



The Candlelight Stroll | Page 9

NOTL's chief administrator **resigns**, heads to Hamilton

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The new year will mark the beginning of a new chapter for Niagara-on-the-Lake's top bureaucrat.

Chief administrative officer Marnie Cluckie is stepping down from her role as of Jan. 14, the town announced Monday.

While the town didn't say where she is going, an almost simultaneous

announcement by Hamilton Mayor Andrea Horwath said Cluckie was becoming the Steel City's new chief administrator and city manager.

In selecting Cluckie for the job, Horwath utilized

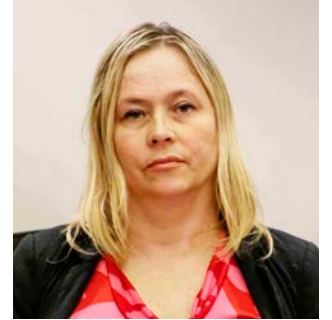
the so-called "strong mayor" powers given to the heads of some Ontario municipalities.

Cluckie previously worked for the city from 2005 to 2015.

NOTL council plans

to select an interim chief administrator soon and begin the process of recruiting a permanent CAO in the coming weeks.

That process typically



Marnie Cluckie.

Continued on Page 3

Town, tourism agency ink deal on **\$1.1M** in room tax proceeds

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

With negotiations completed on how to disperse the town's room tax proceeds, Niagara-on-the-Lake's destination marketing organization is looking to get back to business as usual.

It's been almost a year of back-and-forth over how the town and its marketing group will each get its 50 per cent share of the new tax collected on behalf of the town.

The 2 per cent tax, which took effect July 1, 2022, is charged to guests at hotels and other short-term accommodations.

A contract that sums up the rights and responsibilities of each party was greenlit by council at a meeting on Tuesday night.

The contract, included in the meeting's agenda material, had an attached staff report summarizing

Continued on Page 2

Paul Bosc Sr. remembered as **visionary**



Paul Bosc Sr. with one of his beloved Egyptian Arabian horses. The Niagara-on-the-Lake wine pioneer has died at age 88. SUPPLIED

Jill Troyer | The Lake Report

Paul Bosc Sr., who died Saturday, is being remembered as the "ultimate pioneer" of Niagara's wine industry, an innovator and a nurturer of young talent.

The man who founded Chateau

des Charmes in Niagara-on-the-Lake died peacefully after a brief illness.

He was 88 years old and tributes to his life and his life's work have been piling up.

"His legacy is written across

the vineyards of Niagara and beyond," said Tony Aspler, longtime wine writer for the Toronto Star. "He was really THE pioneer of vinifera in Ontario."

Vinifera is the family of European grapes most people are

familiar with, such as Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc and more.

Michael Vaughn, a wine expert and former wine columnist for

Continued on Page 5

IceDogs and mascot Bones **practise** with NOTL teams

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

It was a hockey skate that two groups of NOTL kids and their parents won't soon forget.

Two Niagara-on-the-Lake

Minor Hockey Association teams had some very special guests show up for their practices the past two weeks.

First, youngsters with the U7 Initiation Program 1 squad got a surprise visit

from Bones, the Niagara IceDogs' mascot.

And last Thursday members of the U9 Minor Development team were shocked when four members and one coach from the IceDogs showed up to join them on

the ice.

The IceDogs sent some of their stars, too – top scorer Kevin He, first-round draft pick (#2 overall) Ryan Roobroeck, forwards Ethan Czata and Ivan Galiyanov, and assistant coach Damon

Racicot.

It all came about because the two NOTL teams were supposed to have participated in a pregame skate at an IceDogs league game a



Hunter Willms with IceDogs' mascot Bones.

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Tourism NOTL's chief executive Minerva Ward, seen here at a previous meeting of council, told The Lake Report she plans to use some of the room tax funds to upgrade Tourism NOTL's website. EVAN LOREE

Town, tourism agency ink deal on **\$1.1M** in room tax proceeds

Continued from Front Page

the deal. All told, the town and tourism agency will split more than \$1.1 million in room tax revenue.

The town has collected about \$720,000 from the room tax in 2023. Almost \$360,000 of that will go to Tourism NOTL.

In 2022, the town collected more than \$453,000, of which about \$227,000 will also go to the agency.

The room rate is scheduled to rise to 3 per cent in January and be extended to bed and breakfasts and cottage rentals.

"We look forward to a good and collaborative working relationship with the town," said Minerva Ward, the president of the Tourism NOTL.

The marketing group, a subsidiary of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, has been waiting on the town to distribute the tax proceeds for a year and a half now.

"It should have happened at the same time the (municipal accommodation tax) was passed (in 2022)," Ward said.

"It's not public money. It's not taxed. It's not normal taxpayer money."

The purpose of the room tax is to help the town pay for marketing programs and infrastructure that benefit the tourism industry.

Ward said Tourism NOTL has continued to advertise the town to would-be tourists despite not yet having access to its share of the accommodation tax.

She said the Chamber of Commerce kept Tourism NOTL's marketing initiatives afloat while the negotiations were playing out.

Ward, who leads both the chamber and the marketing group, said Tourism NOTL would be able to move forward with a few new projects now that the money is being remitted.

"We're finally here and we can get on with the work," she said.

Tourism NOTL has a five-year marketing strategy, Ward said, which includes an update to its website and a branding campaign for the town.

"The tourism website is sort of mixed up with the chamber's website," she explained.

With funds finally coming in, she said she'd be able to deliver a new site for Tourism NOTL, "something that's clean, visually appealing, easy to use, and so on."

The new site also would be used to display digital and photographic content.

"Marketing is driven by content," she said. "We've tried to create some in-house, but we really need proper content that we can then use on our website or social media."

While council endorsed the contract with Tourism NOTL, it did so with a couple of conditions, one being that Tourism NOTL have its own board of directors, distinct from the chamber.

Coun. Maria Marvridis pitched this amendment, saying she was hoping to ease the anxieties of some councillors who were "still not convinced on supporting this transfer agreement."

Ward began legally separating Tourism NOTL from the chamber earlier this year to satisfy council's concerns about financial transparency.

The contract also allows the town to review the finances of both the chamber and NOTL Tourism.

This clause was not typical of a transfer agreement, Ward said.

She said the town probably wanted to double-check that the expenses incurred by NOTL Tourism while waiting for the room tax to be remitted could, in fact, be charged to it.

The contract was endorsed unanimously, though Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Coun. Erwin Wiens were both absent from the meeting.



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Parking **delays** permanent patio plans

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Council has, for the fourth year in a row, decided to renew its temporary patio program, though questions remain over whether it should be made permanent.

Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors decided not to support a permanent patio program, saying a lengthy staff report didn't adequately deal with many of their concerns.

"I'm being asked to support something, but I don't have any of the information to make an informed decision," Coun. Nick Ruller said.

His reluctance was spurred by a 52-page staff report that suggested council support the creation of a permanent seasonal patio program.

An appendix attached to the report shared the results of a town survey in which nearly 93 per cent of 394 respondents said they supported the town's patio program.

The same survey found that some residents felt the patio program would be even better if Queen Street was a pedestrian-only zone.

The town introduced the



Coun. Sandra O'Connor suggests the town should close its patio program. EVAN LOREE

temporary patio program in 2020 to support restaurants that were suffering during COVID-19 lockdowns.

The seasonal program permits NOTL restaurants to run patios on public property adjacent to their business.

If the town switches to a permanent program, the municipality won't have to renew or review it each year, as it does now.

"Moving forward, a lot more needs to go into a report before I can make a solid decision because we are changing the streetscape of Queen Street," said Coun. Maria Mavridis.

The town has issued 37 seasonal patio permits,

eight of which go to restaurants on Queen Street, said the staff report.

Mavridis said there were 26 food establishments on Queen Street alone.

Coun. Gary Burroughs wondered if all of them would qualify for a patio permit if the town moved to make the concept permanent.

And Mavridis wanted to know how the town would make up revenue lost from parking spaces occupied by future patios.

The staff report proposed imposing a fee of 50 per cent of the daily parking rate in order for patios to take over some parking spots.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor shared both of Mavridis's concerns and added the program makes parking even tougher in Old Town.

As well, the seasonal patio program is out of step with the town's commitment to heritage preservation, she said.

"I really don't feel that the patio program is in the town's best interest at this time, and therefore I move to end the patio program," she said.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said O'Connor's suggestion was out of order, had nothing to do with the report under discussion and he therefore could not allow it to be debated.

Cluckie to be new city manager in **Hamilton**

Continued from Front Page

can take several months.

The outgoing chief administrator was not available for interviews.

Cluckie has been NOTL's chief administrator since December 2020, when she was hired to replace Holly Dowd, who retired in 2019.

The position had been filled temporarily by Sheldon Randall, who was the town's director of operations at the time. He has since retired.

During her tenure, Cluckie helped council with its 2022-27 strategic plan and oversaw numerous modernization and digitization projects, improved transparency and intergovernmental advocacy, the town's statement said.



Marnie Cluckie has resigned from her position as Niagara-on-the-Lake's chief administrative officer. FILE/EVAN LOREE

Cluckie said it was an "incredible honour" to serve the Niagara-on-the-Lake community "alongside a remarkably talented and dedicated team."

"I extend my sincere gratitude to my colleagues on the senior leadership

team and the entire Niagara-on-the-Lake staff for their tireless commitment to service delivery excellence," she said.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said council was "grateful" for Cluckie's efforts to move the town forward.

"Marnie's unique ability to bring people together for a common purpose, her visionary leadership and tireless work ethic have had a positive and lasting impact on the community," Zalepa said.

Cluckie began with the town at a time when the world was coping with an unprecedented pandemic, the statement noted.

She steered the Niagara-on-the-Lake staff in its response and recovery to ensure residents continued to receive critical services while taking steps to improve communication and service delivery, the town said.

Cluckie previously held senior administrative positions with Halton Region and Niagara Region.

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Virgil speed camera in testing stage

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Drivers might need to make it a habit to slow down as they drive through Niagara-on-the-Lake.

