nearly a decade, said he appreciates the program’s positive impact.

“I’m glad we can help out the community and palliative care,” he said. “It’s a great service for a lot of older people and those who don’t have a shredder at home, too.”



From left, Drew Plummer as Dickon, Gryphyn Karimloo as Colin, David Adams as Ben Weatherstaff and Gabriella Sundar Singh as Mary in "The Secret Garden." The show is on now at the Shaw Festival. MICHAEL COOPER

'The Secret Garden' blossoms on Shaw stage

"THE SECRET GARDEN"

(out of five)

Royal George Theatre, 2 hours 15 minutes. Ends Oct. 13. *Writer: Frances Hodgson Burnett. Adapted by Jay Turvey and Paul Sportelli. Director: Jay Turvey. A play with songs.*

Penny-Lynn Cookson
Special to The Lake Report

Mystery and magic are in the very words and idea of a "secret garden." We want to know more. Where is it? What's in it? Why is it a secret?

So, the Shaw Festival's decision to create a new version of this much loved, classic children's story written by Frances Hodgson Burnett in 1909 seems an appropriate choice for our garden obsessed Niagara-on-the-Lake.

So how does this "Secret Garden" grow? Fitfully.

The promise is all there in the fresh shoots of spring appearing after the barren winter, but the expected blaze of summer blossoms is not. Nature's glory is visually lacking.

The expectation of this reality is superseded by a demand on our imagination. We will have to work harder in this garden because the rewards are not immediately obvious.

Mary Lennox, aged 10, is a spoiled, unhappy child living in India, whose neglectful British parents have left her in the care of servants.

She awakens one morning to silence. Her parents and nanny are dead of cholera, the servants fled. She is alone.

Mary (Gabriella Sundar Singh) is sent to England to live with her widowed uncle, Archibald Craven (David Alan Anderson).

She is met by the no-nonsense housekeeper, Mrs. Medlock (a crisp Sharry Flett) and transported by train and carriage (both brilliantly choreographed) to Misselthwaite Manor, a 600-year-old grand house on the edge of the Yorkshire Moors.

Although confined to her rooms and instructed not to explore the house of 100 rooms and closed doors, Mary can play outdoors. She meets the brusque but kind gardener, Ben Weatherstaff (David Adams), from whom she learns of the walled secret garden.

He teaches her to gently befriend Robin Redbreast (Tama Martin) who helps Mary to find the key to the locked gate.

Mary is liberated. She wants to bring the desolate garden back to life after 10 years of neglect. A sensitive village lad, Dickon (Drew Plummer), who charms the animals and birds and knows much about nature will help. Together with spade, pruning, digging and seeds, they restore the roses and garden.

Cries in the house heard by Mary are met by denial by servants as "the wind." She investigates along long corridors whose walls hold ancestral family portraits,

cleverly presented by the actors standing within picture frames.

Mary discovers a bed-ridden boy of 10, whose fearful screams, tantrums and hysterics have led to his isolation and misery. He is Colin (powerfully played by Gryphyn Karimloo).

He is her cousin, neglected by his father and believing he is going to die. Mary has a new goal, save Colin. Get him outside, to the garden, which will restore his health!

Mary's young maid Martha (Jacqueline Thair) and Mrs. Sowerby (Patty Jamieson), intervene to have Mr. Craven return from his constant travels to Misselthwaite Manor.

Drawn to the garden where his beloved wife fell, thereafter dying in childbirth, he is astonished to see his son who has the grey eyes of his mother, walking toward him. They embrace and reunite. Joy and happiness abound.

Although the wait for a profusion of roses, daffodils, snowdrops and lilies was futile, we were rewarded by the vastness of the Yorkshire Moors beyond the glass windows and the play of light suggesting the dark purple black and grey of winter and the soft blue of spring.

Traditional British songs, played by the Musical Quintet, featured many nature songs such as "Blue Bells, Cockle Shells," "May Garland" and "I Sowed the Seeds of Love."

Costumes designed by Judith Bowden thoughtfully

display leaves and flowers. Mrs. Medlock's dark suits emphasize her stern personality.

