

## Royal George to close its doors in 2025

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

After 110 years, one of Old Town's most recognizable features will be closing its doors to the public — for now.

The Shaw Festival announced the Royal George Theatre's imminent closure in a press release on Friday, alongside details of its 2025 season lineup.

The release states the building has needed a rebuild for decades, but due

*Continued on Page 3*

## Three days of comedy coming to Exchange

Paige Seburn  
The Lake Report

The laughter at the Exchange Brewery is about to reach new heights as the summer wraps up in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

And it's no wonder — Canadian comedy icons Seán Cullen and Chris Locke are headlining the Summer Send-Off Spectacular, fresh off their five-star performances at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

For over six years, this cozy and intimate brewery has been a cornerstone of comedy in the Niagara region, hosting shows that draw in everyone from local regulars to comedy connoisseurs from out of town.

Throughout his time at

*Continued on Page 12*

# SUMMER OF THE FLOOD

## Torrential rains leads to flooding, concerns about infrastructure and questions about overdevelopment



Nina Wojciechowska's home on Line 6 was surrounded by a lake of water on the morning of June 18. She is one of dozens of NOTL residents who submitted flooding photos and stories to The Lake Report depicting what they experienced. SUPPLIED

Richard Wright | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's summer of 2024 will go down as one of the wettest and wildest in memory.

A pair of extreme storms in June and July created flash floods in areas of greater NOTL, overwhelming sewers, drains, culverts, ditches, storm ponds and streams, causing tremendous damage to homes and properties.

At the worst end of the spectrum, many residents suffered through backed-up sewage in their homes, creating messy cleanups and dangerous biohazards.

This has prompted serious questions from residents about the effectiveness of NOTL's municipal drainage infrastructure, heightened concerns over how residential development is contributing to the watershed problem, and curiosity around just how accurate claims that these types of storms are once-in-a-couple-generation events.

The terms 100-year and 500-year storms have been bandied about by experts, politicians and water management officials.

But with the frequency — and intensity — of these storms over the summer and, indeed, the past few years, it raises questions of how responsible and relevant such characterizations are when examining how effective local infrastructure is now and will be into the future.

The story of NOTL's summer of soak and sewage begins on June 18 with a torrential downpour that dropped up to 45-millimetres of rain in the north central/eastern regions of the community in less than an hour.

Some areas reported even higher levels of rain over the same period.

The rain was so intense that the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority's flood warning was directed at all of NOTL.

Then, less than a month later, on July

10, another flash storm ripped through the community.

Again the conservation authority issued a flood warning, although this one came out proactively, on July 9, one day before the deluge hit.

Residents have shared their experiences with The Lake Report in one-on-one interviews and online via email with pictures of overwhelmed drain line openings spewing water and debris, flooded intersections, yards, driveways and backed-up toilets.

While much of NOTL was exposed to the repeated heavy rains, concerns are particularly acute in St. Davids and Queenston, located just below the heights of the Niagara Escarpment.

In this first instalment in a series of in-depth, feature-length reports, we look at the experiences of some of those residents.

**Read Part 1 on Pages 6 and 7.**



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# A mixed bag: 2024 tender fruit yields vary in NOTL

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake tender fruit crop is almost completely in and reports are mixed on how well things went with this year's yield.

Concerns were real among some growers in April and the first couple weeks of May when an early spring cold snap raised fears frost would damage early blooms and affect the summer harvest.

In the end, the frost did hit some areas of NOTL — now, with the apricot harvest complete and peach and nectarine nearing an end, it seems some did well while others were not so lucky.

"I've got a great crop," said Scott MacSween of MacSween Farms on Lake-shore Road, talking about his summer peaches.

"All the concern I had in the spring about the bloom and all the cold weather, it's been no problem."

MacSween is going as far as calling his yield this year a "bumper crop."



Rene Schmitz says his apricot harvest is down almost 50 per cent this year. While his farm produced "a lot of peaches," the yield is down for those, too. RICHARD WRIGHT

"And because we had that bloom that was early in the season, we are two weeks earlier in terms of our harvest," he said.

Whether it is a plum or a cherry or a peach or a nectarine, every variety is 10 to two weeks early. Right now, I am picking peaches that usually I am picking in the beginning of September."

Overall, the farm's summer yield is "probably" up by 20 per cent more than an average year's harvest, he said.

Not only is his crop a good one, he said the amount of rainfall his fields received this year — which wasn't as much as in some southern parts of NOTL, where torrential downpours left a wake of damage — has left his peaches with a beautiful shape and weight.

"Because we had that rain we had really good size this year. The quality has been really good."

**Apricots take a beating**  
While nectarine and peaches have produced well

enough, apricots seem to have taken a big hit.

"They did not do well," said Sarah Marshall, manager of the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers.

"We barely had a crop at all. It was the frost that did them in."

Apricots have a shorter growing season, said Marshall, and therefore didn't have the stamina to defeat the ill-effects of the May frost as peaches and nectarines did.

Rene Schmitz of Palatine Roses and Fruits is reporting his apricots were down to almost half of a normal season's production.

He feels lucky to have that much on the books.

"There has been a lot of farmers with absolutely no apricots," said Schmitz, adding that his peach output this year is "OK."

"We have a lot of peaches but it is definitely down."

Schmitz, who has been farming in the area since 1997, said changing weather patterns, which could include frost and insect infestations, are playing a role in his reduced output.

"(The weather) is much

more erratic than in the past," he said. "You don't get the deep winters anymore and there are more insects because of that — we know that."

An example of an insect damaging to the fruits that Schmitz grows is the plum curculio, a beetle that runs amok on fruits like plums, cherries and peaches.

They lay eggs within the fruit and both adults and larvae feed from the inside, causing brown rot.

Schmitz knows that despite loss of product from rain, insects, heat or frost, he will continue to produce the food the world needs.

"As a farmer, you look to the sky and see a thunderstorm and it wipes out your crop. You can't be sad about it. You cry a tear, you dust yourself off and you keep going."

**Summer's heat and rain not a good thing for everyone**

At Dutchyn Farms in Queenston, owner Joe Dutchyn's nectarine crop is down this year over past years.

The longtime producer has seen his share

of growing seasons and reports that this year's heavy rainfall in his area, combined with a heat wave that rolled through NOTL in parts of June and July, affected his crop's growing process.

"A lot of our first pick of crops went to the ground because they had split pits," he said.

"When there is too much rainfall and too much heat, everything rapidly grows and the pit splits."

That split, he added, affects the stem, which in turn creates a hole in the fruit allowing water, and even insects, to get inside and the fruit.

"So you have to drop all of that to the ground," he added, referring to a thinning process that discards unwanted crops.

Still, despite the lower-than-normal output on his farm this year, Dutchyn is taking a very pragmatic approach to his yield.

"Being a farmer, I am happy every year just to have a crop. This year, we had some issues, but overall I am pretty content."

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# Zalepa promises speed limit review for St. Davids – and all parts of NOTL

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The issue of lowering some speed limits in St. Davids was brought forth Aug. 20 when Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa sat down at a public Q&A hosted by the St. Davids Ratepayers Association for a discussion on matters facing the bedroom community.

The reasoning behind the request stems from higher limits that remain in town bylaws for roads that were previously rural but are now classified residential because of increased development in the area.

“Particularly, I know recently, while looking into another issue in town, we found that Tanbark (Road) has still been listed in the town bylaws as 80 kilometres per hour,” said association board member Mike Pearsall during the Aug. 20 meeting.

Pearsall noted that other municipalities in Niagara, such as Lincoln, have



Mike Pearsall of the St. Davids Ratepayers Association feels the 80 km/h speed limit for many once-rural roads in the community needs to be reduced. RICHARD WRIGHT

already taken this measure to reduce speeds in now-developed areas.

“The ratepayers association of St. Davids is saying that within the residential areas of St. Davids we would like the town to consider dropping the speed limit to 40 kilometres per hour,” he said.

This should happen “before we start seeing a number of collisions and

injuries as a result,” he said, adding that the association is currently working on a diagram to show all areas of St. Davids that would apply.

Zalepa responded by sharing that road safety is one of council’s priorities and it has already asked town staff to conduct a speed management review of all areas in the greater Niagara-on-the-Lake community.

“My understanding is that this fall the staff are going to come back with a more holistic look at how we can look at speed limits in general across different parts of the town,” he said.

“Council is supportive of it and direction is happening.”

A public engagement process will take place this fall, he added.

“That will be a good chance to hear what you have to say,” he said directly to those in attendance.

“People have other opinions as well. Council will have a chance to take it all in and make any decisions that come from that.”

Other measures have been taken to combat speeding in St. Davids.

This spring, a speed camera was installed on York Road near St. Davids Public School as part of the Niagara Region’s Vision Zero road safety strategy, which involves adding and moving speed cameras to different locations throughout Niagara.

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# Royal George closing its doors in 2025

Continued from Front Page

to a failing foundation, it cannot be mitigated.

“At the conclusion of our 2025 rendition of ‘A Christmas Carol,’ the George will close its doors on this incarnation,” Tim Jennings, Shaw’s executive director, said in the release.

Jennings hopes the Shaw can work alongside the government to rebuild the jewel box theatre with a “future of access and sustainability in mind,” he stated.

“Our intention is not to change the feel of our Royal George Theatre, rather we hope to amplify this treasured space,” he said.

The theatre’s closure announcement follows a tough fiscal year for the Shaw, which reported a loss of \$5.7 million in 2023.

During the company’s general meeting in March, board chair Ian Joseph



The Royal George Theatre will see its last performance in 2025, before Shaw Festival shuts its doors for good.

said the Royal George was “well beyond its intended lifespan.”

During the same meeting, Jennings said fixing the theatre was something that had to happen.

The Royal George Theatre, located at 85 Queen St., has occupied a part of NOTL’s heritage district for more than a century and has been under the Shaw’s ownership for more than four decades.

Built in 1915 by Mrs. M.

N. Norris, it was first the Kitchener Theatre: a place for vaudeville acts and silent movies to entertain soldiers at Camp Niagara during the First World War.

According to an overview of the Royal George Theatre’s history from 2010, compiled by former Shaw Guild president Faye Goodwin, the theatre changed hands several times throughout the 20th century, but in 1980, the Shaw Festival acquired

the theatre for its live productions.