There's a new camera set up in Virgil near Crossroads Public School on Niagara Stone Road – and it's being programmed to automatically catch and ticket speeders.

It is one of four speed cameras Niagara Region is installing in community safety zones across the region to help keep people on the road safe.

Scott Fraser, the region's associate director of transportation, said the camera



A speed camera has been installed in Virgil and is in the testing stage. EVAN LOREE

is being tested to make sure it's operating as intended.

It is not yet being used to enforce speed limits but is on track to start as of Jan. 8, 2024, he said in an email.

"The (automated speed enforcement) program is

an important component of the region's overall Vision Zero road safety initiative," he said.

Vision Zero is a regional program that seeks to improve road safety and eliminate fatal accidents.

The region is in the process of collecting data on collisions and speeding infractions from before and after the camera was installed, Fraser said.

Those metrics will be useful in determining the success of the program.

"A truly successful program, in our eyes, would mean that no tickets were issued, because it would mean people had slowed down," said regional spokesperson Janet Rose.

She told The Lake Report speed cameras like these effectively curbed speeds in other areas, including Durham and Hamilton.

The region will put up an "In Use" sign once the camera is active.

Newark Neighbours helps more families

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Christmas is coming fast and Newark Neighbours is hoping to spread a little comfort and joy to the families it helps, said Cindy Grant, the agency's director.

Grant said that Newark Neighbours will be providing Christmas hampers filled with all the supplies needed for holiday meals to 100 families starting Dec. 20, but help is needed to get them filled.

"It's a bit of a moving target," Grant said. "We're looking for juices – cranberry and apple – snacking crackers and coffee."

The Christmas campaign is one of three staged by the agency over the course of a year – the others are at Easter and Thanksgiving – and it comes at a time when the agency's food bank is helping more and more people than ever.

"We've had a large influx of new people in the past two weeks," Grant said. "As of (Nov. 30), we are helping 131 households."

Of that number, 37 are families with 78 children under the age of 17. Those numbers are up from 119 families and 77 children just over a month ago.

But help is on the way. As a member agency of Food Niagara, Newark Neigh-



Cindy Grant, chair of Newark Neighbours. FILE

bours will be one of the beneficiaries of Bell Media's Niagara group of radio stations' Great Holiday Food Drive.

It also has been getting assistance from across town, including NOTL Hydro, which will be collecting donations of food and toys for the agency during Saturday's Niagara-on-the-Lake Christmas Parade.

"There are nearly 40

groups and organizations around town who are currently collecting for us," Grant said.

The increasing numbers turning to the agency for help are indicative of a trend across Canada.

In a report released Nov. 26 by Feed Ontario, it was noted that 800,822 adults and children accessed a food bank in Ontario between April 1, 2022 and

March 31 of this year, a 38 per cent increase over the previous year.

"Ontarians are struggling to get ahead," said Carolyn Stewart, Feed Ontario's chief executive officer. "While we are seeing low unemployment rates across the province, working Ontarians are having trouble earning enough income to afford today's cost of living."

The report also noted that social supports such as Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program are not enough.

Twenty-six per cent of food bank clients rely on Ontario Works while 28 per cent rely on the program. Combined, those numbers represent a 17 per cent increase over last year.

Grant said NOTL is no different.

"We're seeing single moms, working families, people who just can't get by (without help)," Grant said.

Inflation is a factor that Grant said is fuelling the increase in demand.

"Prices on our groceries are going up, just like everywhere else."

Newark Neighbours food bank operates Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1534 Niagara Stone Rd. in Virgil from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The food bank will be closed for the holidays beginning Dec. 20, reopening on Jan. 2.

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Paul Bosc Jr. and Paul Bosc Sr. at harvest time at Chateau des Charmes winery in 2020. DON REYNOLDS

Bosc was a NOTL wine pioneer

Continued from Front Page

the Globe and Mail and Toronto Life, echoed the sentiment, saying, “Paul was a master winemaker and he knew it all started with the grapes.”

Bosc is credited with being the first person to plant vinifera grapes in Niagara on a commercial scale, at a time when most of the grapes being grown here were hybrids.

Vinifera grapes make much better wine, but common wisdom at the time said they couldn’t be grown in Niagara, because of the climate and soil conditions.

Bosc, who had been educated in France, was sure they could grow here and went on to prove it.

“He was interested in generating grapes to produce the best-tasting wines possible,” said Vaughn.

In recognition of his many accomplishments, Bosc won multiple accolades, including the Order of Canada, Order of Ontario, an honorary doctorate from Brock University, the Queen’s Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals, and the Canadian Vintners Association Award of Distinction.

“His story is the story of a new Canadian, who brought new ideas to Canada,” said his son, Paul Bosc Jr., the

president and CEO of Chateau des Charmes.

Bosc Sr. came from five generations of French winemakers, and learned viticulture and winemaking at university in Dijon, France.

“He was the beneficiary of knowledge from centuries of winemaking and he brought those values around quality with him to Niagara,” his son said.

After arriving in Canada, he built a career at Chateau Gai, where he produced some of the very first vinifera wines in Niagara on an experimental basis.

Then he launched his own winery in 1978 – Chateau des Charmes – and planted almost exclusively vinifera grapes.

“He also introduced three new varieties here, Alligote, Viognier and Savagnin, from France,” said Aspler. “He was the ultimate pioneer in the industry.”

He recalls being in the vineyard with Bosc in those early days when Paul Sr. showed Aspler one particular vine.

“It towered over the other plants, and Bosc exclaimed, ‘I’m going to propagate that one!’ He did and it was Gamay Droite, a new varietal that he created.”

“He put Gamay on the map in Canada, and today

it has blossomed,” Vaughn added.

Bosc Jr. recalled his father’s spirit and work ethic. “He was a self-proclaimed fighter, he never gave up and that was crucial because he was up against some tough adversaries, including Ontario weather.”

“Vines are not a crop that you plant and they pop up in a few weeks. Vines are vulnerable, a lot could go wrong,” he said.

“There was a lot of trial and error, but he was always learning from failures. He made a huge contribution adapting a non-native crop to a brand new climate, with no previous history here.”

Vaughn noted, “He was always working, especially in the vineyard. That’s what he loved the best.”

Bosc was always ready to share his knowledge and hard learned lessons with others.

“He was very generous with his time with others in the industry, and he wouldn’t dictate to anyone how they ‘should’ do something, his approach was more ‘I’ll show you how I do it,’” said Bosc Jr.

“He was very free with his knowledge. He encouraged younger people. He nurtured young talent,” said Aspler.

One of those people is

Amelie Boury, who is now vice-president, winemaking, vineyard and operations at Chateau des Charmes.

She grew up in France, was educated there and began working with Bosc Sr. in 2011.

“We became very close. I was only 27 when I started working with him,” she said.

“I grew up with him mentoring me, teaching me and I was like part of the family. It was amazing. He knew so much and I was like a sponge,” said Boury.

“He was always curious and involved,” she added. “Even this fall, during harvest, he was right there on the crush pad as the grapes came in, checking them out.”

“I hope he will never be forgotten. He was a grand monsieur (a great gentleman),” said Boury.

Bosc Jr. said his dad never stopped being engaged and participating in the winery. “Despite being 88 he found ways to contribute right until the very end.”

“He remained very independent, living in his own home, just him and his three cats,” he noted.

A public funeral service will be held at Our Lady of Scapular Church in Niagara Falls on Thursday, Dec. 14, at 11 a.m.



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Santa keeps flame going



Santa and Mrs. Claus help to light the candles at the 34th annual Candlelight Stroll. He'll be back in town on Saturday for the annual Christmas Parade, which starts at 11 a.m. EVAN LOREE

Editorial

Celebrating the visionary Paul Bosc Sr.

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

Our wine world has lost an innovator and passionate advocate with the death of Paul Bosc. His accolades and achievements are impressive, and his legacy will live large.

Behind the truly grand accomplishments was a truly inspirational man.

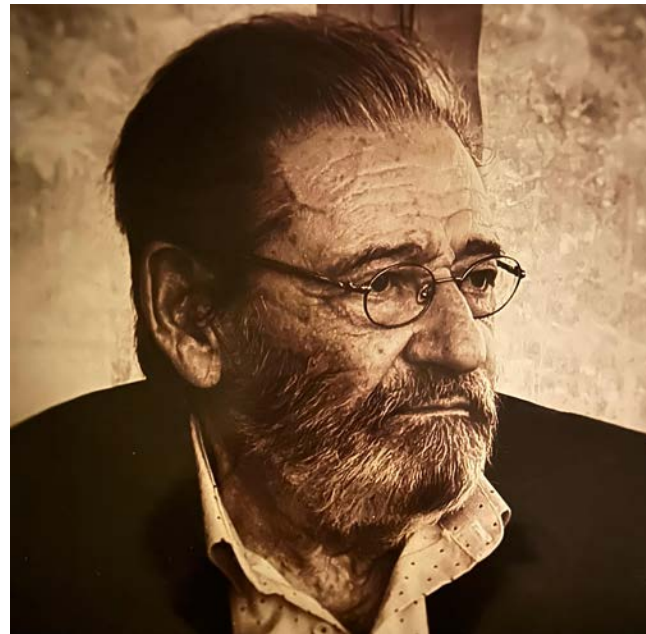
I had the great privilege of spending many an afternoon with Paul Sr. (as he was known), in the last year or so, gathering up his life story for his biography.

Diminutive in stature, always dapper, and distinguished in every way, he unfolded a remarkable narrative.

Forthright and fascinating, the stories flowed, often with great good humour and enjoyment in the telling. There was no detail unremembered, no event forgotten.

He had so much to be proud of, but his recounting of his many successes was very matter of fact, even understated. He was never boastful.

I came to think he must have been born with a spine of steel, because he



Paul Bosc Sr. has died at age 88. MICHAEL BEECH

overcame obstacle after obstacle, never even contemplating compromise.

He arrived in Canada from France in 1963, as a young man still in his twenties, with his wife and son, Paul Jr. Despite the fact he didn't speak English, he landed a job as winemaker at Chateau Gai.