One wishes the animals and robin to have been more lifelike. In myth, Robin Redbreasts are the messengers of lost loved ones. They are small, fluffy, with big eyes and red bibs. They are not white pterodactyls.

Dickon's cub fox has a sweet head but the body of a deflated airport windsock. The baby lamb taken for Colin to bottle-feed looked plastic. The focus of the children in the audience was unaltered, so imagination is clearly more accepting with this age group than with their elders.

What we experienced was how the friendship of children from disparate backgrounds working together came to understand themselves and others through fortitude and a love of nature.

It is a story of death, loss, relocation and isolation overcome by resilience and a belief in magic. The garden's rebirth and restoration enabled the recovery of a family nearly destroyed by death and loss. All were united through the transformational power of nature and the magic of the secret garden.

As Colin said, "Even if it isn't real magic we can pretend it is. Something is there — something."

And that is the enduring magic of theatre — isn't it?

Penny-Lynn Cookson is an arts and culture historian, writer and lecturer living in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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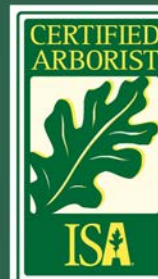
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TEAM OF THE WEEK

St. Davids Cold Storage U7



The U7 St. David's Cold Storage team is one of The Lake Report's featured Teams of the Week. With the season wrapping up soon, they will be among the Niagara-on-the-Lake Soccer Club teams participating Saturday in the club's annual closing festival. Games and festivities will be held at Centennial Sports Park in Virgil. The soccer festival coincides with the NOTL Hockey Association's annual equipment swap at the arena from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



The NOTL Golf Club men's Ryder Cup team edged out the women's Solheim team to retain the Pro's Cup. SUPPLIED



The Shaw Festival faces off against the Stratford Festival in an away game last year. TERRY BABIJ

Women dominate but men **retain Pro's Cup**

Harry Huizer
Special to The Lake Report

Usually in sports, when a team wins four out of seven matches, it's enough to take home a championship.

Well, golf can be different, as the annual match between the men's Ryder Cup team and the women's Solheim squad showed last Friday at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club.

The women outplayed the men in most of the matches, winning four, tying one and only losing two. But they lost on cumulative points by a score of 23-19.

Let me explain.

The pairs matches pitted seven teams of women against seven men's twosomes over 18 holes.

The front nine was a team scramble and for the back nine, a better ball format was used. Six points were at stake in each match.

It was a perfect sunny summer morning that started with team pictures and even some humorous trash talk before the first match teed off.

Under captain Martha Cruikshank, the women hoped to win back the Pro's Cup. And they almost did.

Some outstanding golf was played on both sides. Newly crowned men's seniors champ Patrick Craig and partner Drew Porter reeled off six birdies in a row to shoot 30 on the front nine.

However, the women's

duo of Judy Mantle and Ginny Green stormed back on the second nine to win the match 4-2. The men were in shock.

In another match, women's club champion Louise Robitaille shot a 1-under 35 on the back nine to stun lefties Jim McMacken and John Reynolds, leading to another 4-2 victory for the women. Again, a shocker.

This pattern of dominance continued all morning as the women racked up four match play wins, all by scores of 4-2. Another close match ended in a 3-3 tie.

It seemed the trophy might be returning to the women. But wait.

The men's side won two tight matches 6-0, which gave them enough points

to squeak through and pull off a 23-19 win.

Glen Murray and Don Allen and Ted Carmichael and Peter Falconer got the 12 crucial points needed to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

The 6-0 score doesn't tell you how close the two matches were. And it almost doesn't seem fair after the women dominated by winning the majority of the matches.

They played great as a team, but the men won the cup based on points.

At a luncheon afterward, club pro Max Murphy presented the men with the coveted Pro's Cup.

We're sure the women's team will be working on a way to recapture the trophy next year.

50th annual Shaw vs. Stratford cricket match this Monday

Staff
The Lake Report

The folks behind two of Canada's biggest theatre festivals are set to face off this summer in a friendly, but spirited, battle on the field — and the home team hopes to emerge victorious.