The first production hosted at the theatre by the Shaw was “Puttin’ on the Ritz” — according to the Shaw Festival website, there was no time or money for major renovations before the first show, but throughout the 1980s, the Shaw raised the funds to make several repairs and restorations, as well as improvements to the seating, sound and lighting systems.

Before its closure, patrons can catch four productions at the venue next season.

“Tons of Money,” “Major Barbara,” “Murder-on-the-Lake,” will be shown at the theatre, as well as a final production of “A Christmas Carol” over the holidays in 2025 before NOTLers and visitors say goodbye to the Royal George Theatre as they know it.

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## Native Centre highlights book vending machine

The Niagara Regional Native Centre’s book vending machine is completely free to use for members of the community who want to access Indigenous-authored literature. The vending machine is filled with books — specifically books by Indigenous authors — for community members to take home for free. The machine is sponsored by Start2Finish, a Canadian charity that provides educational support to the country’s at-risk children and intends to break the child poverty cycle. JULIA SACCO



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## Legion donations for Jasper fire relief approach \$1,000

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Royal Canadian Legion has raised close to \$1,000 for the Jasper Legion as it attempts to assist its own membership, and the Jasper community at large, after a devastating fire ravaged the mountain tourist town this summer.

The fundraiser began Aug. 8 with donations being collected at the NOTL branch’s weekly fish fry after local executives felt compelled to act following reports the fire had destroyed homes and businesses and caused the town’s evacuation.

Starting with two separate wildfires reported on July 22 north and south of the town, they merged together three days later, resulting in a weeks-long evacuation and a wildfire Parks Canada reported as Jasper National Park’s largest in 100 years.

In the end, over one-third of Jasper’s homes and businesses were destroyed and the estimated cost of the damage has been tagged at \$880 million.

The Jasper Royal Canadian Legion is one of the lucky structures to remain standing.



Jasper fire crew in the Maligne Valley. JASPER FACEBOOK

“It is the least we can do,” said Megan Vanderlee, first vice-president and bar chair of the NOTL Legion.

“Our legion community country-wide is a big family and we know this money, as modest as it is, will help.”

Parks Canada and the Municipality of Jasper lifted the evacuation alert on Aug. 17 after classifying the fire as being held.

In conversations she’s had with executive members in Jasper, Vanderlee has learned the legion is feeding around 500 people daily as people returning to the community — as well as emergency crews already on-site — wrestle with the challenges of getting by with

limited regular services.

“That does not surprise me at all,” said Vanderlee of the legion’s generosity and humanity. “They are good people.”

Collections for Jasper will continue to be taken at the NOTL Legion through the Labour Day long weekend, said Vanderlee.

NOTLers can drop off donations at the legion at 410 King St. in cheque or cash form.

Donations can also be made directly to the Jasper branch via PayPal.

A link to the PayPal account can be found on the Jasper Legion’s Facebook and website pages or at [jasperlegion.ca](http://jasperlegion.ca)



# St. Davids pool to be maintained

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Despite being a half a century old and in need of repairs, the St. Davids community pool will remain open through the rest of this season and the foreseeable future thereafter, says Niagara-on-the-Lake's lord mayor.

Speaking at the St. Davids Ratepayers Association regular meeting Aug. 20, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said to the approximately 30 people in attendance that "the pool will continue to be in the community and maintained and operated."

Barring "any kind of strange event," town crews "are going to keep it running — that's the plan," he added.

Built in 1969, the popular 25-metre, six-lane pool, which features a 1,900 sq. ft. change house/lifeguard station, has experienced major mechanical issues over the past 20 years.

An information sheet distributed at the meeting states the facility's vulcanized piping is cracking,



The St. Davids pool is 54 years old and in need of repairs but NOTL council will keep it open. RICHARD WRIGHT

which has led to water leading into the surrounding soil.

"Town staff have repaired the leaks, but much more occurs every year," it continued.

Another issue is a broken main drain at the bottom of the pool, leading municipal staff to put in sidewall drains.

The facility is also non-compliant when it comes to Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities standards, which all public establishments are meant to be in compliance with by next year.

In 2019, the town began conversations with an architect to design a new pool and applied for a grant through the Canada Infra-

structure Program the same year, but it was unsuccessful in receiving the money.

The estimated cost of a new pool based on 2019 dollars was \$5 million.

That, said Zalepa, will likely be a lot more today due to the rapid rise of inflation in the past five years.

Additionally, attendees were made aware the town is collecting information via its parks and recreation masterplan review to assess current infrastructure needs and find ways to improve the physical wellbeing of NOTLers — Zalepa encouraged all residents to take part through the town's community engagement platform.

"That's a fancy way of saying...take a look at all

your recreational facilities, determine what needs are missing, what things could be could we do, what things are we no longer using well, and how could we repurpose those things, those assets, to do more of things people want," he said.

The bottom line, Zalepa added, is that the town will continue to operate with "Band-Aid" repairs until it can find the money to replace the pool, either through the municipality's capital budget, community fundraising or by further attempts at provincial and federal grants.

Coun. Adriana Vizzari, who resides in St. Davids and was in attendance, said that the community has shown it wants and needs the pool and she is proud of what council is doing to protect it.

"I think I spend every single day at the pool, surely, and it is hopping," she said.

"There are lane swims, there are lessons, it is affordable, it is accessible — it is exactly what we want at a community pool."

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# Residents blame **development**, say town should have taken action

**Kal and Win Laar  
8 Sheppard Cres.  
Queenston**

The Laars have lived at 8 Sheppard Cres. in Queenston at the immediate base of the Niagara Escarpment since 1975 and have experienced floods in the past but have never seen one like they had had on June 18.

On that date, with a small bucket situated just off their back porch, the couple measured 101 millimetres of rainfall in under an hour.

A retired civil engineer, Kal designed the family home to protect against exterior water flows, including a downward-sloping ditch at the side of the home.

Later, in 2006, he dug a small storm pond in the backyard for added protection from gravitational water flows that come off the escarpment and fruit farms that surround the property.

“Since we are at the base of the escarpment there is massive amounts of water coming down the hill, and the farm next door drains across our back and across our front. So we are a little island here,” said Win Laar.

“Kal knows how to deal with water,” she added.

Their past flooding problems happened mainly around the time they moved into their home, but there have been a few more over the years as well.

During this summer’s massive rainfall, the water was no match for Kal’s expertise. He has begun to doubt the generational storm mantra.

“The first year we were here in ‘75 the earth was bare and overflowed,” he said.

“The developer told us it was a 100-year storm, which sounded plausible the first time,” he added.

“After the sixth time it didn’t sound very plausible any more.”

In a written statement to The Lake Report prior to an in-person interview, Win explained what they went through on June 18 of this year.

“A single culvert at the front of our property drains water from the hill of the escarpment itself, plus our two acres of land, plus the neighbouring 10-acre farm,” she said.

“Water goes from behind our home and in front of our home but it all goes, or is supposed to go, through a single inadequate culvert,”



**Above:** Win and Kal Laar’s Queenston property shows a massive amount of water rushing over the drainage ditch at the side of their house. The ditch is eight feet deep but water still came over the top. In the inset photo, the water is up to the top of Win’s rain boots.

**Right:** The side yard of Jim Cole’s property. The portion of land is roughly 400 metres long by 150 metres wide and was more than 12 inches deep.

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she continued, adding later that the culvert pipe is only 15 inches in diameter.

“On June 18, the culvert was completely overwhelmed. I stood on Sheppard Crescent filming water as it poured over our lawn and down the road, carrying various vegetative debris,” she said.

“My boots are 13 inches high and the water on the road was just one to three inches short of the top of my boots. Some of that flood crossed York Road and went into the garage of the home just below.”

The Laars want municipal officials to recognize that this summer’s storms, separated by just a few weeks, are not happening only once in every 100 to 500 years and add that they need to do something about

the in-ground infrastructure, which they believe, has obviously outgrown its life expectancy.

“The 100-year storm is overused as an excuse,” said Kal. “The idea that it is prohibitive to design for something that only happens once in 100 years lets them off the hook, but is that justified? I think not.”

His wife is calling for a complete examination and replacement of infrastructure in their neighbourhood.

“A lot of this infrastructure is not designed for that (kind of storm and frequency),” she said.

“Look at that flow,” she added as she again viewed the video of her standing amid the floodwaters.

“There is no way a 15-inch pipe is adequate to take that.”

**Jim Cole  
1157 Line 7 Rd.  
St. Davids**

On June 18, Jim Cole’s property at the eastern end of Line 7 “flooded like an Olympic pool” and he believes the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake should be responsible to prevent it from happening again because of poor maintenance and planning of the drainage system on the road.

His reasoning is simple: the ditches in front of his house cannot accommodate the massive amount of water they received on that day nor have they been designed properly to distribute water to the nearby drainage points.

“If you look west, you can see the road terrain rises up,” he said as he walked the length of his

driveway toward the road to view the ditch.

“Well, the water can’t climb the hill,” he added.

Without that ability, the water that is trying to escape his yard is unable to do so because the ditch is full.

Compounding the issue is the collection of debris that ends up clogging the culvert at the end of his driveway.

What was seen in the aftermath of the storm was a knee-deep pool of water to the side of his property. The piece of land is almost 150 metres wide by 400 metres long.

In the back of his property, his wife’s garden has been destroyed and while he feels lucky that he didn’t get a lot of water in the house, he “did have some water get in,” he said.

Cole would like to see

maintenance crews from the town clean out the ditches in the area and dig them deeper so they slope downward to the municipal drainage lines that lie to the west and east of his home.

Contributing to his frustration, he said, is a scary response from town officials that a nearby neighbour received.

His own calls to the town, he added, have not been returned.

“They told my friends on Line 6 the reason they are not (clearing the ditches) is because it costs them money to get rid of the toxic soil,” he said.

“Now, that begs the question, what toxic soil? Is it just an excuse for them not to do it, or are we living in a chemical dump? It makes you wonder.”

However, when contacted by The Lake Report, NOTL communications co-ordinator Marah Minor stated in a written response that she spoke to town staff and “there are no known toxins in the soil on Line 7 Road” that prevent staff from cleaning the ditch.

Hearing that, Cole is left to wonder why no town crews have shown up to take care of the problem.

“If there is nothing there, then let’s get the Gradall (excavator) out and get to work,” he said. “The town should, in good faith, get the machine going and clear out the ditches.”