He learned English, no small feat, and built a highly successful career at Chateau Gai, which included the iconic TV commercials he starred in in the 1970s. Those of a certain

age will remember them, because they saturated the airwaves.

That image of Paul Bosc in the vineyard, in his leather jacket and full head of hair, promoting Marechol Foch, with the tagline, "In order to make good wine, you need good grapes. At Chateau Gai we know that."

Others might have rested on their laurels at that point, but not Paul Sr. There was more to come.

He started his own winery, Chateau des Charmes, in 1978. He was determined

to plant European vinifera grape varieties in his vineyards, instead of the hybrids that were being grown at the time. Everyone said it would never work.

There had been experiments growing those types of grapes, such as Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, etc., but he was the first to go out on a limb and plant them on a commercial scale.

He relied on his expertise from his education in France, and his hard work – and it did work. He made award-winning wines and eventually others followed suit.

With few exceptions, all of the vineyards in Niagara are now planted with vinifera grapes. The grapes no one thought could grow here are now the foundation of the wine industry in Niagara.

Paul Sr.'s demeanour was one of quiet confidence. He knew who he was, he knew what he had done and he didn't need to trumpet it.

So let us do that. Let's truly appreciate the gifts he brought to our vineyards and our wine industry, and celebrate him as the giant pioneer that he was.

editor@niagaranow.com

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

No consequences for developer not responding to town

Dear editor:

Regarding your story, “Contentious King Street condo project appealed to land tribunal,” (Nov. 30), despite all the presentations and arguments against this development to members of town council, they were unable to make a decision?

The whole article focuses on town councillors crying, “This isn’t our fault. The developer didn’t respond to our questions.”

Planning expert Pierre Filion naively says that despite the fact the devel-

oper was able to run out the clock by not responding to the town’s comments by the deadline, he “wouldn’t call it a flaw in the system.”

I think the people in town would wholeheartedly disagree with this statement – because it certainly seems to be flawed.

The message to all developers is just don’t answer or respond to the town, let the deadline pass and you can get what you want. The Ontario Land Tribunal will give you what you want.

The whole system is backward: It seems to me if the

developer doesn’t answer the town’s questions, the issue should be dropped, not allowed to go to the Ontario Land Tribunal, which will likely allow the builder to do what he wants.

Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake chief planner Kirsten McCauley says staff recommendations on the project “will likely come to council in a closed session” because the project is subject to legal proceedings.

Coun. Gary Burroughs was the only councillor to state “this is a mistake.” So, is this a decision by the

councillors to go behind closed doors or is this really because it is subject to legal proceedings?

This decision affects many people who are extremely upset about the town’s handling of this issue and many other developments in town.

Let’s watch and see how many other development projects go to the Ontario Land Tribunal because the developer won’t or can’t provide timely feedback to the town’s questions.

Sheila Serio
NOTL



Writer Sheila Serio says developers should have no right to appeal non-decisions at the Ontario Land Tribunal if the non-decision is a direct result of the developer not responding to the town’s comments. MIDJOURNEY

Do residents have rights when neighbours build next door?

Dear editor:

About a year ago we learned the house on the property that adjoins our backyard was to be torn down and replaced.

In order to see if the new house would have any negative impacts on our property, I tried contacting the neighbouring owners.

They refused to meet with me or provide a copy of the new, approved site plan. They did arrange for their builder to stop by our house to show my wife and I a copy of the site plan on an iPhone, but he would not give us a copy of it.

How good are your eyes for detail and memory on a screen that size?

With no luck there, I tried to obtain a copy through the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s planning department.

I was told that we could come into the planning department and view a copy, but if we wanted a hard copy, I would have to fill out a freedom of information request (FOI).

I questioned this on the basis of “what private and personal information is contained on a site plan?” I still have not received an adequate answer to this question.

A copy of the proposed site plan is available (without an FOI request) to the adjoining neighbours, only if a minor variance is required for a new proposed structure. So, where are the privacy and personal information concerns?

I have reviewed the Ontario Freedom of Information Act and have not found anywhere that says an FOI



Kip Voegel says the Town of NOTL needs to be more forthcoming with its site plans, which are public property. MIDJOURNEY

request is required for a copy of a site plan.

After a few days of emails back and forth and staff insisting it was town policy, I filed the FOI request.

When I went to file it and pay the \$5 deposit, the offices had closed early due to an impending snow storm. This was the day before the Christmas-New Year’s break.

I deposited my money and FOI request in the dropbox at the front door.

When the town offices reopened after New Year’s, my son-in-law and I made arrangements to view the site plans. When we did this, we were told we could not take any photos of them.

The day the town reopened, I received a call from the clerk’s department saying they had received my FOI request and the town had 30 days from that date to respond, not the date I had filed it.

That got straightened out, but in the end it did not matter. I was told additional charges would apply depending on how much time

staff had to search the files to find the copy.

The site plan was already out and in an active file in the planning department. My FOI request for a copy of the site plan was denied with an explanation that made no sense with regards to the document that was applied for.

You can appeal the decision to Ontario’s information and privacy commissioner by paying a \$25 deposit.

I did not file an appeal because by the time I received the decision, the house had been torn down and construction on the new one started.

We are now looking at a 35-foot wall. The previous house was a single storey with a full dormer on the back. At the most, it was 20 feet high.

The new house has a larger footprint and restricts our view of the Niagara River toward Queenston and Lewiston. It also interferes with our digital antenna TV reception from the south and southeast.

With the heavy rains in late July, water flooded our backyard. We can only hope that this will not be repeated and has been taken care of.

Pot lights are being installed in the soffits. Will they light up our backyard and the inside of our house all night, like the lights installed on the house and in the yard of a home built across the street from us 10 years ago?

What about the rights of adjoining property owners?

Kip Voegel
NOTL

Town of NOTL needs to look at spending cuts, hiring freeze

Dear editor:

It may well be that Niagara-on-the-Lake needs to spend more on its infrastructure.

Most residents would likely agree that having raw sewage leak from our sewers into our creeks and Lake Ontario is unacceptable.

And most would also agree, I believe, that town should undertake the necessary repairs and upgrades to our sewage system to resolve the issue.

However, I doubt many would agree with Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa that property tax increases are required for that to happen, (“Leaky sewers a symptom of low infrastructure spending, mayor says,” The Lake Report, Nov. 23).

Instead of property tax increases, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake should consider other options, including using some of the new tax dollars it will receive from the accom-

modation tax to address infrastructure issues such as leaky sewer lines.

There is no question that the high numbers of tourists who visit our town each year put a strain on our infrastructure.

Nor is there any question that clean, naturally smelling waterways and lakes, beaches with water that is safe to swim in, pothole-free roads and smooth sidewalks would augment the tourism experience offered by our wonderful town.

It may also be that town needs to take a hard look at its current spending. There are undoubtedly areas in the budget where spending could be reduced.

I’ve noted previously that it does not make sense for town to make discretionary grants to groups and organizations when it is also planning to implement a significant tax increase.

And I question whether all the new hires town has made recently were re-

ally the right thing to do, especially with the ongoing costs associated with those hires.

Given the current economic climate, inflation and housing affordability issues that are making it challenging for many to make ends meet, a property tax increase is not the answer to finding the money to fix our aging infrastructure.

Cutting discretionary spending, a staffing freeze and being flexible (while staying within the law) about how the revenue generated by the accommodation tax is used would be a better option.

It may take some innovative thinking about how the various revenue streams the town has at its disposal are allocated, but I believe it can be done. It’s time to keep property tax increases in line with inflation, period.

Terry Davis
NOTL

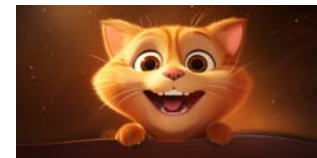
NOTL Cats Rescue reaches fundraising goal with \$6,484

Dear editor:

NOTL Cats Rescue is very pleased to announce we’ve surpassed our fundraising goal for 2023.

With the support of the community, area businesses, volunteers and our families we have raised \$6,484.

NOTL Cats Rescue would like to recognize and thank the following for their support and contributions to



our fundraiser: Phil’s Your Independent Grocer, Reif Estate Winery, Soko Bakery Café, Maple Leaf Fudge, Virgil Pet Valu, Hendriks Your Independent Grocer, Coconut Quartz and, of course, The Lake Report.

A reminder that pets are not Christmas gifts – they are a life commitment.

Before giving any animal as a gift ensure the receiver is serious about caring for the animal and that they have the time, willingness, ability and the resources to care properly for their new companion.

Tanya Rice
NOTL Cats Rescue

Democracy in development? **Maybe for the few**



Brian Marshall
Columnist

In November of 1947, Winston Churchill stated: “Many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried, in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government — except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”

Indeed, while I would much rather live in a democracy than under any other form of government, there are fundamental weaknesses inherent in any expression of democratic governance that human beings have, to date, developed.

I would suggest that one of these fundamental weaknesses relates to the size of the electorate base — in other words, the greater the number of voters represented by a single politician, the less influence an individual voter (or group of voters) has on the policies and actions of said elected representative.

Now, for argument’s sake, if we assume this to be true, then the level of government most responsive to the electorate would be the local municipal councils while each higher tier becomes successively more divorced from the will of the people and more inclined to adopt the paternalistic attitude that “father knows best.”

And, not wishing to be disabused of this notion by the inconvenient voices or actions of the lower tiers of government — which are responding more directly to the will of their communities — they limit the power, authority and financial wherewithal of these lower tiers.

Traditionally, this has



A 3D rendering of the three-storey condominium Bice Builders has proposed on King Street. FILE

been done by playing shell games with policy and legislative direction. Quite simply, with only property tax revenues, no municipal government has the money to hire sufficient staff to keep up with the changes in governing legislation and, as a result, will regularly be found non-compliant with legislation allowing local decisions to be ignored or overruled by the upper tiers (and the supporting bureaucracy).