The Shaw Festival will go head-to-head against the Stratford Festival on Monday for the 50th anniversary of the Shaw vs. Stratford cricket match.

The two teams alternate hosting every year, with Niagara-on-the-Lake set to host this year's match on Monday, Aug. 26 at Veterans Memorial Park. The annual match is a tradition that began in 1974.

Last year's match was held at Lower Queen's Park in Stratford, with Stratford clinching the win.

The Shaw team, captained by actor Jeff Irving,

is looking for redemption this year, as well as the chance to hoist the coveted Butch Blake trophy (named after the late actor Mervyn "Butch" Blake, who was with the Stratford Festival for more than 42 consecutive seasons).

The teams are typically made up of members of the acting ensembles, stage managers, designers, management, technicians, crew, administration, support staff and even board members.

"This is a unique event each year because it's the only time that so many members of our country's two largest repertory theatre companies come together to celebrate one another," Shaw actor Martin Happer said in an email.

"This being the 50th anniversary of the first match makes it that much more special."

The match will begin at 12 p.m. on Aug. 26.

Bounce back: Pickleball courts reopen

Paige Seburn
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's pickleball courts were back in action last weekend — and players were thrilled to return to their favourite outdoor sport after a lengthy closure.

The courts at Virgil Sports Park opened with extended hours to celebrate their reopening on Saturday, Aug. 17, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday, Aug. 18, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Pickleball enthusiasts Nicole Lombard and Lauren Viviers were ecstatic about returning to the courts.

"We're just happy that the courts are finally open after years of waiting," said Lombard.

The reopening comes after significant delays caused by the need to install sound barriers to address noise complaints from nearby residents.

In 2022, a two-year ban was placed on playing pickleball at the Virgil courts after a Welland court ruled the town and NOTL Pickleball Club had violated the town's noise bylaw — and ordered the town and club to pay fines of \$1,000.

The addition of the barriers, aimed at balancing community concerns with recreational needs, has al-



NOTL's pickleball players were happy to be back on the Virgil courts this past weekend after they were closed for two year due to a complaint from a neighbour. PAIGE SEBURN

lowed the courts to finally welcome players back.

Following this special weekend, regular play resumed on Monday, according to the schedule outlined on the town's website.

Club president Dragana Simao noted, "We now have over 700 members. The option of six outdoor courts is a bonus to our members, allowing them to enjoy the outdoors while playing their favourite sport."

The repurposed courts are open to non-members of the club and NOTLers and their friends and families are welcome to play.

Board member Tim Luton said, "We're more than happy to see non-club members using the courts. It's

all good for the sport. There are six courts available and plenty of times for both the public and members to enjoy."

Lombard said that despite slipperiness caused by the rain last weekend, these are nice courts to play on.

And it's amazing to be playing outdoors again, Viviers said, especially since it's the right season for it.

Longtime player and NOTL Pickleball Club member Lesley Hidvary, who began using the Virgil courts after they first opened in 2019, said she was excited about the reopening.

The park is one of her favourite spots for pickle-

ball since it's right around the corner from her home, she said.

Hidvary, who would play seven days a week if her knees co-operated, said there is an important social aspect of the game.

"I know most of the people because I've been playing for so long, but you also meet lots of new people too," she said, highlighting how the reopening of the courts has sparked a renewed sense of excitement and community among area pickleball players.

For information and to see the public schedule, visit notl.com/recreation-events/programs-activities/pickleball.



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.
Category: STARTS WITH "G"

Grab some shade in one of these turreted garden houses that as the name suggests is good for a nice view.

Last issue:

Category: WORLD OF BARBIE

Clue: In 1989 Barbie became an ambassador for this UN agency that helps children around the world.

Answer: What is UNICEF?