But it’s not just ditches that Cole believes are causing his water problems. He thinks it could also be attributed to a new vineyard planted five years ago by his next-door neighbour.

“Most of the land is being used for vineyards and I think water is running off the vineyards so fast because they want to get the water away from the vineyards with the under drainage,” he said.

“And I think it is running into the lowest points it can find — and now we have an issue with this. I never had a flood here until the neighbours put in a vineyard,” he said, adding he has been living in the home for 25 years.

Despite all this, Cole said the town is still responsible for drainage on land it owns.

“I’m thinking land-use has contributed to the problem but if they can’t get rid of the water, now it is a town problem because if you look at the ditches, the water is not going anywhere.”



# Removal of trees and new construction along culprits, residents say

**Mike Allen**  
**York Road and Sheppard Crescent, Queenston**

Mike Allen believes his flooding issues are directly related to the construction of three massive homes near his house at 2006 York Rd. in Queenston.

He's resided there since 1982 and had some water problems in the past, "but not like this," he said.

"Since January of this year we have been experiencing lots of flooding, mostly caused by the construction at 2001, 2003 and 2005 York Rd.," he said.

Prior to the new construction, the lot had one dwelling on it.

"The new owners cut down dozens of old-growth trees and have levelled the entire property and are building three extremely large houses and there is no green space," he said.

"The problem is that water is pouring off these properties onto the road and into the ditch. This water then travels to the other side of the road where it fills our drain up with dirt and gravel from the construction site."

"I've had to have our ditch cleaned out three times now and at much personal expense," he said.

"To add to the problem, these houses are built right on top of and beside a water table below the escarpment."

Allen questions whether

the approved plans were followed and whether the stockpiled dirt on-site is placed there with inadequate silt fencing and drains.

In an Aug. 20 interview, Allen said he has begun discussions with the town, region and the Niagara Escarpment Commission about the situation.

"Conversations are happening," he said. "So, there is a little bit of hope there on the horizon. Thank god."

**Art Powis**  
**963 Line 9 Rd.**  
**St. Davids**

The damage done to Art Powis' house on a residential street in St. Davids represents a homeowner's worst fears.

Rising from bed at around 9 a.m. on June 18, he started the day with the ominous sound of running water in the finished basement of the five-year-old home he purchased in 2020.

"And it wasn't just a trickle," he said. "It was rushing water. I thought, 'Geez, what is going on down there? Is there a pipe burst or what the hell?'"

Dismayed and not wanting to face a bad situation first thing in the morning, he decided to make a coffee and prepare himself before heading down to see what was happening.

"On second thought, I said to myself: 'Ah well, I had better go down there and see what is going on.'"

Heading to the basement, he didn't get much farther than to the bottom of the stairs before he was stopped in his tracks.

"There is a bathroom down there and the sewage was backing up furiously through the toilet. A column of crap and whatever else is in there was so high from the toilet seat and over the sides of the toilet."

With the incredible rainfall that St. Davids had experienced that morning, Powis said it was easy to guess what had caused his sewage backup up.

"It is on record how much fell and what time it stopped and when it started," he said.

"And it was a beauty. One of the bigger ones for sure. So, that would kind of lead people to wonder if they weren't related because crazy rainfall stops and sewage backup starts."

He tried to stop the flow himself with a broom handle and stuffing towels down the toilet while walking around barefoot amid in the sewage.

"Which wasn't a very smart thing to do, but I got the toilet to stop but then the drain in the shower overflowed and the bathtub. Finally, I decided I am not going to be able to stop this."

That's when he got on the phone trying to reach someone with the Town of



Water flows down the side of Queenston resident Mike Allen's home on June 18.

Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Niagara Region to give him some answers about how this could happen.

He said he first called the town and was forwarded to an answering service.

He then reached out to the regional wastewater plant and spoke to a person who told him the

region's responsibility is the pumping stations and the sewage disposal plant, not the infrastructure.

"I said, 'Well I phoned the (town) and left a message but nobody has called me back.'"

"Ah, you gotta call another guy," he said. He was helpful but he still wouldn't admit that there

was a problem."

To date, Powis said he has not heard back from town officials.

"I think the (problem) is in the lazy no-good SOBs that work for the (town)," he said.

**Next:** In Part 2 for the Sept. 5 edition, more flooding victims from across NOTL share more stories.



Art Powis spent hours cleaning in the aftermath of the June 18 storm, after the sewage line backed up in his basement, destroying everything from furniture to the walls and even furnace. He estimates the cost of the damage to be around \$45,000. He's in the process of dealing with insurance. SUPPLIED





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### Contributed by Patty Garriock

“It’s a bit embarrassing to have been concerned with the human problem all one’s life and find at the end that one has no more to offer by way of advice than “Try to be a little kinder.”  
- Aldous Huxley

### HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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## Taking flight

Photographer Frank Hayes captured this photo of a great blue heron taking off from the pond at Line 9 and Concession 3 roads.

### Opinion

## Entrepreneur turned philanthropist, Goettler again eyes mayoralty



### THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner  
Columnist

Work-from-home, he says, is a seriously lame idea. Employees lobbying for more money earn instead his disdain. “Distinguish yourself,” is his credo. “Don’t be part of the herd.” Work hard. Take on any job. Clean toilets. Wait tables. It’ll change your life. Don’t be a snowflake.

Vaughn Goettler, with his wife Lauren, is an entrepreneur. He’s rich. He ran for mayor and lost. He’ll run again.

He’s pragmatic, driven, a tad rumpled, safely retired but far from finished. He has fine real estate, toys and ambition.

He’d be just another insufferable, congenial, gilded multi-millionaire if not for one thing. Generosity. They give money away. Gobs of it — probably

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s biggest philanthropists.

You may have read about it. “The Goettlers support the Museum expansion.” “Goettlers fund Yellow Door Theatre.” “Goettler donation fuels Niagara Symphony.” And the Goettlers, famously, handed over a million bucks to save a wild patch of NOTL known as The Wilderness.

Where did the money come from?

Business and ambition. He left a corporate job two decades ago, bought into the HVAC business. Sold his holdings four years later. Went into anaesthetics. “That was strange.”

In 2014 he and new wife Lauren bought back into HVAC. Did private equity deals. Blew the doors off estimates. Sold to an outfit from San Francisco a few years ago. A hundred employees turned into 1,500. He’s still on the board, owns a hunk of shares. More wealth will be coming.

Why give it away?

“If you’re fortunate enough to accumulate wealth, you have choices. You can do nothing. You can invest it to get more. You can sit on it. Or you can try to do things that will make a difference.”

The symphony. Acting. The arts. Inspiring youth. The Wilderness — trying to protect native heritage and history.

“If that land turns into townhouses, for example, we’ve lost it forever. This gives me a great sense of gratitude and Lauren is the driver of it all.”

So, now what?

“I don’t want to work 70 hours a week any more. I could see myself doing public service, though. If I were to become mayor it would be a significant undertaking on my part — you have to make changes you want to see. But this interests me, yeah.”

The Goettlers have a foundation that dishes out money. And, yes, there are tax benefits for good deeds. The breaks are not restricted to the one percenters among us, however. The system actually rewards those who share.

There are tax credits of up to 33 per cent federally (high-income-earners get the biggest) plus another 17 per cent from the province. You can split donations between spouses for the greatest advantage. You can claim donations from past years to help reduce a higher income now. And you can donate se-

curities — like stocks — without being taxed on the capital gain (but which yields a higher tax credit). Just ensure the charity you support qualifies — something the CRA site will tell you.

Of course, to donate you need to make more than you spend or save. Most Canadians don’t. Donations have tanked since COVID, as families struggle with the crazy price of groceries and real estate. More and more, society relegates good deeds to governments while the masses vex about the cost of rent, mortgages, tats and children.

We also love ragging on rich people. Especially when older, white and male. There’s no doubt a wealth divide exists in Canada, or that it yawns a little wider every day.

Surveys show half the population would be pooched if they missed a single paycheque. They also say most want to work from home and walk the dog.

Wealth comes from ambition. Wow. Who knew.

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

[garth@garth.ca](mailto:garth@garth.ca)



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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Is the town **protecting** our interests?

Dear editor:

When our town staff and council make poor decisions, the consequences affect the public and the pockets of the taxpayers.

When engineering reports are prepared addressing service issues and traffic on our roadways related to the controversial Parliament Oak hotel plan and there are “no liability” statements regarding the use or completeness of its recommendations, the public pays for any errors or omissions.

Columnist Brian Marshall documented my concerns in his July 18 piece, “Concerns and costs around town’s infrastructure and stormwater management.”

When a council erodes historic designations regarding properties and land in our community, the public pays for the consequences.

With the constant issuance of minor variances that change the historic look and nature of our Old Town, the public and our town suffer the consequences.

When we hire staff and

elect councillors and a lord mayor, they must understand our community goals and objectives as set out in our official plan and zoning bylaws.

It appears that there is no commitment from our council to protect public interest, nor our extensive historical status and our unique community features.

The question remains: why is this happening in NOTL, a town that has worldwide acknowledgment of its history and its architectural assets, a town that played a major role in the formation of Canada?

We live in a special place that needs care and our attention in order to retain our town and community as a national historic visiting place for the world.

We have been gifted a special place on this Earth that needs care and preservation. Our focus should be that and that only.

With the direction that is being provided by staff and council, we are about to “fall off the cliff.”

**Richard Connelly**  
**NOTL**

Israel must be allowed to **defend itself**

Dear editor:

In an Aug. 22 letter, “Canada must stop supplying weapons to Israel,” Kit Andres says, “As Mennonites, we strongly condemn the weapons industry and those who profit from arms manufacturing 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.”

So, wherever and whenever really? However, by including all Mennonites under one umbrella, it does not draw attention to a stand of antisemitism.

After Oct. 7, 2023, when a kibbutz in Israel was attacked by Hamas terrorists, whom you support, where were the protests after innocent babies died and women were raped and killed?

Or when the Iranian regime was killing women for not properly wearing head coverings, or what Putin is doing in Ukraine, or the massacre of Christians in Sudan?

Where was your stance then? Now that Israel is defending itself, you sharply condemn those who supply weapons so Israel can defend itself.

What about all the Christians being killed in China, Korea and elsewhere around the world? How about stopping the arms supply to Iran?