Since 2018, Premier Doug Ford’s government has played this traditional game like a virtuoso with perhaps more actions deliberately directed at the hobbling of municipal tiers than any other preceding provincial government.

Consider his government’s changes to heritage designation and “listed” properties — changes that not only made it more difficult to designate but also forced municipal governments to devote their limited staff resources to designating listed heritage resources on a short 24-month timeline.

After all, staff engaging in this vital effort means fewer hands and minds available to undertake the other business of municipal planning departments.

Then, not content with traditional tactics to limit local democratic representation, among other items,

Ford has (in certain jurisdictions) reduced the numbers of elected municipal representatives — lessening direct voter influence.

“While Bice’s action may be viewed as biting the hand of the community that feeds it, or a question of the ethical ground upon which it was based, there is nothing illegal about what the company did.”

Further “strong mayor” powers have been introduced: witness their use in Welland to hire a chief administrative officer without council involvement — an action decried by one councillor as “using the power takes away responsibilities of councillors, who are the voice for residents who elected them.”

This is not a unique situation: the mayor of Caledon did exactly the same thing (first firing the existing officer) in August.

This action elicited a comment from one of the councillors (Lynn Kiernan) who stated: “Mayor (Annette) Groves has effectively silenced the voices of the

other members of council by these actions. Using these powers is a gross violation of our democratic principles.”

Of course, Ford has justified all these changes in order to “get more homes built faster,” but one wonders: how might the hiring of a chief administrative officer, the vetoing of a bylaw or the use of most of the other provisions of strong mayor powers accomplish this objective?

I am reminded of the words of Sir James Jeans: “Democracy is ever eager for rapid progress and the only progress which can be rapid is progress downhill.”

This might, for our purposes here, be paraphrased to suggest that democratically elected governments are ever eager for rapid progress ... because I’m quite sure that the people of this province are more interested in a measured and considered approach to progress that respects the communities they live in.

Moreover, the evidence presented through Ford’s aborted Greenbelt debacle and the staggering number of municipal zoning orders his government issued — more than the total of all municipal zoning orders issued by previous provincial governments in the history of Ontario — to bypass local development controls shows unmitigated pander-

ing to developers.

And how does this “rapid progress” going “downhill” manifest at a local level?

In the past year, we have seen a number of development proposals floated before Niagara-on-the-Lake’s town staff, its committees and council.

Dipping into this list, a quick representative sample might include the multi-storey residential development on Mary Street, the hotel development on the Parliament Oak property on King Street, the 25-storey multi-use high-density development in Glendale and the multi-unit condo development at the top end of King Street.

In every single case, each of these proposals requires zoning or bylaw amendments to proceed.

In every single case, community reaction has been clear, swift and nearly universally opposed to the developments — as proposed.

The question is, will these developers proceed to further their proposals?

And the answer is: very likely.

As I have pointed out in this and several previous columns (for example, see: “The Greenbelt and the games governments play” in the Oct. 26 edition of this paper), no matter what reasons or rationale underwrite a decision rendered

by our municipal council, if it is not in favour of the development proposal, the developer has the option of appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

And, because the province continually changes the rules of the game while the municipality lacks the funds to always remain current with those changes, it is almost inevitable that the local government will be found non-compliant in one or more technicalities.

It is really no surprise that the Ontario Land Tribunal record stands at 96.6 per cent in favour of developers.

This leads us to the situation with the Bice Builders’ King Street condo project, wherein the developer simply ignored council’s request for continued dialogue and waited until the 120-day time limit for a council decision (imposed by the Ford government) ran out, which allowed the company to file for an appeal.

While Bice’s action may be viewed as biting the hand of the community that feeds it, or a question of the ethical ground upon which it was based, there is nothing illegal about what the company did.

On the contrary, the rules of the game in Ontario actually encourage developers to follow a path that will nearly always lead to a win.

Of course, there are actions the provincial government could take that would level the playing field, but given its demonstrated bias toward developers and consistent disdain for the will of voters — at any time other than the weeks leading up to an election — the odds are vanishingly small.

I have known a great number of very successful developers over the past 50 years who cared as much about their community and the people who lived in it as their pocketbooks.

The two are not mutually exclusive ... despite what our provincial government seems to think.

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



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Cora Long D.D.

Candlelight Stroll **shines bright** despite cold

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Thousands of candles cast tiny shadows across Old Town Friday night.

As 12-year-old Maya Webster was inside the Court House chatting up the who's who of Niagara-on-the-Lake, a crowd of locals and visitors alike were gathering outside, preparing for the Candlelight Stroll.

And while the Dietsch family, with their 13-year-old son Dylan, were giving a TV interview, the Salvation Army Brass Band was playing Christmas music on the Court House steps, with Deborah Whitehouse providing the vocals.

The crowd was a low hum.

Minerva Ward, the president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, which organizes the event, said she was a little disappointed by the rain and cold, which kept many people at home this year.

In 2022, almost 6,300 people came out, substantially more than the 2,500 a chamber spokesperson estimated turned out this year.

Still, Dylan and Maya, the recipients of the money raised by this year's stroll, are each receiving more than \$2,800 from sale of candles.

Maya said she was excited but also a little nervous, though this was not the first time she had spoken to a crowd about juvenile diabetes.



PHOTO GALLERY
See more pictures at niagaranow.com

Kat Forbes and husband Brandon Poirier return to Niagara-on-the-Lake every year for the Candlelight Stroll. EVAN LOREE

Maya has been advocating for research into juvenile diabetes since she was almost seven.

"I'm very proud of her," said her dad Jeff Webster.

He told The Lake Report that his daughter began her journey as a diabetic when she was two and he never expected she would have the opportunities she's had.

"It's like anything. Over the years, it's become just part of your day-to-day life," Webster said.

Dylan, who lives with cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, was joined inside the Court House by

his brother, parents and a friend, John Dixon.

The family is planning to use their share of the stroll funds to install a lift in their house to help Dylan get up and down the stairs.

Dad Matt Dietsch said they gave their son the day off school so he could save his energy for the stroll.

Dylan smiled and said he felt "good" about having the day off, while smiling at his friends and family.

He and John Dixon have been friends for about four years and John said it was "just fun to be around" Dylan.

Andrew Niven, who chairs the board of the Chamber of Commerce, said the annual stroll was one of his favourite events.

"It really defines what community is," he said when the leaders of the stroll walk down the Court House steps and light the first of thousands of candles.

Lord Mayor Gary Gale said it was the "authenticity" of the Candlelight Stroll that lit his candle.

Zalepa said he's known the Dietsch family for a long time and was inspired by Dylan's grandfather Mi-

chael Dietsch, who served as lord mayor in the 1990s.

Tony Baldinelli, NOTL's member of Parliament, was also there.

"Dylan speaks to me directly," Baldinelli said, because his son Daniel was born premature and had to spend 136 days in hospital recovering.

Knowing the money from the event is helping to support Dylan was, in Baldinelli's words, "fabulous."

Meanwhile, Cassandra Stuart from Stevensville was outside with her three children Ellie, Isaac and Lincoln.

Stuart said she has attended the annual stroll for about four years.

"I like the carolling, the gathering of everybody. And it's beautiful," she said.

As her children, four-year-old Ellie and three-year-old Isaac, smiled in unison over the thought of opening gifts on Christmas day, Stuart said it was their joy that she loved the most about Christmas.

Six-year-old Fiona Jaramillo was at the head of the crowd with her parents during the speeches, catching a glimpse of the mysterious Santa Claus as he helped to light candles.

Four-year-old Katherine Urquhart was awfully fond of her cat-eared hat while she sat perched atop dad Eddie Urquhart's shoulders.

She, too, had a view of the action as the first candles were lit.

On their evening stroll, Brandon Poirier and Kat Forbes took a moment to listen to one of the performing bands.

The couple told The Lake Report they come to Niagara-on-the-Lake every year for their anniversary and stay at the Pillar and Post, where they were married.

They said they just enjoy being together for Christmas.

"She kinda saved Christmas for me a long time ago," Poirier said, smiling at his wife.

Forbes said there is something magical about the town and the time of year that brings them back every year.

Wayside Chapel's Christmas **sing-along** returns

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

The Wayside Chapel's Christmas sing-along may just become a yearly tradition.

The chapel's afternoon of carolling will return for a second year this Saturday after a large turnout in 2022, said Rick Meloen, the sing-along organizer.

"There were about 70 people and I would have been happy with ten,"

Meloen said. "It may turn into an annual tradition."

Anyone who wishes to participate can meet outside of the Wayside Chapel on the parkway at 3 p.m. on Saturday.

"We just thought it would be an opportunity for people to take some time out of their schedules for carolling," Meloen said.

He added that songbooks will be provided, but they are willing to sing whatever the group desires.



Anyone who wishes to join the sing-along can meet outside the chapel at 3 p.m. on Saturday. FILE



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Lake Report photographer unveils NOTL-themed calendar for 2024

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

An award-winning photographer whose work has been featured in countless editions of The Lake Report, Dave van de Laar has unveiled a new calendar for the year 2024, featuring stunning snapshots from across Niagara-on-the-Lake.

This is van de Laar's first time producing a calendar, though it's something residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake have been asking him to put together for a few years now.

"I love taking pictures of the downtown area and that's what my calendar is about," he said. "Mainly the downtown core. I walk down there quite a bit."

Van de Laar chose 12 images of NOTL that evoke nostalgia for the town's history and showcase its beauty, such as a scenic autumn view of Queens Royal Beach, the storefronts of Queen Street, or the grand, historic homes of Old Town.



Dave Van de Laar's calendar is packed with photos of Niagara-on-the-Lake. SUPPLIED

He particularly enjoyed going out during the autumn and winter seasons to take photographs:

some of the subjects of these months include the Royal George Theatre on a cold blue night, the snow-covered Fanny Rowley House, and the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre against a golden twilight.

"I had lots to choose from," he said of those photos.

Since announcing the arrival of his 2024 calendar, van de Laar said the demand has been more than he expected, which has made his foray into this new project a great experience.

"I think the best part of it is I've had a great reception. I

think it looks great," he said.