Answered first by: Jane Morris

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Claudia Grimwood, Margie Enns, Lynda Collet, Jeff Lake, Bob Wheatley, Howard Jones, Pam Dowling, Jesse Agnew, Daniel Smith, Jim Dandy, Catherine Clarke, Nancy Rocca, Sheila Meloche, Sylvia Wiens, Hedy Wiebe, Marla Percy, Marjory Walker-Barone, Tuija Johansson, Elaine Landray, Esther VanGorder, Wade Durling, Sue Rautenberg

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Across

- 9. Strangle (9)
- 10. "Steady State" astronomer Sir Fred --- (5)
- 11. Creatures (7)
- 12. Senior Australian politician (7)
- 13. Deliberate destruction of property (9)
- 14. Career golfers (4)
- 17. Six legged creatures (7)
- 20. Superficial area (7)
- 21. Short death notice (4)
- 22. Not here (9)
- 27. Makes sorrowful (7)
- 28. Regulate (7)
- 29. Essentials (5)
- 30. Genuine (9)

Down

- 1. Dam across the Nile (5)
- 2. Second-largest continent (6)
- 3. Timidity (9)
- 4. Maiden (6)
- 5. Continues obstinately (8)
- 6. Ring (5)
- 7. Emotional outburst (8)
- 8. Downcast (9)
- 15. Luxurious car (9)
- 16. Northern Russian city (9)
- 18. Superficial (4-4)
- 19. Rep (8)
- 23. Stir to action (6)
- 24. Something unusual (6)
- 25. Animal (5)
- 26. Absence of light (5)

Crossword Puzzle

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
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Last issue's answers

1	M	A	T	E	R	I	A	L	H	U	S
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10	R	E	T	A	I	L	E	R	U	U	
	S	S	N	E	N	V	I	S	A	G	E
12	N	O	M	I	N	E	E	E	U	G	
	M	V	S	U	N	S	T	A	B	L	E
14	R	E	V	E	R	S	E	S	T	L	E
15	M	D	S	E	L	E	C	T	R	I	C
22	A	N	O	F	W	A	R	X	O	R	
	S	O	E	S	P	A	R	T	A	N	
24	C	O	R	R	I	D	O	R	L	P	N
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27	A	R	K	A	N	S	A	S	I	D	A
	Y	Y	H	P	I	N	P	O	I	N	T

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8			5					9
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What AI can **teach us** about the human brain



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

In the last two decades there has been much talk about how artificial intelligence is modelled after the brain — what with terms such as “neural networks” and “deep learning” commonly used to describe some features of how AI works.

But some scientists with expertise in both neuroscience and AI suggest that AI may also teach us how the brain works.

Up to now, most profitable work on the brain has been based on simple systems, simple species and therefore simple brains, and in more complex animals, studying more manageable parts of the brain such as the visual system from retina to the sensory cortex, the motor system from the motor cortex to motor neurons in the spinal cord, the auditory system from the inner ear to the temporal

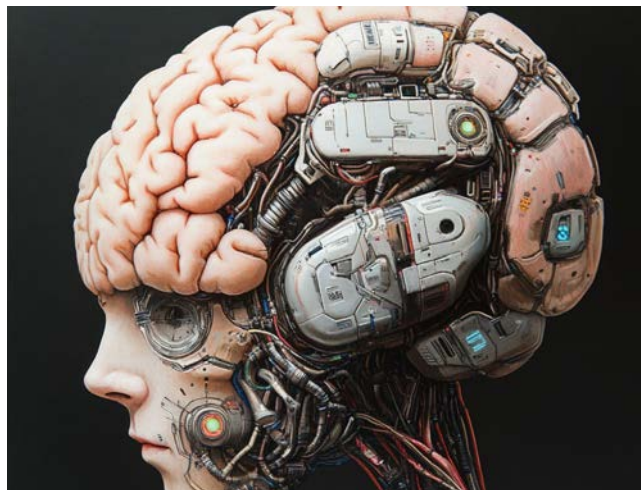
lobe, the olfactory system, somatosensory system including touch-pressure, thermal and pain sensations from the periphery to the sensory cortex, memory, position sense, transmission in nerve fibers and synaptic transmission and so on — all manageable bite-sized pieces of the mammalian nervous system.

Perhaps the biggest bugaboo of all has been consciousness: one of those all-embracing but enigmatic words that means very different things to physicians, neurophysiologists, psychologists and even physicists such as Penrose and Schrodinger.