In the supplied picture of your protest, I see a sign that says “Let Gaza live” but none that says “Let Israel live.”

Does this mean it’s OK for terrorists to kill innocent Jews, but Jews are not allowed to defend themselves?

I believe in the sanctity of life and in defending myself as well as those who are not able to defend themselves. So, Israel should not defend itself?

Such a stance is neither Mennonite nor Christian. Either support the Jews as scripture says to do or you support the terrorists.

Mennonites and Christians are not synonymous. The letter has no scriptural backup and says your group members are from “historic peace churches.”

Not me. I am unashamed to admit the truth.

**George Heidebrecht**  
**NOTL**

Conservatives will **hurt local news** gathering

Dear editor:

Thank you for your Aug. 15 editorial by editor-in-chief Richard Harley, (“Poilievre is truly great — at pandering”) outlining why Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre’s political speech in Niagara and other places amounts to “pandering” by telling lies about the Liberal government.

He blames all our anger and difficulties (financial, etc.) on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and government legislation.

My Concise Oxford Dictionary defines “pander” as a verb meaning to gratify or indulge a person, a desire, or a weakness.

Panderer is a noun) that means an illicit procurer or encourager of coarse desires.

If it hadn’t been for the Trudeau government supporting vaccinations, shutdowns, CERB during the pandemic, our death rates would have been twice as many as in the U.S. under Trump’s Republicans.

If elected, the Conservatives would repeal the Online news act and so-called censorship laws.

The 5Cs (conservative, competitive, capitalistic, commerce at all costs) would prevail and more local newspapers and radio stations would fail against massively funded U.S. and other media.

**Elizabeth Oliver-Malone**  
**NOTL**

**Spread out development** across all of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Dear editor:

New politicians always make promises that voters want to hear. That’s how they get elected, by running down the incumbents.

The problem is they don’t understand all the challenges until they get into the job where they run into the same roadblocks as the last guys. Here in Niagara-on-the-Lake people were out to get the incumbent mayor (whose husband was gravely ill during the last election and so wasn’t as available to fight back).

The new group were also able to split the vote by encouraging a late entry into the race. The new group was going to improve everything over what was done before, or so they said.

So, what happened to all those promises? As usual, the new mayor ran into all the same challenges as the last one and now everyone is up in arms because he didn’t deliver on what he said. It’s all so predictable.

NOTL activists have been fighting development and trying to preserve the town’s history at least since the Shaw Festival began. By the mid 1970s, it was already referred to as “Niagara on the Take” or “Niagara on the Fake.”

There has been endless discussion about preservation over the years but not much has been designated by the town. The main strip has slowly transformed itself into a tourist draw for “cone-lickers.”

Most tourists rave about how beautiful and well-preserved the town is but most visitors come from typical suburban situations so the word “preserved” is open to interpretation. Without a steady stream of activists, NOTL would have gone the way of most small Ontario towns and become ugly and ripped apart by developers and regional traffic solutions.

The major tourist draw is the fact that this town has been “preserved” for so long. It’s different from all the other Ontario small towns that have been partially wrecked by development.

It hasn’t, however, managed to avoid amalgamation, brought in by the Conservative government of Mike Harris.

So what was the real NOTL is now referred to as Old Town and is governed by a council elected by the whole town, which includes a lot of people who think quite differently than Old Town residents.

The Old Town has always been way more expensive than the rest of the area because it has always attracted people who care about history and aesthetics.

It’s the Old Town and the well-groomed Niagara Parks bicycle paths and picnic areas that draw the tourists and this is why the sidewalks and bicycle paths are groaning with them all summer.

Meanwhile the residents who have been overlooked by all the small businesses that have sprung up to service the “cone-lickers” are more and more besieged by the tourist crowd, and more and more taken for granted.

The residents of the original NOTL invest substantial amounts in their properties, which is why the properties are more expensive.

They get labelled as NIMBYs by some short-sighted people. They often have to drive outside their community to shop because the main street is focused on tourists. There is no local main street for residents.

Many NOTL residents would gladly pay higher taxes to avoid rampant development but amalgamation changed all that. The result is the gradual degradation of the “golden tourist egg.”

And please don’t use the argument that people protested other developments that they now gladly accept. That’s ridiculous. They are different people. New people who accept what is already here — because it’s here when they arrive. Most of the past protesters are dead now and they were not at all happy that they lost. It’s a constant battle.

The solution is to spread the inevitable development and new attractions, if you must have them, out into other areas of the amalgamated NOTL.

Don’t be a NIMBY if you live in another area. Help out. It’s easy for people to blame NIMBYism on Old Town residents.

Do your part if you don’t like it. Draw tourism to other areas, like Virgil and the wineries. Allow the wineries to have hotels. Spread out the tourists, because the Old Town is swamped, maxed out and fed up.

**Jackie Bonic**  
**NOTL**



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Max Murphy is no longer the NOTL Golf Club pro. FILE

## Pro **departs** NOTL Golf Club after less than one season

Staff  
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club will be looking for a new head pro after the sudden departure this week of first-year pro Max Murphy.

Murphy, 28, who was hired early this year after working as an assistant pro at the Cherry Hill Club in Fort Erie, “recently resigned,” the club’s owners said in a note to members on Wednesday morning.

Whoever takes over will be the third head pro at the club since longtime professional Billy Simkin left after the 2021 season.

He was succeeded by Keith Vant, who departed for the Glendale Golf Club in Hamilton this spring after two seasons in NOTL.

With Murphy leaving, club owners Eva Kessel, Marc Forbes and Rob DiDomenico told members that golf operations will now be overseen by assistants Darren Smith and Owen Howells.

## Marriages survive **Matrimonial** tourney

Staff  
The Lake Report

It’s often jokingly nicknamed the “Divorce Cup,” but there’s no evidence of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club’s annual Matrimonial Tournament actually leading to marital strife.

However, the male-female alternate shot format certainly features some interesting golf predicaments.

And they are usually the product of wild-shooting gentlemen knocking the ball into areas of the course that their straight-shooting partners have never traversed, where they have to make shots they might never have previously contemplated.

That was the case again this year — but the friendly competition also featured some great golf.

Smooth-swinging lefty Jim McMacken credited his wife Janice’s shotmaking for helping them to claim the Matrimonial trophy.

It’s a net format, meaning that after handicaps are



Jim and Janice McMacken won the Matrimonial tourney with a net score of 5-under 67. OWEN HOWELLS

calculated, a couple’s gross score minus their handicap is their final total.

The McMackens ended up at net 5-under 67 to take the title, edging out John Reynolds and Linda Williams (69) and Kevin MacLean and May Chang (70), the only other duos with a net score below par.

The best gross scores were recorded by two of the club’s top shooters, Stephen Warboys and Louise Robitaille, the reigning women’s

club champion.

They shot an enviable gross total of 4-over 76 (net 72). Robitaille said a double bogey and a bogey on the same par-3 hole on both front and back nines hurt their score.

The McMackens had second low gross at 86, followed by MacLean and Chang at 88.

In other play last week, 2024 club champion Ricky Watson was the top shooter in Thursday’s men’s league

play, firing an even-par 36. Dave Jackson had the best Stableford score, with 24 points.

Jeff Jacques was closest to the 150 marker on #1, Max Horning sank the longest putt on #2, Quinton Spagnol outdrove everyone else on #3, while closest to the hole shooters were Jeff Brookhouser (#4) and McMacken (#9).

Gross skins, all for birdies, went to Mark Derbyshire (#1), McMacken (#2), Jared Mines (#5), Brodie Townley (#6), and Warboys (#7).

Net skins were won by Rob Chubey (#3), Townley (#6), Noel Morris (#7) and Horning (#8).

The two Teds were the top dogs in Tuesday’s WOOFs league play. Ted Carmichael and Ted Wiens both shot 3-over 39 to take first place honours.

Rick Shultz was low net while Jeff Jacques won the hidden hole with a birdie on #7. Bruce Murdoch was closest to the pin on #4.



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# As soccer players wrap it up, hockey players ‘gear up’ for new season

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Hockey Association hosted its annual hockey equipment swap on Saturday.

The timing of the swap, which ran from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Meridian Credit Union Arena, worked out perfectly for parents and kids in sports, said team equipment manager Glen Davis.

The swap coincided with the Niagara-on-the-Lake Soccer Club’s end-of-year festival, happening on the fields outside the arena.

And with the soccer season over and hockey season about to start, many of them got to pick up gear for when they hit the ice.

“Parents come and go between soccer games and here,” Davis said.



Jack and Brock Friesen check out new shin pads while Boyd Hopkins tries a new helmet out for size, during the equipment swap at the Meridian arena on Saturday. JULIA SACCO

For \$10, players and parents could stop by to drop off outgrown equipment and upgrade for some better-fitting threads.

The arena was full of eager swappers at 10 a.m. before the games began at noon, Davis said.

Gary Friesen and his sons, Jack and Brock, were those who stopped by to swap out some equipment.

Both boys walked out with a decent haul for the upcoming year.

Carrie Plaskett, the soccer club’s president who doubles

as volunteer co-ordinator for the hockey association, said that the day was a great success for both sports.

“Both the clubs communicate to run things and it all works out perfectly,” she said.

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

The Lake Report

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# Comedy festival comes to Exchange for three days, August 29 to 31

Continued from Front Page

the Exchange, David Green has seen it all — from navigating performances behind glass during COVID-19 to recording his own comedy album.

But on Aug. 29, 30 and 31, something extra special is brewing.

Green, the man behind the comedy magic set to take place at the Exchange, could hardly wait to share what's in store.

They have had some great shows here over the years, but this one is going to be something else, he said.

The weekend kicks off on Thursday night with a family-friendly magic show by Anthony Lindan at 7 p.m., setting the stage for a weekend of diverse entertainment.

But if you're looking for something a bit more interactive, Friday's 19-and-over Family Battle Night at 8 p.m. might be right up your alley.

Picture this: a live version of Family Feud, hosted by crowd-favorite comedian Liam Kelly, where four local families duke it out for glory and prizes, said Green.



Get ready for three nights of comedy at the Exchange brewery in NOTL, including a Family Feud night.

"It's Family Feud, but live in Niagara-on-the-Lake," said Green.

Green's inspiration for this summer send-off comes from the desire to bring more excitement to downtown and create a diverse lineup that offers something for everyone.