Each calendar costs \$20 and they are currently available for pickup. To place an order for a calendar, you can contact Dave van de Laar at davehv@gmail.com or by calling 289-219-1912.

For more information and to see what this 2024 calendar looks like, you can visit davevandelaar.com/calendar.

Help fill a stocking for seniors in need

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

For the fourth year in a row, Joan King is calling on NOTLers to fill a stocking to spread some holiday cheer.

For Dec. 20, King will have 222 stockings filled up and ready to distribute across long-term care homes, including Upper Canada Lodge, Pleasant Manner and Niagara Long Term Care.

"Thirty have already been done by the Niagara Lions and the Crossroads School kindergarten class," King told The Lake Report. "I'm putting the rest to our community."

Those who choose to fill a stocking can drop them off at King's home, or a new partnering location, Apple Hill Apothecary in Queenston.

"If someone goes in there to drop off a stocking they will give you a sample of something like tea or a bath salt," she said.

The company just opened in May, King added, so the partnership is a great opportunity to showcase the business to the community.

Those who wish to fill a stocking can contact Joan King at joankempl0@yahoo.com.

They will be distributed from the NOTL Community Centre on Dec. 20.



Joan King, centre, is back at it again this year, filling stockings for seniors living in long-term care homes. FILE

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Edison Singers herald the Christmas season in NOTL

Tim Taylor
The Lake Report

Like almost all professional musicians, Jim Bourne wears many musical hats.

It's a hard-won life, fuelled by passion more than money. It is just what he does.

Organist, choir master, private tutor, musician, pianist and chorister — his is an ever-changing circle of activity.

Bourne is well-known as the music director of St. Mark's Anglican Church in Old Town.

But he also performs with major Canadian choirs, opera companies, well-known solo performers, and on and on. He uses the organ, piano and, of course, his powerful bass voice. And, in a pinch, he can add the clarinet and trumpet.

And he is in the bass section for the Edison Singers for "Tis the Season," the choir's Christmas concert at the Court House Theatre



Jim Bourne, a well-known NOTL musician and chorister, will be part of a Christmas choral concert on Dec. 18, with the Edison Singers in the Court House Theatre. TIM TAYLOR

on Monday, Dec. 18 at 7:30 p.m.

Bourne took to music at an early age, but it wasn't until he joined the choir at Trinity College School in Port Hope that he began to see a real future in music.

"I was the head choir boy," Bourne says, drifting back several decades.

"Our choir went on a three-week tour of England

and Wales. It just blew my mind. It was during this period that I realized that this (music) is what I should be doing."

He describes a life that was never without music.

After high school, Bourne attended the Conservatoire in Brussels for a year.

"I was too young for university, so I just took chamber music lessons —

played all the time — and sang whenever I could. In the afternoon, we all went out for beer."

When he returned in time for university at Western in London, Ont., his parents urged him to sideline music.

His father was the town engineer in Port Hope, then moved his family to Cobourg to join a private engineering firm.

"My father didn't really think music would be useful," he says with a smile.

After switching his major from general to French during his first two years, some friends in the music faculty asked him to accompany them for their voice recitals. By his third year he successfully auditioned for the school choir.

Bourne made the switch to the music program, starting back in year one.

"I just think it was in my blood, the thing I was best at."

After graduating from Western, he earned a post-graduate performance diploma at the Royal College in London, England, all-the-while performing in a variety of small ensembles.

After an 18-year stint as music director at Leaside Presbyterian Church in Toronto, and a concurrent 14-year role as accompanist for the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, Bourne moved to Niagara in 2018 to become St. Mark's music director.

But he loves singing for Noel Edison. "Noel is always solid at the podium. He gets the best people he can. And then he doesn't micromanage anyone. No one shapes the music like Noel Edison does."

And Edison loves the Christmas choral season.

"Even though I have been in the choral music business for over 45 years," says Edison, "I still look forward to the month of December with all the concerts and all the wonderful music that is written for the season."

"The music of Christmas comes in many forms, shapes and emotions," he says.

"It's about past gatherings with family and friends, adult memories of good times — and sometimes bad times — but it's the one time of the year that always conjures up a deep emotion of goodwill towards all."

For more information about the concert, go to theedisonsingers.com or call 226-384-9300.

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Artist's miniature dioramas take you back in time in Niagara-on-the-Lake

Linda Fritz
The Lake Report

Connecting with our past can take many forms. We read books, watch movies, visit historical sites and we go to museums.

Among its exhibitions, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum is making the connection in another way: dioramas, three-dimensional models representing scenes from the past. The model can be miniature or large-scale.

Vince Biondi has created four miniature dioramas of life in the late 1800s to the early 1900s in Niagara-on-the-Lake. While three can be seen at the NOTL Museum, the fourth is at the Queenston Community Centre.

Although Biondi was born in Toronto, he spent most of his working life in Calgary working for Air Canada, first as a flight attendant, later as flight services manager. Toward the end of his career he hired and trained new staff.

His early interests included building miniature airplanes, but his true love was the railway.

This can be seen in three of his dioramas. His vision of the Queenston dock and railway includes a couple of rare steam engines and a street car.

The model goes further: You can see a couple arguing with a porter about their luggage and nearby a car is loaded with boxes of fruit ready to be shipped to Toronto. A fisherman has cast his line into the river and a busker stands on the dock,



The Michigan Central railway terminus was at the NOTL docks. LINDA FRITZ

ready to entertain visitors.

That diorama can be seen at the Queenston Community Centre.

A second railway model shows the corner of John and King streets in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Today we know it as a four-way stop near the Pillar and Post. At one time, it was a major railway crossing.

Originally, the Pillar and Post was a cannery and Biondi shows it as that. He has also included railway cars from the period.

He searches to find the appropriate locomotive and if he can't find what he needs, he meticulously creates them.

The third railway diorama portrays the Michigan Central railway, which ended at the docks in NOTL itself.

Like John and King streets, this model also includes a warehouse. Today we know it as the yacht club. The lighthouse near the Niagara Pumphouse

Arts Centre is also there.

Biondi's most recent diorama is of the Queen's Royal Hotel. Again, you see people arriving, but rather than by train, they seem to have used a rather fancy car. They are well-dressed and clearly looking forward to their stay.

These three dioramas are at the NOTL Museum.

To create the models, Biondi gathers pictures and postcards of the area. He visits museums and uses the internet.

The library and archives at Brock University have been a useful source of maps of the areas. His research is careful and precise.

He likes to walk through the locations to think through how they looked at the time he wants to recreate.

The dioramas can take several months to complete and he'll often spend three hours a day building them.

Precision is impor-

tant. The models are built to the scale of 1:87, or one centimetre representing 87 centimetres in real life. The same image resolution is used for high-definition television.

Although he collects the trains where he can, Biondi creates the buildings from scratch, using balsa wood and styrene as well as other forms of plastic.

His next project is a recreation of the early 20th century Queenston-Lewiston bridge.

As part of his research, he has walked down the extension of York Street in Queenston, along the paving stones that were once part of the road to the bridge. An old abutment still marks its location, as does one on the Lewiston side.

The NOTL Museum is open daily from 1 to 5 p.m. during the winter. The Queenston Community Centre is open Tuesday afternoons from 1 to 4 p.m.



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.
Category: ONE SYLLABLE OR TWO?

**As a flower, it's one syllable.
As a pale type of wine, it's two.**

Last issue:

Category: ACTRESS BY ROLE

Clue: Ann Perkins on "Parks & Rec" and top cop Angie Tribeca.

Answer: Who is Radisha Jones?

Answered first by: Jane Morris

Also answered correctly (in order) by:

Lynda Collet, Bowen Hobbes, Bob Wheatley, Pam Dowling, Nancy Rocca, Wade Durling, Jim Dandy, Claudia Grimwood, Catherine Clarke, Elaine Landray

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Holiday decor enthusiasts **line up** for house tour

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Janet Coscarelli and her friends were among many who braved a rainy, cold weekend in Niagara-on-the-Lake and ventured out to this year's Holiday House Tour.

The Rotary Club's annual house tour saw people lining up around the block outside of six homes to check out the elaborate Christmas decor inside and outside these properties.

Perhaps most notably, The Garden Party home at 94 Prideaux St. had wait times nearing an hour, which is the home Coscarelli and her lifelong friends were dedicated to visiting on the tour.

"We came all the way from Nashville to see it," Coscarelli said.

Coscarelli and her friends, Gayle Alley, Sarah Hunt and Claudia Weber, have made visiting Niagara-on-the-Lake a new tradition.

"This is our second time here," she added. "We came in the summertime (for the garden tour) and were so delighted. I said, 'If I ever win the lottery, I'm buying a house here.'"

Despite the weather of the weekend, the group of



Lineups for the hugely popular Rotary Holiday House Tour on Saturday were up to an hour long. JULIA SACCO

ladies said NOTLers did everything they could to make their visit as comfortable as possible.

The ladies joined the Queen Street Candlelight Stroll on Friday and even when taking a moment out of the rain, were brought some Christmas magic.

"I sat on a stool and a bunch of teenagers came by and sang two songs to

me," "Frosty the Snowman and Santa Claus is Coming to Town," Coscarelli said.

The ladies said despite the six-hour travel time, they plan to come to NOTL again soon.

Inside, 94 Prideaux St. proved worth the wait for those waiting in line, as they got to take in Brenda McArthur's glamorous approach to holiday decor.

On the opposite end of the aesthetic spectrum was the Woodlands Cottage home at 2051 York Rd., which showcased all-natural decorations done by Gauld Nurseries, The Lake Report contributor Joanne Young and homeowner Elaine Bartolini.

"I wanted it to feel very homey for people," Bartolini told The Lake Report.

Her home, which dates back to the Secord family, featured decorations primarily made with organic pieces of branches and evergreen leaves, obeying her one rule of "no sparkles."

"Anyone can, really, do that arrangement, like that one on my windowsill, just by gathering some leaves and drying oranges," Bartolini added.

Each house on the tour featured different decor approaches and had unique details to offer, making it easy to see how both the Friday and Saturday tours completely sold out.