Francis Crick, who won a Nobel Prize for his work in DNA, spent the later decades of his life wrestling with the neural nature of consciousness — to little avail.

Most people equate consciousness with awareness of self, others and the environment in a meaningful manner, which adds more words but little clarity.

Some scientists, such as Oliver Sachs, thought questions about the consciousness weren't worth the effort, that it was a pit for all except philosophers and that the question would quietly disappear as we



The human brain, like AI, operates by managing and making use of large data sets, then picking and choosing what's appropriate for a given task. MIDJOURNEY

better understood how the brain operated in general. Maybe so.

As I write this essay on AI and the brain, I'm aware of writing with my right hand, steadying the notebook with my left hand and a sentence-by-sentence flow of ideas, but little else, except the garden when I look up from time to time — but little else.

That may be what I'm aware of, but while I'm pondering and writing, my brain receives countless messages from sensory receptors, to update it about what's going on in the world outside and within the body, all of which I'm blissfully unaware, thank goodness. I'm also aware that if I

change my thought or what I'm aware of and my focus shifts, it's almost impossible — for me at least — to hold two or more separate thoughts simultaneously.

It's somewhat akin to visualizing numbers in my mind: when the next number pops into view in my mind, the previous one disappears.

You may be better at this game than I am, but it makes a point, when our attention and awareness changes, what last held our attention tends to fade away, at least momentarily.

Our brain is capable of nimbly shifting what it attends to and what held our attention moments ago drops below our attention

threshold. This pattern of shifting attention goes on all the time.

Some temporary attention holders may not be so temporary: the brain continues to work on them out of our awareness and what was temporary a few minutes, hours or even days before, may pop back into our awareness — sometimes with solutions to whatever we were fussing about.

That's where AI comes in. Like the human brain, AI acquires large databases (sets for AI), which cover a broad range of subjects sequestered in different sets.

The issue is: how does AI choose from among different sets of data to better focus and solve the problem or question at hand?

Some have likened this process to small staff meetings in a large company with a lot of different data sets offering specialized and sometimes competing information for attention.

That's where intelligence comes in: managing and making best use of large data sets and picking and choosing which set is most appropriate to a given task, without losing touch with other data sets.

That's also what AI is learning to do better. It's also what the brain effort-

lessly does — most of the time.

For example, much of the primary information from the sensory, motor and emotional realms come together in the association cortex in the parietal, temporal and frontal lobes.

The latter provide integrated and potentially actionable information that may prompt us to become aware of whatever situation is going on, while tamping down competing information below the threshold of our awareness.

That's probably how the brain operates and, in like fashion, AI operates.

Is the latter conscious and/or aware? Probably — if it walks like a duck, it is a duck.

The difference is that one, the brain, is carbon-based and the other, AI, is silicon-based and, incidentally, one down from carbon in the periodic table.

So much for consciousness and awareness — although I know I haven't heard the end of this debate from colleagues.

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.

Games reflections and suggestions from an Olympic worker



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson
Columnist

Much like here in Niagara-on-the-Lake after a rainstorm, the Seine River water quality was a major concern at the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

We spend big money in Niagara to mitigate E. coli health risks — Queen's Royal Beach was closed as

of Aug. 21, for the umpteenth time this summer, due to E. coli.

And in Paris they reportedly spent more than \$2 billion to make the Seine at least swimmable for the athletes.

If we can swim (sometimes) at Queen's Royal Park or Ryerson Park, the world's best and toughest can surely swim in the Seine, eh? Just don't inhale or open your eyes.

I lived in two Olympic villages, so I speak with some historical perspective.

In Munich, 1972, I was a busboy in the 5,000-seat cafeteria called the Mensa. I was among 152 food service employees, from 87 countries, who lived in a nine-storey apartment building in the village. Just imagine the

gemütlichkeit (good cheer)!

Four years later in Montreal, I was a dining room supervisor in the athletes village. What joie de vivre!

In 1974, I was a T-shirt printer and salesman at the British Commonwealth Games in Christchurch, New Zealand. Lots of “G'day, mates” and cold beer.

The Paris Olympics were televised with lots of pizzazz and historical perspective and provided countless iconic images of Paris landmarks. Bien fait, les français and les parisiens.