Saturday night, starting at 8 p.m., Cullen and Locke will take the stage for a 19-and-over August All-Stars comedy show.

These two aren't just any comedians—they're some of Canada's top comics, used to playing in huge theaters but excited to perform in the intimate setting of The Exchange, said Green.

The Exchange Brewery's unique atmosphere, where the audience is up close and personal with the performers, has made it a favorite spot for both comedians and guests, he said.

With seating for just over 30 people, every show feels like an exclusive experience, said Green.

"The Exchange brewery is just such a special venue for these performances. It's so small and so intimate. The crowd is so close to each other. The shows there are just electric," he said.

"There's nobody hiding at the back in the shadows—it's just a different feeling when everyone's so close

together, being so friendly and positive. It's always a good time," he said.

When Green first started hosting shows at the Exchange, comedy venues in Niagara were few and far between.

But that has since changed.

"The scene has been flourishing in the last few years, and there's a lot more comedy clubs and venues to go to now," he said.

"It's exciting to be part of this growth and to help bring laughter to more people while inspiring others to dive into comedy."

For those planning to attend, there's street parking nearby the brewery, located at 7 Queen St., that's free after 8 p.m.

And if you're thinking of making a night of it, the Exchange also offers dinner and show packages, with all the details available on their website, exchangebrewery.com.

Green's tip: arrive early, take a stroll down to the gazebo on the water and then head back to the brewery for some top-tier comedy paired with their finest brews.

# Stratford edges Shaw in 50th annual cricket match

Stephen Ferley  
Special to The Lake Report

The Shaw versus Stratford annual cricket match celebrated its golden anniversary on Monday.

Every other year Niagara-on-the-Lake hosts the encounter that was started back in 1974 by the two festivals' companies, ensembles, support staff and management.

The fixture brings NOTL's cricket history into the present day — a history stretching back to the 1850s with the Niagara Grammar School Cricket Club and to 1862 with the birth of Niagara Cricket Club playing at what we now know as Veterans Memorial Park.

The name of two of that club's initial board of direc-



Onlookers watched closely as this batter attempted to take a shot. The long-running Shaw vs. Stratford game was played from noon to 6 p.m. JULIA SACCO

tors lives on in Paffard Street.

In the 1970s, many ensemble members at both the Shaw and Stratford were over from England for the summer or were from countries with a cricketering history.

A cricket game between the two was a natural fit.

The captain of this year's Shaw team, Jeff Irving notes, "With the guidance of folks like Butch Blake from Stratford, it just continued from then. Lots of people from both festivals involved and lots of fun, camaraderie and hopefully some good cricket."

The historical record on

the Butch Blake trophy indicates that Stratford have won 20 of the 35 games since 1989 and before this week's game Stratford captain Emilio Vieira was heard to claim, "We aim to take the trophy back to Stratford with us today."

Monday's event was launched by NOTL town crier Tom Pekar together with a formal gun salute from the musket squad of Fort George.

The game was social, friendly — and competitive. Serious but never over-the-top.

Batters on both teams aimed to build an innings — not always easy on the matting wicket at Memorial Park and with an outfield not too conducive to stroke play along the ground.

Bowlers aimed to bowl a line and length. The ground fielding was enthusiastic with the concentration needed for the 40 overs and the three hours of each inning — with several excellent catches taken in the deep and very few unforced errors.

Batting first, Stratford scored 196 from their 40 overs. Captain Vieira top-scored with 53.

Previous Shaw team captain Martin Happer picked up four for 13 off his four overs — proving that he's squeezed in some valuable bowling practice between rehearsals and performances for "One Man, Two Guvnors."

In reply, the Shaw were all out for 186, falling 10 runs short in a tense finish.

Blake Wilson put together a consistent knock for 37 before falling to a caught-and-bowled. And Drew Plummer added 35, including three straight sixes that threatened the cars parked nearby.

Did Shaw miss the cricket experience of artistic director Tim Carroll and board chair Ian Joseph, both unavailable for business reasons? Certainly.

Would their runs have made the difference? Dr. Patrick Martin, a knowledgeable cricket fan visiting from St. Kitts and Nevis to watch his daughter Tama in the ensemble for the Shaw's "My Fair Lady" answers knowingly, "Possibly."

No worries. There's always next year. In Stratford.

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NSO's new executive director Adam Scime. SUPPLIED

# Niagara Symphony Orchestra welcomes new executive director

Staff  
The Lake Report

The Niagara Symphony Orchestra is welcoming Adam Scime to captain the helm of its ship. The longtime composer and performer will be assuming the position of the symphony orchestra's new executive director, starting Sept. 2. Scime has served in leadership roles in arts organizations such as Kaeja d'Dance, New Music Concerts and FAWN Chamber Creative. He holds a doctorate of musical arts from the University of Toronto.

In a media release from Aug. 23, Scime said he is honoured to join "an extraordinary orchestra and its community." "I believe in the power of music to inspire, unite, and uplift, and I am committed to working alongside the entire Niagara Symphony Orchestra community to continue our exciting journey," his statement read. The orchestra is preparing for its 76th season with several performances scheduled from now until next June. For more information, visit [niagarasymphony.com/concerts](http://niagarasymphony.com/concerts).

# Lots coming up at RiverBrink Art Museum

Staff  
The Lake Report

The RiverBrink Art Museum has a calendar of events coming up as summer comes to an end and we welcome autumn:

## ON THE BRINK Installation Art Festival — Aug. 31 to Sept. 1

Starting this weekend, on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1, RiverBrink will host an installation art festival, a two-day outdoor exhibition of installation art — large-scale, mixed-media constructions — on the grounds of the art museum in Queenston, overlooking the Niagara River.

This event is set to be the first in what will be an annual showcase of installation art in the heart of Niagara.

RiverBrink hopes to celebrate the creativity and innovation of artists in and around the region, including Olivia Hope, Warren Quigley, Donna Szoke, Quintin Teszeri and Kathy Thomas.

The festival will be held from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, with remarks and a tour being offered on Aug. 31 at 2 p.m.



Admission is free for the "On the Brink" art exhibit at RiverBrink from Aug. 31 to Sept. 1. SUPPLIED

## ARTIST TALK with Dianne Davis — Sept. 14

Coming up in September, Dianne Davis, the artist behind RiverBrink's current exhibition "We Live the Opposite, Dar(l)ing," will host an artist talk on Saturday, Sept. 14 — the final day of the exhibition this year.

"We Live the Opposite, Dar(l)ing," which opened to the public at RiverBrink in May, is a reimagining of

Niagara's past through a historical queer lens, featuring fictional characters that pay homage to queer artists, culture and legacies in history.

Davis will be at RiverBrink on Sept. 14 at 12 p.m. for the talk. There will be a Q&A period, followed by refreshments.

Admission is by donation: to RSVP, contact programming and curatorial assistant Moyu Chen at [mchen@riverbrink.org](mailto:mchen@riverbrink.org).

## OFF THE WALLS RiverBrink Art Sale — Oct. 25 to 27

Finally, coming down the pike this October, RiverBrink is hosting its biannual art sale, this year called Off the Walls, taking place from Friday, Oct. 25 (which will include an opening preview reception) to Sunday, Oct. 27.

RiverBrink is inviting people to donate their works of art for this fundraiser, which supports both programming and exhibitions at the art museum, plus improved accessibility to the grounds.

Through the fundraiser, RiverBrink is also helping to support the next phase of the restoration of the Upper Canada Heritage Trail.

RiverBrink is seeking paintings, drawings, prints, photographs and watercolours, both historical and contemporary. Tax receipts will be provided for donations.

For more information, contact Chen at [mchen@riverbrink.org](mailto:mchen@riverbrink.org).

To learn more about what's happening at the RiverBrink Art Museum, visit [riverbrink.org](http://riverbrink.org).

# The Green Scene is now digital!

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Fiona Byrne as Rachel Crabbe, André Morin as Alan Dangle, Jade Repeta as Pauline Clench and Allan Louis as Lloyd Boateng in "One Man, Two Guvnors." Arts columnist Penny-Lynn Cookson gives the show a rave review. DAVID COOPER

# ‘One Man, Two Guvnors’ a **roaring** hit with non-stop laughs

**“ONE MAN,  
TWO GUVNORS”**  
★★★★★  
(out of five)

*Festival Theatre, 2 hours, 35 minutes, one intermission. Ends Oct. 13.*  
*By Richard Bean. Based on “The Servant of Two Masters” by Carlo Goldoni. Songs by Grant Olding. Director: Chris Abraham.*

Penny-Lynn Cookson  
Special to The Lake Report


Love it or hate it? There’s no in-between on this one. “One Man, Two Guvnors” is a ribald, rollicking, raucous, roaring hit. To dismiss it with disdain, as some have, is beyond *chacun à sans goût* — it is to miss the point. Its absurdity is the absurdity of life, of the human condition, to see our foibles and follies and to laugh, belly laughs, tears rolling down our cheeks at a shared theatrical event of pure comedic entertainment superbly delivered. In 2011, the London National Theatre production directed by Nicholas Hytner and starring James Corden was wildly successful. A year later, the play was on the West End and on Broadway, achieving wider acclaim and awards. And now, we have a superb Shaw production.

Richard Bean’s play is based on Carlo Goldoni’s “Il servitore di due padroni,” written in 1745 about a clever servant named Truffaldino who gets into difficulties trying to outsmart his two employers at the same time. Bean’s servant is Francis Henshall (an outstanding Peter Fernandes): awkward, deceitful, easily confused, dim but loyal and primarily interested in filling his copiously empty stomach. He is also Harlequin in a checked suit. The story has its roots in the traditions of the Italian commedia dell’arte performances, beginning in the 16th century with charlatans hawking wares and vagabond actors playing stock characters in urban marketplaces. These performances appealed to all levels of society and soon spread across Europe from the streets to the courts of the nobility and emperors. Goldoni took these stock characters and made them recognizable social types regardless of place or time. His original plots had wit and humour relevant to social values. Theatre was tied to reality, dramatic action controlled. Masks were abandoned but the masquerade continued. We see these characters


in Bean’s Brighton, U.K. It is 1963 and there’s a carousel of music on the Brighton Pier. A skiffle band is playing. Isn’t that Ringo? John? Cilla Black? No horses, but a Vespa whizzes by on stage. The characters are Pantalone, the “elderly” cuckolded husband who wishes to marry off his daughter against her will for his financial gain. This is middle-class Charlie Clench, well-played by Tom Rooney with a bad toupée. Pauline Clench (Jade Repeta) is a Columbine with an overheated libido for the Lover, an aspiring young actor named Alan (André Morin) who poses in foppish commedia dell’arte positions at every opportunity. Patrick Galligan is the Dottore, the hyper, narcissistic, long-winded lawyer in a wide pinstriped suit tossing out Latin phrases and making no sense. Scaramouche is the insufferable Stanley Stubbers, an upright, uptight, hot-tempered snob fond of the bottle and intrigue, wonderfully played by Martin Happer. Kiera Sangster is a flirtatious and sexy Dolly, the bookkeeper and would-be amour of Francis, come-hithering with a beehive hairdo topped by an innocent bow.