A sold-out house tour with six different properties requires a lot of different hands for things to continue running smoothly.

Jason Lalonde, one of the many volunteers, stood outside of the Davy House despite the cold and rain to keep the show going.

"I've got heated gloves and everything, so I'm good," Lalonde joked.

The Rotary Club lost around 20 volunteers to a stomach flu that hit on the Wednesday before the tour, so all hands were on deck.

"We had to call in a lot of last-minute help," Lalonde said.

"I brought in my daughter just because. But I've been outside pretty much the whole time," he said.

Other properties on the tour included Ballard Barn at 135 Centre St., Gate Street Studio at 358 Gate St. and Willowbank at 14487 Niagara River Pkwy., along with other annual sites and wineries in town.

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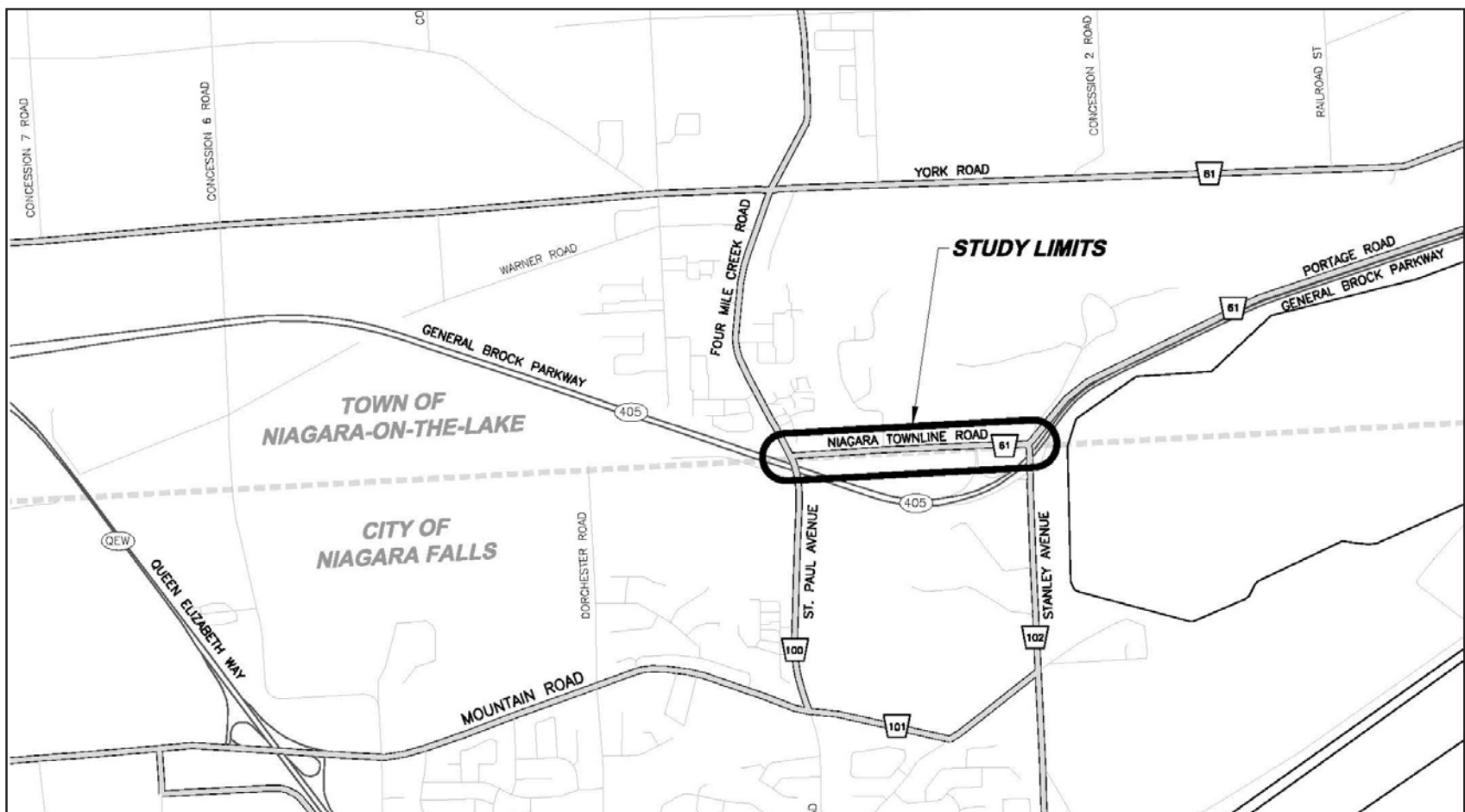
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Public Notice

Public Participation Meeting Proposed Street Name Change

Townline Stamford Road (Regional Road 61) to Niagara Townline Road (Regional Road 61)



Niagara Region has received a formal request to consider changing the name of Townline Stamford Road (Regional Road 61) to Niagara Townline Road (Regional Road 61).

The proposed change would provide that Townline Stamford Road be renamed to Niagara Townline Road.

The public participation meeting is being held during Niagara Region's Public Works Committee as follows:

Date: Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Location: Council Chamber, Campbell West Entrance, Regional Headquarters

To provide input orally at the Public Meeting, please pre-register with the Regional Clerk by sending an email to clerk@niagararegion.ca before noon on Monday, Jan. 8.

To provide written input, please either mail your comments to the Office of the Regional Clerk, Niagara Region, and 1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Ontario, L2V 4T7 or send an e-mail to clerk@niagararegion.ca by 9 a.m. on Friday, Jan. 5.

Direct any inquires with respect to the proposed street name change of Townline Stamford Road (Regional Road 61) to Mr. Graeme Guthrie, Associate Director Transportation Engineering at 905-980-6000 ext. 3249 or graeeme.guthrie@niagararegion.ca or Mr. Petar Vujic, Manager Road Safety at ext. 3238 or petar.vujic@niagararegion.ca.

Notice of Proposed Adoption of the Street Name Change By-law:

It is the intention that the proposed street name change by-law will be forwarded to Regional Council for consideration on Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024.

Accommodations for Participation

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in the Jan. 9, 2024 meeting, please let us know in advance so that arrangements can be made in a timely manner. Special accessibility accommodations and materials in alternate formats can be arranged by contacting Niagara Region's **Accessibility Advisor** at 905-980-6000 ext. 3252 or accessibility@niagararegion.ca.

Personal Information Collection

Any personal information collected at public meetings or submitted in writing is collected under the authority of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, will be collected, used and disclosed, where applicable, by members of Regional Council and Regional Staff according to the **Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**. The written submissions including names and contact information and the report of the public meeting will be made available to the public. Any information you share will only be used for the intended purpose for which it was provided. For questions or comments about privacy practices, or for more information about the administration of the **Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act** in Niagara Region programs see niagararegion.ca/government/foi.

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Touring McArthur Estate an annual tradition

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Each year the McArthur Estate is unmistakably decked from head-to-toe for the holidays.

This year's evening tour at the McArthur Estate took a unique approach to decor, featuring numerous Trisha Romance paintings as an homage to the local artist who once lived in the house and has frequently depicted Niagara-on-the-Lake in her work.

Guests flocked to the estate this past Friday and Saturday during the annual Rotary Holiday House Tour weekend to take in some of the paintings, along with the usual illustrious decorations.

The Walters family comes to McArthur house nearly every year and this year, multiple generations of women came along to enjoy a tour of the estate.

"My mom is here, my grandma is here and my sister is here along with my nieces- so that's four generations of us tonight," their daughter Kaylan Ssenfuma told The Lake Report.

The family made the trek



Five-year-old Janna Magarian shares her wishlist with "Santa" (aka Ward Simpson). DAVE VAN DE LAAR

from Howard, Ont. — about an hour west of Kitchener-Waterloo — for this holiday tradition.

"We loved the other house that (Brenda McArthur) did. She does a great job," Ssenfuma said.

Lana, Lindsey, Cindy and Ava Ford and her family also come to McArthur each year, but this season's decor was even more special for them, as fans of Romance's work.

"It's our annual girls' tradition," Lindsey Ford said. "We've been coming since Ava was probably seven years old, and now we come every year for a

girl's weekend."

"We always find (McArthur) so warm and welcoming to open up her home," she added.

McArthur explained that each year guests would ask numerous questions about the paintings that she had on display in the estate, so she decided to dedicated 2023's tour to Romance.

"I've added a lot of new Trish pictures, so tonight really felt like a night of honouring Trisha Romance," she said.

The team made some adjustments to the decor, taking down other paintings.

"It brought a real warmth

to the house," McArthur said.

Lana Ford stopped along the tour to grab a card print of one of Romance's paintings.

"I would love to have a picture of it," she said. "I think it's so nice to be in Niagara-on-the-Lake and to see these beautiful residences."

She added that the family would love to come back for a garden tour during the warmer months.

"We usually come on Friday, we stay at the Pillar and Post and we have our routine all figured out," she said. "The first day we see five houses and then the next day we see two and come here."

The women plan to make their trek from Whitby again next year.

When planning out such an elaborate tour, McArthur certainly isn't alone and she credited the team of assistants who helped make her ideas come to life.

"They help me put the whole thing together to create this incredible space. They work diligently with me from October on," she said.

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Top: Linkon Jackson and Leo Biega try to avoid getting caught by IceDogs mascot Bones in a game of tag. Bottom: Smith Kaposy and Bennett Hope with IceDogs players Kevin He and Ethan Czata. TRACEY HOPE

IceDogs show up for practice

Continued from Front Page

few weeks ago. That got cancelled at the last-minute due to poor ice conditions and the kids were really disappointed.

"About half an hour before this was supposed to start we got a call saying that it had to be cancelled due to poor ice conditions," said Tracey Hope, a parent with kids on both teams.

"Apparently there was an event earlier that day that ruined the ice surface and the team needed to spend a couple of hours before the game fixing it."

"Our kids were devastated, to say the least." But the IceDogs made up for it. Big time.

The major junior club reached out with a way to put smiles back on the kids' faces: How about a special skate with Bones and some IceDogs players?