Allow me to make a few Olympic suggestions:

Yeah, our Canadian team did OK, with more medals than ever before. Are we getting better, or are there just that many more events?

So many weird, youth-oriented, television-friendly events. What's with synchronized diving and co-ed running races?

Australia won twice as many medals as Canada with almost half as many people. My mathematics is sometimes suspect, but does this mean Aussies are almost four times as athletic as Canadians?

I want to see mixed synchronized pole vaulting. Mixed synchro high hurdles would be a riot to watch. And mixed high jump. They could approach the bar from opposite directions.

People from warmer countries seem to enjoy a big advantage in the Summer Olympics, so let's have more Winter Olympic events that Canadians could win.

How about dog sled racing? Olympic snowshoeing? Both flat trail and moguls. No drone spying allowed.

To give Canadians more real medal chances at the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles, let's replace open water ocean rowing with hot tub log rolling. Dressed in tight red-and-black checked T-shirts.

I must ask what happened to our easy-to-identify and extremely patriotic Canadian flag red rowing and swimming suits?

Both sports are hard enough to follow, but our proud and svelte Olympians used to be quickly identifiable in their bright red suits.

Lately, we have joined most other countries with boring, navy-blue-and-

black, very tight and revealing outfits. My research shows that Nike and its mega sponsorship dollars dictated that change.

Is nothing sacred? If our Canadian Olympic bureaucrats don't stand up to the International Olympic Committee, the Australians are going to get boomerang throwing into future Games. And then the Swiss will want yodelling.

Where will this Olympic creativity end? I hope the smart IOC people change their minds and decide to leave break dancing in the Summer Games.

Now that was a great sport to watch.

On to Los Angeles, eh? With Tom Cruise jumping out of an airplane.



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The Great Gorge Route

This image is an artist's rendition of the Queenston to north Niagara Falls section of the Niagara Belt Line/Great Gorge Route. The Niagara River is shown running side-to-side with the United States at the top and Canada at the bottom. The beige route along the river with red-coloured rail cars depicts the route. Along the left is the escarpment with Brock's Monument near the top. As your eyes skim across

toward the right you see the land where Highway 405 is today, the Niagara Glen, the whirlpool with an aerocar and the Michigan Central Railway Bridge on the right. Visitors could board the cars in Niagara Falls, head north on the Canadian side along the top of the Niagara Gorge, cross at the Queenston-Lewiston Suspension Bridge, head south along the river shoreline and then cross back into Canada at the

Honeymoon Bridge in Niagara Falls. This image came from a pamphlet that also contains an image of the Niagara Falls section as well as information about the route and other local landmarks. Service ended in 1932 on the Canadian side and in 1935 on the American side. Known as the "most magnificent scenic route in the world," it carried more than 13 million passengers.



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Ornamental grass adds **movement**



GROWING TOGETHER 

Joanne Young
Columnist



Joanne Young says ornamental grasses, like this golden variegated hakonechloa grass (Japanese forest grass), can help bring your garden to life with movement and motion.

Summer is the season when grasses really perform, providing motion, sound and a haze of colour in your gardens. It is when they really take on their true forms and characters.

I feel that we really don't give enough attention to the garden, but it does add a different element to any garden. Most of our gardens are filled with heavy evergreens like pyramid Junipers or dense Spruce that can add certain qualities such as colour and form, but they lack movement.

What can be more relaxing on a warm summer day then chilling out on your favourite lounge chair or hammock and watching the grasses sway and rustle in the breeze?

It is not just summer interest that grasses provide, but also can continue to show off throughout fall and winter as well. Left untrimmed until the spring, they will stand up beautifully all winter, showing off their silhouettes against the snow.

Grasses come in all

sizes, shapes, textures and colours, from soft mounds, straight spikes, feathery fronds or arching cascades. Most grasses will fall under one of two categories: clumping or spreading forms.

Clump-forming grasses maintain their compact shape, so they're well-behaved in flowerbeds. Spreading varieties can be invasive (some even pose a threat to native species in the wild), so they should be carefully chosen and controlled with care. I would strongly suggest that that you keep with clumping varieties.