The double gender act of Roscoe/Rachel is fiercely played by Fiona Byrne, curiously looking like Charlie Chaplin. As the long-suffering waiter, Graeme Somerville is tasked with training a dottering, shaky new server named Alfie. Alfie is Matt Alfano, the epitome of Pierrot, the melancholy, white-haired, white-faced, defenceless servant with hanging arms in his oversized white jacket. He is also the Lazzi, the comic acrobat who kept the scenes going at a ferocious pace as he tumbled downstairs, staggered upstairs and was continually bashed. His was a technically brilliant performance that had the audience gasping and moaning with dread and laughing. This show gave us commedia dell’arte traditions including audience participation, the importance of serving wine and fine food in silver dishes, greed, consumer fixations, loves lost and found, loneliness, murder and mayhem, cross identities, gender confusion, non-stop laughs, superb direction and marvellous production values. A winner on all counts. Penny-Lynn Cookson is an arts and culture historian, writer and lecturer living in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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# Shaw Festival announces 2025 lineup

Staff  
The Lake Report

Details of the 2025 season of the Shaw Festival have been unveiled: theatregoers can expect a lavish production of a mythical classic, thrills, comedic beats — and one production whose story hits close to home.

The Shaw’s 63rd season runs from April 9 to Dec. 21, and will mark the final year of productions hosted at the Royal George Theatre on Queen Street before it is closed to the public after more than four decades of hosting the Shaw’s works.

“We’re really excited to have the chance to continue showcasing all the talents of the Shaw company and the different ways that we bring art to life,” said artistic director Tim Carroll.

“We’ve made it a focus this season to engage and interact with our audience a bit more as well, because it’s good for the spirit.”

Debuting next summer at the Royal George Theatre, “Murder-on-the-Lake” is a whodunit drama by Rebecca Northan and Bruce Horak that sees Niagara-on-the-Lake assume the role of “tranquil town rocked by a shocking murder” from classic mystery tales — and it’ll be up to a randomly chosen member of the audience to assist in solving the crime.

“Murder-on-the-Lake,” from the same creators of 2023’s “The Game of Love and Chance,” previews July 26 and runs until Oct. 4.

Also at the Royal George



The 2025 season will be the last chance to catch a show in the Royal George Theatre as it’s known today. FILE

for the summer, “Major Barbara” is Bernard Shaw’s provocative 1907 three-act play about a Salvation Army officer’s moral clash with her arms manufacturer father. Directed by Peter Hinton-Davis, it previews June 1 and closes Oct. 5.

There’s also “Tons of Money,” Will Evans and Arthur Valentine’s 1920s farce that sees one Aubrey Allington devise a scheme to fake his own death and steal the identity of his long-lost cousin, in order to inherit his fortune. It previews April 11 and closes Oct. 5.

Over at the Festival Theatre, C.S. Lewis’ beloved tale of how four children’s lives are transformed after they’re transported from the English countryside to the fantastical world of Narnia, “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe” previews at the festival on April 9.

This production, co-

adapted for the stage by Selma Dimitrijevic and Carroll, marks the culmination of the “Chronicles of Narnia” cycle at the Shaw and runs until Oct. 4.

Also at the Festival Theatre, Cole Porter’s “Anything Goes” brings more music and tap-dancing fun to the stage: nightclub singer Reno Sweeney embarks on a transatlantic aboard the S.S. American and navigates love triangles, mistaken identities and comical misunderstandings. It previews May 2 and closes Oct. 4.

For something a bit different, previewing June 25 is Frederick Knott’s “Wait Until Dark,” a suspense-filled thriller about a young woman in New York, who recently lost her sight and becomes the target of a gang of criminals and must use her wits to survive. It runs until Oct. 5.

Then, over at the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre,

look out for productions of Will Eno’s “Gnit,” previewing June 19, and Pearl Cleage’s “Blues of an Alabama Sky,” previewing Aug. 2 — both shows close Oct. 4.

Meanwhile, at the Shaw’s Spiegel Tent, an adaption of correspondence between Bernard Shaw and actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell — real name Stella Tanner — whom Shaw was besotted with and infuriated by, called “Dear Liar.”

This two-hander play follows their relationship through the letters they wrote to one another and scenes written for Tanner. “Dear Liar” previews May 18 and closes Sept. 18.

For the holiday season, Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas” is back at the Festival Theatre, directed by Kate Henning and running from Nov. 7 to Dec. 21.

Ending off both the year and the tenure of the Royal George Theatre, a holiday production of “A Christmas Carol,” directed by Carroll, will preview at the theatre, its final show before the theatre closes its doors for good. “A Christmas Carol” will run from Nov. 1 to Dec. 21.

Also new next season is a change to performance times: matinee shows will start 1 p.m. instead of 2 p.m., while evening shows will begin at 7 p.m. instead of 8 p.m.

Tickets for the Shaw Festival’s 63rd season, once available, can be purchased through the box office at 1-800-511-SHAW (7429) and online at [shawfest.com](http://shawfest.com).

# Wells of Hope hosts 20th anniversary gala

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Wells of Hope is celebrating 20 years of helping those in need access clean water, education and basic health care.

Founded in 2004, Wells of Hope is a team of numerous volunteers across the Niagara Peninsula that has worked to build wells and schools, provide school supplies, collect, transport and distribute goods and organize medi-

cal and dental clinics in Guatemala.

Scott Maxwell, the organization’s chair, said that the 20th anniversary celebration will be an evening of “helping those who have helped so many.”

On Friday, Sept. 13 at Queen’s Landing, guests can enjoy wine and food from NOTL wineries, distilleries, breweries and restaurants, music from Ron Dewberry and Juliet Dunn’s Dance Band and the chance to participate in a raffle.

There will also be a presentation to highlight the different pillars of the organization’s charitable status, including education, welfare, agriculture and water, Maxwell said.

“There will be presentations on each of those, so people understand where Wells of Hope was 20 years ago and where we are today,” he said.

Since its conception in 2004, Maxwell said Wells of Hope has constructed more than 30 wells, more than 30 school additions,

two medical clinics, several bridges, over 10,000 packs of hope and around 60 individual homes.

In addition, Wells of Hope has spawned two other groups that have set up their own ministries in Guatemala’s Jalapa region to do work in aiding abused women and girls and feeding the hungry.

To be a part of the celebration, tickets are available for the 20th anniversary online at [wellssofhope.com/events/657](http://wellssofhope.com/events/657) for \$100 each. [juliasacco@niagaranow.com](mailto:juliasacco@niagaranow.com)



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# Learning to **walk and live** with Doc the guide dog

## JODEY'S JOURNEY

Jodey Porter  
Special to The Lake Report

*At 72, I have had an extensive career as a senior Ontario public servant. I've been an Ontario Human Rights commissioner, a member of the United Nations Council on Human Rights and executive director of the Canadian Diabetes Association.*

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

*Like most people my age, I thought there wasn't much more I needed to learn to fulfil my life's aspirations.*

*Now, as a first-time student at The Seeing Eye Guide Dog School, I have just 25 days to absorb everything I need to start a new life. It's like learning to walk, talk and think all over again.*

*Here's the backstory.*

When people see guide dogs with their partners walking down the street, it looks so simple, so easy, so flawless, all in harmony, all in tune, all working forward.

You just cannot imagine how wickedly and brutally difficult all this is to learn.

Doc is 19 months old, full of extraordinary energy and knows a lot more than I do about what is on the road ahead. It is a complex dance without music. It is gymnastics class without sight.

A sightless person is directing the dog who sees, hears and senses so much more than the owner. I must learn each of the many orders he has spent his life learning and accompany each with just the right physical gesture to make sure we communicate.

On our first working day together, we walked down a busy street in Morristown, N.J., with obstacles placed intentionally in our way — pylons on the street, traffic roaring ahead of us (a car driven by one of the instructors), people who come up and try to be friendly with your dog when it's working.



Jodey Porter and Doc check out the statue of Seeing Eye Guide Dog School founder Morris Frank and his dog Buddy in downtown Morristown, N.J. SUPPLIED

We walked and walked and walked and walked.

I have learned about out-fitting Doc with something called a working harness, a gentle leader, short leashes, long leashes and on and on. There are ways to find empty chairs in dining rooms, ways to settle your

dog under a table, ways to give and not give your dog food and water.

There is an extraordinary regimen to live by and live up to, and it is all about creating a team.

How did we do? Well, I'm not sure Doc was very proud of his user, but we did pretty darn well.

We did walk straight into the pylon obstacle, but Doc saved me from the fake traffic accident, was not distracted by random dogs and remained solidly focused on the goal ahead, moving forward, safely, checking how I was doing. All rather incredible.

Pretty wild when you put our new partnership into a living, breathing, mechanical world with cars, dogs, kids, homeless people and even an early St. Patrick's Day parade. It is sensory overload.

This is so incredibly hard and even though I have spent most of my lifetime in a world of visual impairment I had no idea how complex and challenging the task would be.

As the days pass, we have no time to become overconfident.

We traverse shopping malls, deal with escalators, cross busy streets, around traffic circles and crossing islands, through pedestrian walkways. Always distractions, distractions. And then there is the terror of unpredictable cars and inattentive drivers.

A growing partnership between dog and owner, hoping to be safe.

It's a lot to digest and a lot to achieve. I have been through security checks at courthouses, up-and-down staircases, across the entire town of Morristown, small streets, country roads, into the heart of a vibrant commercial town centre.

We take a bus ride, then get onto a train for a big adventure into New York City.

There's lots to learn on the way. Plenty of new commands, nuances and physical and verbal gestures to be memorized, made part of our two-entity capability. Frankly, it is all outside the realm of what we expect as people.

By now you will realize that there is an incredible team of people who make this all happen.

Since Seeing Eye Inc. was established in 1929, the organization has created 18,200 partnerships and now serves some 280 new and returning students each year.

There are 180 staff members with 35 full-time instructors responsible for training the dogs and the students.

Each partnership costs about \$75,000 and none of it comes from government or insurance. I paid just \$150 in tuition. The rest comes from foundations, corporations and other gifts.

This is a family, make no mistake, and the dogs and people and teachers and managers and historians and funders all move together toward a single end — freedom.

*Next: I'll offer an inkling of who some of my fellow students are and what makes them tick.*

*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.*

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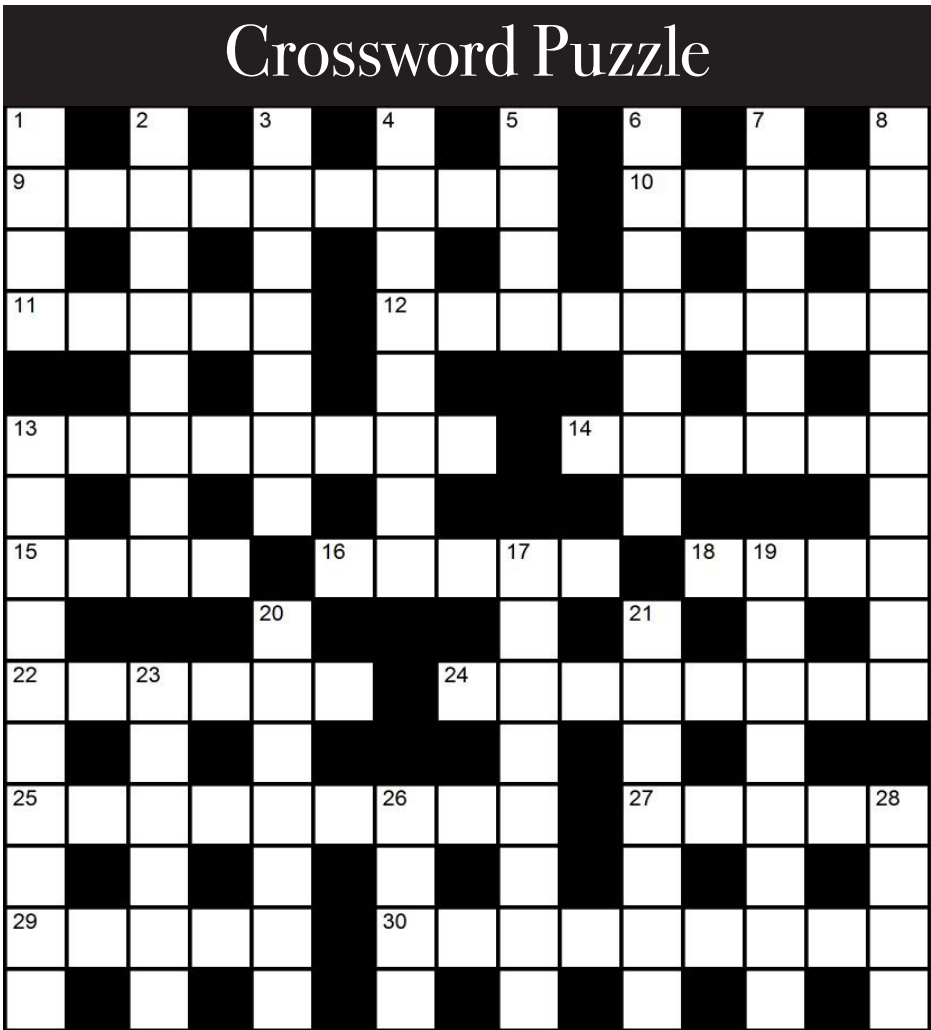


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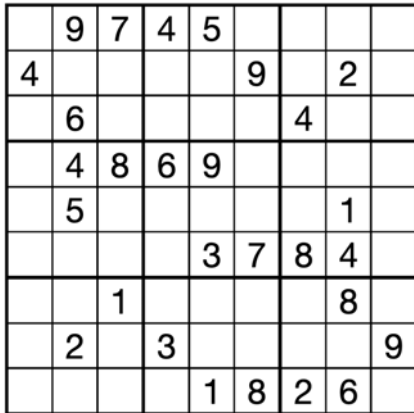
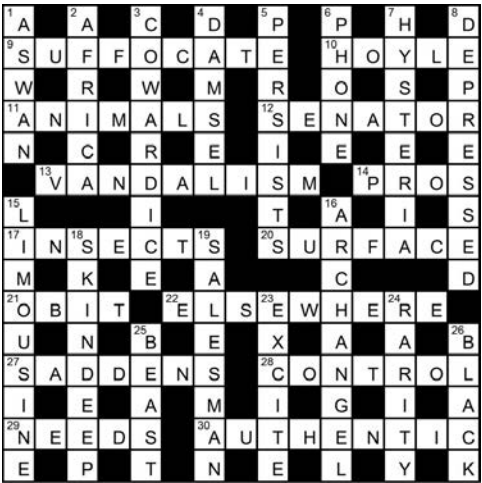


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- Down**
- 1. Look at amorously (4)
  - 2. Ate (8)
  - 3. Smart (7)
  - 4. Broad-brimmed straw hat (8)
  - 5. Obstacle (4)
  - 6. Gossip (4-3)
  - 7. Mountain plant (6)
  - 8. Diva (10)
  - 13. Rope-like hairstyle (10)
  - 17. Prevented from speaking (8)
  - 19. Get too hot (8)
  - 20. Revulsion (7)
  - 21. Arid areas (7)
  - 23. Merchant (6)
  - 26. Protruding tooth (4)
  - 28. Garden tool (4)



Last issue's answers



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# The long road travelled and hope for future



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

Looking back, it seems like forever.

First, Jan forgot the odd appointment or lost the odd financial statement preparing the 2008 income tax material for our accountant — all easy enough to write off.

But one day, Jan became lost driving home from her daughter's home in Fonthill and bit by bit, cut back on how far or where she would drive for appointments unless accompanied by me or a friend — and soon, there were other cues.

Jan was an excellent weaver, good enough to take on commissions, but began to make mistakes that were frustratingly difficult to recognize and figure out how to fix.

With reading, Jan found it increasingly difficult to keep track of who was who in novels and the plot and took to keeping a running tally of the characters in books she was reading before she would finally give up on this or that book, saying something like, "I just couldn't get into that book" or other version of her growing frustration with what had been one of her favorite pasttimes.

With that and other frustrations, such as losing her way within Niagara-on-the-Lake or constantly losing house or car keys, Jan became increasingly anxious and developed frequent visual phenomena typical of migraine — a sure indication of stress.

Like her father, Jan was a social person who enjoyed people, but as time went by, she became quieter, less comfortable visiting with others — except those with whom she was most familiar — and her world outside our home gradually shrunk to the Pillar and Post's morning aquafit classes, choir practices and church services at St. Marks.

Some of those moments were frightening, such as the time when she became bewildered and lost trying to find her way home from the Prince of Wales, or the mysterious man she reported in the parking lot at the Pillar and Post who claimed he was an insurance agent, to whom she gave what was left in her purse.

Those and other unnerving moments were the ones Jan told us about, but as my daughter Martha reminded me, there were probably many other unwitnessed, scary moments for Jan she didn't tell us about or remember.

About this time, we hired a young woman, who was good-natured and kind, to help Jan out for several hours a day while I was away before switching Jan to Upper Canada's day program for two years.

During the latter period,



Dr. William Brown and his wife Jan, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. SUPPLIED

Jan developed the "slumps," for want of a better term, in which for example at the Stagecoach Restaurant, Jan would slump to one side unresponsive for a few minutes before coming to, as if nothing had happened.

These became increasingly common, especially in stressful situations or even at home, when sometimes she would slump to the floor and recover in a few minutes.

Jan was thoroughly investigated at the Niagara Falls hospital, but no obvious treatable cause was found for the "slumps" and because of the falls and now severe memory and cognitive declines, Jan was admitted to Niagara Long Term Care Residence in 2019 — half a year before COVID-19 struck with a vengeance in late 2019 and early 2020, before vaccines were available.

Like several other residents, Jan caught COVID and for several weeks was very disoriented and when once they switched her to another room for isolation purposes, she kept wan-

dering back to her former room, bed and bathroom.

For the next several years, including the switch to Pleasant Manor, Jan was reasonably stable with little evidence of further cognitive decline but like many of the residents at both institutions, Jan failed to develop friendships or even talk with other residents despite seeing one another everyday and close up at mealtimes.

No surprise, her natural language skills withered away except for short sentences or phrases prompted by a staff member or me.

Now, toward the end of her second year in Pleasant Manor and the 16th year of her dementia, Jan is failing again.

Left alone, she's apt to dose off and pay little attention to what's going on, has developed abnormal flicking and tremulous movements and there have been periods lasting several hours when she's hard to rouse and, most recently, seems to be losing the sense of how to swallow and coughs a lot.

The latter two suggest that

swallowing is beginning to fail and as a result, she aspirates, something that carries a high risk of pneumonia and one of nature's common exit ramps at this stage of the disease.

Looking back, Jan's history is typical of Alzheimer's disease, although she also has MRI evidence of two old small ischemic strokes — a common enough combination.

The periods of unresponsiveness are probably epileptic in origin and related to the cumulative effects of the disease on her brain, but impossible to treat without making her even drowsier and less responsive.

Even so, I love to visit Jan and that part that I love is still there.

On good days, Jan knows precisely who I am and responds to cuddling and holding hands and most of my bad jokes, sometimes with her own comeback comments poking fun at me.

So, in some of the most important ways, I haven't lost Jan and more important, the warm, social Jan is still there.

The title of this essay speaks to the long road travelled by Jan and I and similar roads traveled by other residents and their partners and best friends.

Alzheimer's is a long-haul disease — what Martha calls a "brutal living disease."

There is reasonable hope that more effective anti-amyloid and tau drugs given early enough — ideally, well before any clinical symptoms — could pre-

vent the progression of the disease.

The importance of clearing the brain of as much tau and beta-amyloid is underlined because of recent speculation that both can act like prions — that is these abnormally shaped proteins are capable of inducing the same changes in normal versions of these protein as Nobel laureate Venki Ramakrishnan speculates in his 2024 book, "Why We Die."

Recent evidence also suggests that the Shingrix vaccine, which significantly reduces the risk of shingles, may also reduce the risk of Alzheimer's — possibly because it reduces the load of the chickenpox virus, which, like other viruses, long stays in the body, and might play a role in triggering Alzheimer's.

However, we're not there yet, because many of the current drugs are associated with bleeding in the brain — an unacceptable risk for someone being treated, who has been identified by biological markers in the brain, CSF and blood as having AD but otherwise is well.

Hear about Alzheimer's and aging in general at the upcoming series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Library, beginning Sept. 4 at 2 p.m. Please register with Debbie Krause.

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.

## Grace United's Festival Market fundraiser touches all the bases

John Sayers  
Special to The Lake Report

This year's Festival Market at Grace United Church on Saturday, Aug. 31, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., is going to be a big hit with every shopping fan. A real home run.

Of course, the first big hit is the breakfast, designed to fortify you for a morning of rewarding shopping. Or afterward, as you sit at a table and contemplate your purchasing successes while

enjoying a late breakfast.

Second might be the baking tables with lots of scrumptious baked goods, especially for the early birds.

Third is the wonderful world of jams and sauces. If you missed the Peach Festival sale, you might still be able to find some Colonial Sauce or some Saskatoon Berry jam.

There also is a new arrival, what I call Citrus Magic marmalade.

Sometimes I visualize the

geniuses in the Grace United jam kitchen as sort of like the mad scientist in the movie "Back to the Future."

And like him, the new Citrus Magic marmalade works. The result is a happy blend of grapefruit, orange and lemon flavours.

Made in a limited quantity, Citrus Magic marmalade may not remain in stock beyond the purchases of those early birds. So arrive early.

The Treasures Sale is featured inside the church hall.

With real treasures, like the elegant vintage Georg Jensen Danish silver carving set in the classic Acorn pattern that can cost you over \$1,000 U.S. online — but only a small fraction of that at Grace.

If silver isn't your thing, maybe one or more of a trio of cast iron antique pots would add to your fireplace décor.

And at the fireplace you could later sit back and watch the dancing flames while quaffing a pint of beer in one

of a pair of engraved, numbered cut-glass Edward VIII Coronation souvenir mugs that were once in the collection of an earlier Governor General, the late Vincent Massey.

They are from a limited edition by famed British glassmaker Thomas Goode and came from a Waddington's auction of the Massey Estate many years ago.

One more of many gems — an early Art Nouveau Gouda-style lamp that can be dated

to early in the last century.

The delicate and fragile original parchment shade confirms its early dating. This isn't a silent auction. No waiting to find whether you were the winning bidder.

And a special large donation has enabled us to set up a stunning display of costume jewelry to present all the bright, attractive baubles in the horde. It's in the hall near the Treasures.

See you at the sale. It's sure to be a hit.



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Great Gorge  
Route, Part 2

Continuing with our Great Gorge Route theme, here is a postcard image showing one of the cars of the Niagara Belt Line. Going through the Niagara Gorge, Niagara Falls, Lewiston and Queenston, passengers of this international trolley system would witness all the natural beauties of the Niagara River. The car featured here is travelling on the American side of the route, where it ran right along the base of the gorge. Note how close the rail lines are to the river. In April 1909, there was an ice jam that significantly damaged the tracks. The company had to rush to repair them before the summer season began.



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# We cannot eat our housing cake



## Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

"The world is a book. The person who does not travel reads only one page."

Such wise words to live by, as we stumble our way through our lives. Those of us who have chosen not to travel have narrow terms of reference, as we make life changing decisions.

I have been extremely fortunate this year, spending time in Marrakech, Morocco and London, England with my adventurous daughter. I watched her live her life in these magnificent parts of the world.

Too, I spent a few days in Vancouver with my son. He seems to have it all figured out, with his life balanced in what is surely one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Yes, when the sun shines. The weather was predictably

perfect during my visit, for kayaking in Deep Cove, biking around Stanley Park's Seawall, and drinking cold beer on the deck of the venerable Vancouver Rowing Club.

And just walking around that great urban area.

After I returned to NOTL I read in The Lake Report the results of the detailed survey about the housing needs of NOTL seniors as they age. Thank you to Stephen Ferley and Michael Ennamorato, two leading Canadian researchers who now call our town home.

Their survey professionally proves what we should have suspected after eating many cookies in the Sweets & Swirls cafe at the Community Centre and talking with friends in Aisle 4 of the ValuMart (I know, I know, The Independent. Change is hard.) And after an Oast House Barnraiser or two with Henry and Shannon at our local Legion.

So, it has been confirmed. Older NOTLers cherish their independence and want options to stay. But, the great majority want to continue living in single family houses, most often with beautiful green grass to cut.

Therein lies the rub.

During my recent visits in Marrakech and London, I was cheek by jowl with people enjoying excellent public transit, world class socialized medicine, safe streets and a multicultural lifestyle that was invigorating and inspiring.

Libraries, pubs and people originally from all over the world.

What do they have that we don't have here in our wee and wonderful corner of the world?

People, and lots of them. Density, and housing variety. Step outside the door of apartment buildings or condominiums or student residences, and navigate these multicultural cities feeling safe.

Being part of a really big and diverse cultural mosaic, with most everyone getting along.

Almost everyone tries to be kind, and isn't this one of the keys?

I thought deeply about the people living the lives they were living in Morocco and England, and then reading the results of our recent comprehensive survey turned on a light bulb in my mind.

It will take a generational change in our thinking, and strong and determined political leadership, to convince Canadians to give

up on the "dream of home ownership."

Plenty of patience too, and the realization that developers are here to make money, and to help us.

I regularly pass by Stone Road Village on Niven Road, and the three story apartment buildings recently opened by the Hawleys in The Village. So many happy people living well, within walking distance of medical services, a bank and the Community Centre and Library. Other amenities, and lots of kibitzing too.

What's not to like?

Yes, friends and neighbours, we cannot eat our housing cake and have it too. If we want amenities and services, we must admit that densification is required. Let's catch up to the rest of the world. Take a deep breath.

Look around the world. If possible, visit Sydney, Munich, Dublin, Oslo, Paris or so many other cities. The majority of people don't live in single family dwellings, and they seem to be enjoying life a whole bunch.

It's not easy to be humble, but let's admit there just might be a better way.

It's sometimes good to embrace and encourage change.

But I ramble.



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

**Pan troglodytes is the scientific name for this close relative of humans and bonobos.**

**Last issue:**  
**Category: STARTS WITH "G"**  
**Clue: Grab some shade in one of these turreted garden houses that as the name suggests is good for a nice view.**  
**Answer: What is a gazebo?**  
**Answered first by: Larry Mantle**  
**Also answered correctly (in order) by: Susan Hamilton, Bill Hamilton, Bob Wheatley, Sue Rautenberg, Margaret Garaughty, Lynda Collet, Susan Dewar, Ted Wiens, Pam Dowling, Mike Gander, Wade Durling, Esther VanGorder, Brenda Stewart, Marla Percy, Linda Becker, Catherine Clarke, Tuija Johansson, Daniel Smith, Nancy Rocca, Marjory Walker-Barone, Neil Pascoe**  
**Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)**  
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# Increase your vegetable harvest with **pollination**



## **GROWING TOGETHER**

Joanne Young  
Columnist

Cucumbers, squash and zucchini plants can produce an abundance of fruit for you in a single season.

Often, there is so much produce that you are up to your eyeballs with fruit and end up sharing them with all your neighbours.

Like with all gardening endeavors though, you may have a summer where the plants do not produce the fruit they have in past years. This is something I have been asked about different times in the last couple of weeks.

Here are some reasons why your cucumbers, squash and zucchini might not be performing as desired.

Most squash are monoecious, meaning a single plant produces both male and female flowers. The female blossoms are the ones that produce the fruit.

To tell whether the flowers on your plant are male or female, look at the area immediately behind the flower itself. Male blossoms are borne on a short, straight, green stem, while female blossoms sit atop a tiny bulbous growth (the eventual squash fruit).

If your squash plant produces ample flowers but never bears actual fruit, or it bears fruit that stops growing when it's very small, then there's likely a pollination issue.

For fruit to form, the pollen from the male flowers must be carried to the female flowers by bees or other pollinators. Without the female flower being pollinated, no fruit will form.

Usually, the bees are plentiful enough that they do a great job pollinating.

When your plants start producing flowers for the season, you'll see the male blossoms first, and you'll wonder where the female



If your squash plant produces ample flowers but never bears actual, full-grown fruit, then there's likely a pollination issue, says columnist Joanne Young.

flowers are. Be patient — the female flowers will come.

If there have been unusually high amounts of rain or cold weather, this can delay the emergence of the female flowers by a bit.

Cloudy and wet weather can also impact the activity of pollinators, which is another reason why you may

not be seeing fruit yet.

So, the decrease in the number of bees and unusual weather conditions can have an effect on how much fruit your plants can produce.

Planting more than one plant will increase your chances of having male and female flowers at the same time.

If you see fruit that is shrivelling and/or rotting, this may also be a pollinator issue.

However, it can also happen because the conditions are so damp the fruit gets killed off by a fungus called blossom end rot.

Make sure you plant your squash and cucumbers in a

compost-rich soil with good drainage to cut down on disease issues.

So, making sure the female flowers are getting pollinated is the key to good fruit production. How can you ensure this is happening?

You can pollinate the flowers by hand — a fairly easy task to undertake.

Use a small artist's paintbrush or a Q-tip to transfer some of the pollen from a male zucchini flower to a female flower. The pollen is located on the stamen, which is the part in the center of the male flower.

Dab the pollen on the tip of the stigma in the centre of the female flower.

You can also pull a male flower off the plant, remove the petals, and brush the stamen directly onto the stigma of a female flower.

With a little effort and dabbling in some science, you can have more produce than you know what to do with.

Joanne Young is a Niagara-on-the-Lake garden expert and coach. See her website at [joanneyoung.ca](http://joanneyoung.ca).



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- SEPT. 12 - GRAND THEFT AUDIO
- SEPT. 13 - COTTAGE BREW
- SEPT. 14 - RYAN THOMAS BAND
- SEPT. 15 - DUO LEEPA
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