Most of the kids on the U7 team are five and six years old, so having Bones hang out with them seemed a good fit.

He played tag with the players and "was absolutely hilarious," Hope said.

"It was great to see the innocence of that age as the kids really seemed to believe they were skating with a giant dog."

The U9 kids were a little shy and nervous around the IceDogs at first, but once they started scrimmaging the kids became more comfortable and had a great time, Hope said.

Eight-year-old Henry Kedziora might have summed it up best. "It was really fun and I got to hug a player when I scored in 3 on 3."

The IceDogs did drills with the youngsters and participated in a mini game as well, Hope said.

"The players stayed the full hour and then afterwards came into the dressing room to pose for pictures and sign autographs."

Parents seemed to enjoy the night as much as the kids, saying it was "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that their child would remember forever," she said.

Coaches puzzled by Preds' poor game performance

Kevan Dowd
The Lake Report

This season's Jr. A Niagara Predators might be a tale of two teams: the Predators in practices and the Predators on game day – two wholly different squads, according to head coach Kevin Taylor.

After picking up some wins in the last few weeks, the Predators lost their only game of the weekend and fell back down through the ranks in the Greater Metro Hockey League's south division.

Losing 5-2 to the Tottenham Railers on the road Sunday, the Predators sit in second-last place but, fortunately, just a couple points below the next two teams.

"We were just flat. One line played OK but there's nobody there on this team right now that can take over the game and that's what

we're missing," said Taylor.

"I think they're a little rattled and they're struggling. Any amount of adversity, they fall apart and they take themselves out of the game."

Things started evenly, with Niagara's Luca Fernandez giving his team the lead late in the first period but Tottenham tied things up going into the second. Two early goals put Tottenham out front before Isaac Locker notched a second for the Predators at the 15-minute mark.

An ugly third period meant multiple penalties for both teams but only Tottenham managed to capitalize, scoring twice more on power plays.

The cost of the penalties was not lost on Taylor. Particularly a pair of five-minute fighting majors, during which Tottenham netted their last two tallies.

"Tottenham took a lot of penalties but we couldn't capitalize on them and the penalties we took were horrible at the time," he said.

"Five minutes left in the game, it's 3-2, we're on a power play and that's when everything fell apart. Guys started taking some stupid penalties and it just kind of snowballed from there," Taylor said.

"And then because things didn't go the way they expected them to go, their reactions made things even worse."

But for Taylor, the most baffling thing is the difference he sees between his team at practices compared to game days. Right now, it's a puzzle he is working with team president and GM Robert Turnbull to solve.

"We practise, we look amazing – we're amazing in practice – but then when we get to the game, it's a totally

different story," said Taylor.

"I don't know where the disconnect is, it's frustrating because you start second-guessing yourself."

If the coaching staff is going to get things figured out, now is the time.

The Predators' next six games have them exclusively playing the league's top three teams: North York Renegades, Bradford Bulls and Durham Roadrunners. Tottenham sits in fourth.

"We have North York on Friday, it will be a tough week of practices, we'll have to regroup and figure this out quickly," said Taylor.

The Predators take on North York Renegades Friday, Dec. 8 at the Meridian Credit Union Arena at 7:30 p.m.

The team has also organized a food and clothing drive for Friday night's game. Fans are encouraged to donate what they can.

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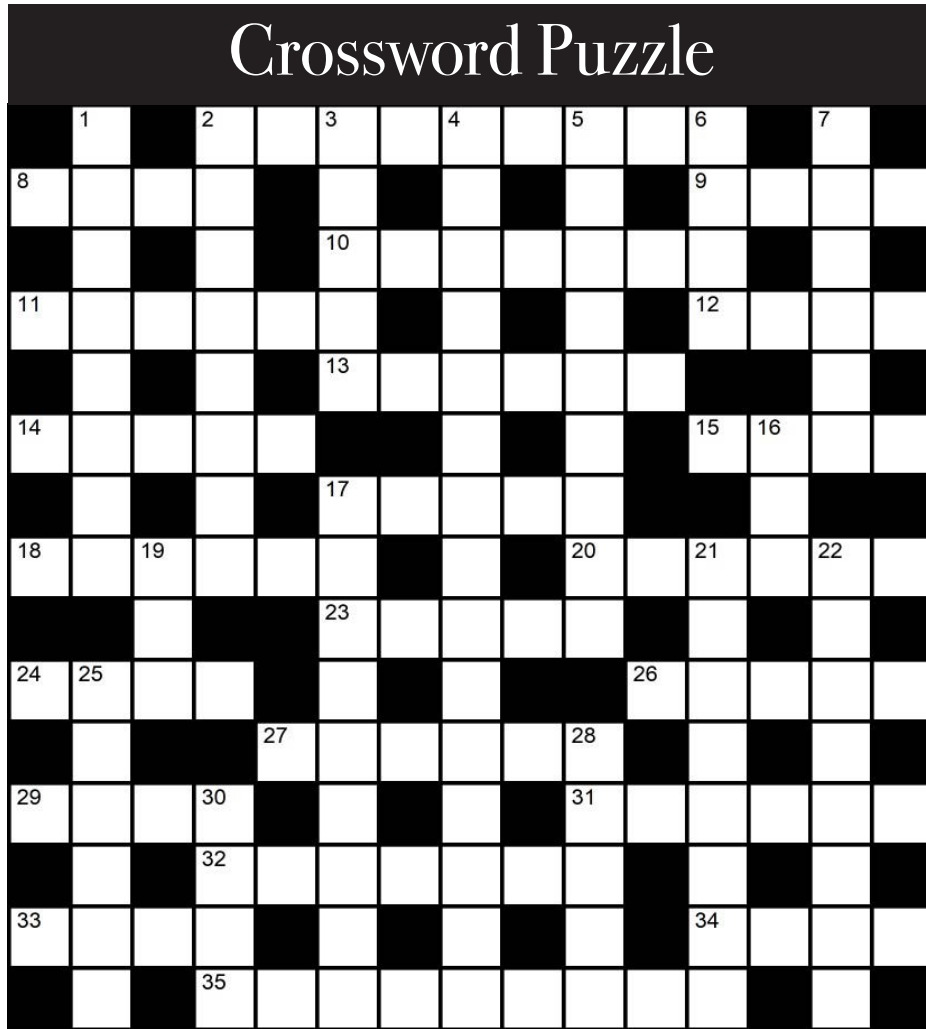
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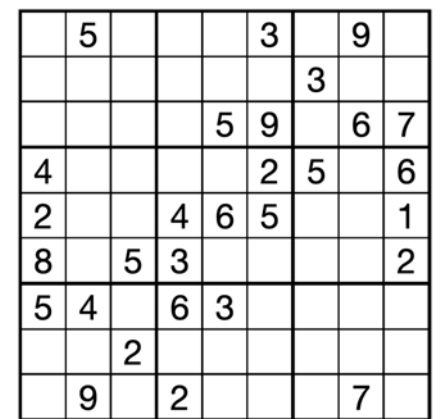
Have some fun



- Across**
- 2. Kind of party (9)
 - 8. Wheel shaft (4)
 - 9. Global promoter of peaceful nuclear energy (1,1,1,1)
 - 10. Patella (7)
 - 11. Woman's garment (6)
 - 12. If you're in this, you're inside (4)
 - 13. He wrote "Hell is other people" (6)
 - 14. Go around and around (5)
 - 15. Screen or religious image (4)
 - 17. Ornamental coronet (5)
 - 18. Repast for a late riser (6)
 - 20. Brandy (6)
 - 23. The German state (5)
 - 24. Kerfuffle (4)
 - 26. On the quiet (5)
 - 27. Strives and makes an effort (6)
 - 29. Crude cartel (1,1,1,1)
 - 31. Agency promoting children's well-being (1,1,1,1,2)
 - 32. Tyros (7)
 - 33. GMT alias (4)
 - 34. A great deal (4)
 - 35. Sensitive to criticism (9)
- Down**
- 1. Such as Marco Polo (8)
 - 2. Inca descendant (8)
 - 3. Finds pleasing (5)
 - 4. 1971 Sidney Poitier film (3,12)
 - 5. Domestic pest (9)
 - 6. Sealed for secrecy? (4)
 - 7. Adolf's ally (6)
 - 16. Cell occupant (3)
 - 17. Unhorsed (6,3)
 - 19. Black light (2,1)
 - 21. Easily fooled (8)
 - 22. Sicknesses (8)
 - 25. Appears suddenly (4,2)
 - 28. Fish dish (5)
 - 30. Heavy wet snow (4)



Last issue's answers



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Science and **the gods** of the 21st century



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Science, the study of the natural world, evolved early, possibly in nascent forms long before the emergence of modern humans, Neanderthals and Denisovans. Enabling traits would have been curiosity, imagination and learning by observation about the natural world of the sky, weather cycles, plants and animals — then, trying to make sense of everything. This was coupled with a growing capacity for symbolic thinking and language, which they used to share what was learned with others of their kind. Since those early times, human understanding of nature steadily evolved. With important nods to the achievements of Galileo

Galilei, Isaac Newton, Nicolaus Copernicus, Johannes Kepler and others, it was in the last two centuries that science began to move with unprecedented breadth and speed. Major achievements of the 1800s included electromagnetism, thermodynamics and in biology, Charles Darwin's hypothesis that species evolve in response to natural, and sometimes sexual, selection. The pace picked up in the 1900s, with Albert Einstein's masterpiece, general relativity, which related mass to space-time. If that were not enough for one century, a new field that described the nature of the atom and subatomic particles and forces emerged: quantum mechanics. The latter proved highly predictive and precise and underpinned the development of digital computers and lasers and how abundant energy is produced by nuclear fusion in the sun. Similar fusion-based methods, now under development, offer the possibility of near-limitless energy without risky nuclear or



Emmanuelle Charpentier. WIKIPEDIA

carbon waste products. In 1953, the structure of DNA was revealed, which provided the foundation for how heritable characteristics are passed from one generation to the next. In the decades that followed, the mysteries about how cells sustain themselves, communicate with other cells and create copies of themselves, opened the door to developing and using stem cells to create mini-brains or other organ tissues. Were it not for off-the-shelf messenger RNA technologies, many more millions would have died in the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a third theme, the world of the digital

computer and the realization of prophetic scientists in the 1950s that computers might someday become powerful enough to solve problems and questions that humans are unable to solve. Artificial intelligence offers many benefits but also threatens many current jobs in the much the way industrialization previously. In 2020, a Nobel Prize was shared by Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna for developing a method for editing genes of any cell, including human cells. In less than two decades, the whole field of genetics was upended because the method, called CRISPR, offered a cheap, precise way to selectively silence genes or introduce genes into the genomes of cells, from bacteria to humans. The problem with such advances in science is that they sometimes carry risks. Eventually, scientists may understand which genes underpin desirable physical, cognitive or behavioural traits with the intention of endowing humans with extraordinary powers. Given that such efforts are underway now and may soon become widespread, policing them will probably prove impossible. On the biological front, the list of intriguing technologies continues to grow such as the use of stem cells to create mini versions of the brain or embryos without parents or even a placenta. Within this century, there is the very real risk that humans could upend evolution by natural selection to evolution by designer technologies to create new versions of humans. We've heard how threatening AI can be in China these days as a means of tracking dissenters using data on smartphones and facial recognition technologies. The advent of quantum computers will make the invasion of privacy much more powerful and end any privacy we have on digital computers. Those are just a few of the looming threats posed by advances in science and engineering, some of which (such as quantum mechanics) were initially undertaken in innocence without thought to their consequences. The worry is that private companies and governments will soon possess powers well beyond our imagination even a few years ago. And they will be mostly unregulated. Like the mythical gods of Greece, our species has acquired enormous powers without the wisdom to manage those powers responsibly. *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.*

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EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM



Peeling potatoes at Niagara Camp, Second World War

This photograph features David Seitz and Bill O'Brien peeling potatoes for the troops at Niagara Camp here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Here I thought peeling potatoes for my Irish brood was exhausting. Imagine peeling potatoes for hundreds of soldiers! The food at camp was made on-site and consisted of wholesome meals. Stews or soups were made to use up any leftovers. Even the peels from David and Bill's hard work were incorporated into the meals, according to one oral history. Waste not, want not as they say. Soldiers experiencing rigorous training would be ready to scarf down anything put in front of them.

Enlightening encounters and braving the chilly elements



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson
Columnist

So much going on in our town and so much to learn.

Last week, I came upon the Learn & Live seminar at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, presented by Trevor Kwolek of Great North Physiotherapy in Virgil.

The title "Spin City: Dizziness and Falls Prevention" caught my attention, so I joined some 25 other aging NOTLers for an hour of learning. Enlightening, frightening, free and so very useful.

Kwolek is a trained vestibular therapist, having studied in several countries around the world. A vestibular

therapist teaches us how to stay vertical as we age and the statistics he presented to get our attention really got my attention.

Through his Virgil clinic he has already been helping many local folks lead a safer lifestyle.

He provided easy-to-understand data, plus then tips and ideas to lessen the chance of falling.

It is a fact that if you fall once, another fall likely will follow. Eliminating clutter, making certain lighting levels help us navigate safely from room to room and paying attention to the task at hand all contribute to safer days as winter arrives in Niagara.

Also, doing basic exercises regularly ensures muscular strength to let us walk, climb and bend more safely. There's that magic word again. Walk. What we consider aerobic exercise, our ancestors considered transportation.

They walked to school, to church, to work and to the shops. Now, as we tend to drive even short distances,



A group of NOTL gals gets together every Monday for a walk — even in the frigid weather. ROSS ROBINSON

our muscles atrophy and our co-ordination suffers.

Just a day or two later, after nobody showed up for my NOTL Free Walking Tour, I decided to enjoy a hot chocolate at Balzac's Coffee Roasters on King Street.

It was a chilly, drizzly and damp morning, but on the patio sat seven cozily dressed young women. They were full of fun and chatter, seemingly unaware that it was too cold to be outside.

I learned they are members of the local Newcomers Club, Women's Walking Division, who walk a couple of miles every Monday and

Wednesday morning. Rain or shine.

They were actively yakking and were appropriately enjoying the weekly special Canadian Drizzle Latte. How very froufrou. And they live by the Canadian mantra that there is no such thing as cold weather. Just cold clothing.

I agree with them and my Cochrane-raised mother often said Canada's transcontinental railroads were not built by people afraid of a few snowflakes or raindrops.

These Newcomers are meeting interesting new friends, promoting muscular

development and therefore lessening the likelihood of falling in the home or around the 'hood.

A few diverse thoughts to wrap up this weekly ramble: I hear the town is organizing a contest to name the three new snowplows. Can we look forward to an equally exciting contest to name the new roundabout in St. Davids?

Or will there ever be a new roundabout in St. Davids? A resident of that village and I recently enjoyed a cold Oast House Barnraiser and he noted that the true cost of expropriating land needed for a large roundabout has not been revealed. Expect this roundabout to be big, to efficiently allow large farm vehicles to pass. Just sayin'.

Perhaps appropriately, we seem to be going around in circles when discussing a roundabout or a traffic light in historic St. Davids. Or somewhere along York Road?

And the issue of hockey players wearing neck guards lingers. Some players and

their unions are waffling when leadership is what's needed.

A primary goal of any union is workplace safety. Can you imagine the UAW allowing two brothers to fight and not to insist on safety boots and hard hats?

Remember the resistance to hockey helmets and automobile seat belts. Remember Lorne "Gump" Worsley barefaced in the net, bravely challenging slapshooters only 60 years ago? Change, my fellow Canadians, is rarely welcomed.

And at the risk of sounding like a broken record, what can we do about the rusty eyesore on Mary Street, in the Tim Hortons parking lot?

Unused for over six years, chained awkwardly, on an angle, in place. In the interests of town beautification, should I go to Penners and spend 20 or 30 bucks on a Christmas wreath or some colourful lights?

There are huge problems in our world. Let's solve a couple of small issues in our lovely hometown.

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As 2024 approaches, we **reflect** on the past year



GROWING TOGETHER

Joanne Young
Columnist

With the end of another year coming quickly upon us, many of us are likely reflecting on the happenings of the last 12 months.

Even when it comes to the world of gardening, there are several items to look back on.

There have been many newsworthy items in the past year or so that are, unfortunately, having a negative impact on the environment.

In Niagara, we have been seeing the devastat-

ing effects of the box tree moth: a relatively new insect in Canada that has been attacking and killing boxwood after boxwood, including old, established hedges that have been able to survive for a couple of generations.

It has been sad driving around and seeing just how many boxwoods have succumbed to this insect.

Another new pest that we have been hearing more about this year is the Asian jumping worm.

Although there have not been many sightings of this worm in Niagara yet, it seems that it is only a matter of time before they become commonplace, destroying soil structure as they multiply in numbers.

And don't forget about the spotted lantern fly, which has been recognized as a potential threat to our grape, fruit tree and forestry industries.

Most recently, we have been learning about a new

disease that is also making its move into the area: oak wilt, which can kill a mature oak tree in one season.

As gardeners, we need to be diligent in spotting and reporting any sightings of the above insects and disease to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Enough doom and gloom – let's focus on the positive.

Gardeners are becoming much more educated and aware of what we can be doing to help improve the natural world around us.

We have stopped using as many pesticides and herbicides in our gardens as we once did.

There was a time when we would spray and kill any insect that dared venture into our garden, without taking the time to get to know them first and see if it is a harmful or beneficial insect.

There was also a time when we would spray our

entire lawns with herbicides just to kill a few weeds.

I am so encouraged when I see someone out poking the weeds out of the lawn by hand instead of spraying.

Some of the issues that we have heard much about, such as the decline of pollinators, seem like such huge problems to solve, leaving us to wonder how one person can make a difference.

But that is just it: we can and we are making a difference.

I am hearing more and more people asking for native options when planting a new garden or tree.

It doesn't mean that you must rip out all your existing plants and become 100 per cent native. If we all just added three or four native plants into our garden it would change things greatly: you add a few, your neighbour adds a few,

so on and so forth.

I feel that taking some simple steps such as this will ultimately be what makes the difference needed to keep all the pollinating insects healthy.

I was excited to be a part of the NOTL Horticultural Society's efforts of planting two new pollinator gardens the past year – one at Newark Community Gardens and the other at the William Nassau Park.

Gardeners are known for their optimism. When some plants are struggling one year, they know that things will be better next year – their tomatoes will be bigger next year, the flowers will bloom heavier, and so on.

They understand the importance of keeping elements in nature balanced. They know the importance of maintaining a healthy soil. They can see that when things are out of balance how it affects their garden, especially when it

comes to food production.

This optimism can go a long way in solving any problem. As gardeners, we can bring about the changes that are needed.

We can ask garden centers to provide more species of native plants.

We can push chemical companies to develop more biological types of controls.

We can continue to educate ourselves in the best way to deal with problems that arise in our gardens.

What we can't do is to sit back and wait for someone else to solve the problem.

We can't wait for the politicians or chemical companies to make the changes – we must be the change makers.

If we all do are part, positive changes will happen.

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



Season's Greetings from the **Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society**

Wishing you a peaceful holiday season and a prosperous New Year filled with the beauty of nature and the warmth of community.
www.notlhortsociety.com

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A big thank you to **Rainer Hummel and the Hummel family** for their \$25,000 matching donation.

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Also thank you to **Ben Buholtz and Jodey Porter** and all those who raised funds for our "Ben's Compassionate Community" program and joined our Healing Cycle Ride this year. This year was our best year to date for participation, both financially and attendance-wise. This year, with the help of our sponsors and participants, we raised \$67,083. We couldn't be more grateful. **Santa for Palliative Care Tim Taylor** was our top fundraiser once again this year. Thank you to everyone who participated in any way. NOTL Community Palliative Care Service and the clients we serve are overwhelmed with gratitude.



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