When designing with grasses, planting them in groupings makes the biggest impact. Of course, this will depend on the size of your garden and overall space. The larger the area, the larger the grouping.

Ornamental grasses can blend in well with the different styles of gardens. Planted in masses in a linear pattern, will give you

a more contemporary look. When planted in staggered groupings can give you a more traditional look. Planted in loose drifts is reminiscent of the countryside. In xeriscapes, sparse plantings of grasses surrounded with stone mulch gives you a totally different look.

Most grasses prefer a site that receives a minimum of five to six hours of sunlight. They prefer a well-drained sandy loam soil. Some of the grasses that prefer a part shade location are Hakonechloa (Japanese forest grass), Chasmanthium latifolium (northern sea oats), and Ophiopogon migrescens (black mondo grass).

When planting ornamental grasses, dig a larger hole at least two to three wider than the root ball. Once you have the root ball out of the pot, tease apart the roots especially if they are circling around the outside of the root ball. Pots of grasses can become quickly root-bound and teasing out the roots

will allow the roots to take in the surrounding soil more quickly.

Then, place the root ball into the hole with the crown of the plant just above ground level. Water generously until it becomes well established.

Maintaining ornamental grasses is fairly easy, the toughest job is dividing the clumps every five to six years. When a clump gets too large or the centre of the clump begins to die back, wait until spring, then dig it up, leaving lots of soil around the edges. Using a pair of garden forks, pry apart the root ball and immediately replant the divisions back into amended soil.

The yearly maintenance includes cutting back the dried stalks every spring before new growth emerges. For shorter grasses, cut back to about two inches from the ground. For taller clumps, such as miscanthus, cut back to about 10 to 12 inches above ground. Grasses can also be cut back in the fall, but then you lose out on the winter interest.

Three of my favourite grasses to use in designs are: golden variegated Japanese forest grass (Hakonechloa macra "Aureola"), standing ovation little bluestem grass (Schizachyrium scoparium "Standing Ovation"), and morning light miscanthus (Miscanthus sinensis "Morning Light").

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



Paws on the Trail will have plenty of activities for participating pups, including a doggie kissing booth. FILE

Paws on the Trail fundraiser returns

Staff
The Lake Report

If you want to enjoy a day of fun and adventure with your furry friend — as well as support the restoration of a historical part of Niagara-on-the-Lake for all to enjoy — the Paws on the Trail dog walk this fall is the place to be.

This year's Paws on the Trail, a dog walk fundraiser held every year to support the rehabilitation of the Upper Canada Heritage Trail, is set for Saturday, Sept. 7 at Veterans Memorial Park.

The dog walk starts at 10 a.m., with registration beginning at 9 a.m. at 370 King St., and can be completed in any distance from 2K to 4k along the trail and off the roads.

Tickets are on sale now at \$30 plus tax per person, allowing you to bring up to two furry friends, on-leash, for the walk.

The first 60 people to register for Paws on the Trail will receive a special participation medal for their pup, and there'll be plenty more to enjoy during the walk, including a doggie kissing booth, swag bags and puppy products for purchase.

All the revenue, plus donations made at the event, will go toward the work of the town's heritage trail committee in restoring the town's old rail line into a 10-kilometre multi-use trail for the public.

This trail follows the historic rail line of the old Erie and Ontario Railway, which connected steamship passengers coming from Toronto to Niagara Falls, Buffalo and beyond for almost 100 years, before it was discontinued in the late 1950s.

Specifically, the restoration project involves making the trail more accessible after years of disrepair, foliage overgrowth and erosion. The team behind the restoration says work on the second of four work phases for the trail will be finished this year.

This second phase, supported by a \$60,000 government grant, goes from East-West Line to Line 3.

To date, the heritage trail committee, which was established in 2017, has raised nearly \$200,000 since fundraising began.

To register for Paws on the Trail, or more information, visit heritagetrail.ca or look up "Paws on the Trail 2024" on eventbrite.ca.




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- ✓ **LIST OF TORONTO BUYERS BUYING IN NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE**