

PHOTOS: NOTL gets swamped | Page 13

Suspended trustee didn't properly report expenses, audit finds

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A Niagara-on-the-Lake Catholic school trustee who was suspended for five months last week over

comments comparing the Pride and Nazi flags did not properly report her 2022 election expenditures, a financial audit shows.

In addition, The Lake Report's analysis of the reports of the investigations

into Natalia Benoit show some connections to far right political groups and the so-called Freedom Convoys.

The audit, discussed at a Niagara Catholic District School Board meeting

Wednesday morning, found Benoit had failed to report about \$260 in campaign expenditures in the 2022 municipal election.

After a debate behind closed doors, the board decided not to pursue

any further legal action against Benoit. The board's reasons will be released at a later date, said vice-chair Rihannon Burkholder.

The auditor's report, signed by Glen Fraser of Meyers, Norris, Penn

LLP, said Benoit's initial financial statement showed she had no contributions and zero expenses.

Benoit submitted revisions to her financial

Continued on Page 7

Too early to assess impact of student visa cap, college says

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A Niagara College official says the college needs more details before it knows how a cap on permits being offered to international students — a new limit put in place by the Canadian federal government — will affect its operations.

A Jan. 22 announcement made by Immigration Minister Marc Miller was short on specifics, other than the number of permits that will be available in 2024, said Sean Coote, Niagara's vice-president, international.

"There's not a lot of detailed information out yet about what this cap actually means and how it can be applied," Coote said.

In the announcement, the federal government said permits for new international student permits will be capped at 360,000 for 2024, a 35 per cent decrease over 2023.

In Miller's announcement,

Continued on Page 4

A Gateway to community

NOTL church welcomes new pastor and home for Sunday worship



Merritt Howley, 6, and brother Malcolm, 4, play with toys alongside Georgina Keller at Gateway Community Church. JULIA SACCO

Richard Hutton | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

Gateway Community Church has a new home for Sunday worship, and a new pastor tending to the flock.

And to celebrate the changes, the Pentecostal church held an

open house on Sunday at the church's new digs at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre.

This is where the church now uses the Simpson Room for worship services and the adjoining Mori Room for its children's

programming.

"It gave the community a chance to see what we're doing," said Georgina Keller, office administrator for Gateway, adding that the open house was a way for the church to mark its 25th

anniversary.

The community centre is the fifth home for the church since its establishment in 1988 by founding pastor Mike Gordon as

Continued on Page 21

NOTL Museum tells stories in honour of Black History Month

Barbara Worthy
Special to The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum is honouring Black History Month with a series of presentations throughout February.

The museum kicks off the month on Friday, Feb. 2 with a discussion of the award-winning documentary, "Belonging," which follows former First Lady Michelle Obama on her 30-city book tour across the

United States.

The film is available on Netflix and the museum's Doc Club will hold a Zoom chat about it Friday starting at 10 a.m. Email bworthy@nhsn.ca for a link to the documentary and the chat.

The presentations are part of the museum's commitment to "keep telling the story" of Black history in Niagara and beyond.

After visiting the museum's 2023 exhibit, "Bound and Determined: Chloe

Cooley, Enslavement, and the Fight for Freedom," a visitor urged the museum to "keep telling the story."

"The time has come to understand the whole truth,"



Continued on Page 5 Chloe Cooley stamp.



**Peninsula
Flooring Ltd.**

13 Henegan Road | Virgil Business Park (905)-468-2135

Proudly Supplying and Installing

ANTRIM
HAND-LOOMED CARPETS & RUGS

HIBERNIA
WOOLEN MILLS

Crescent
DISTINCTIVE CARPET | CUSTOM RUGS

STANTON
CARPET • CUSTOM RUGS • RUNNERS

Rosecore
LUXURIOUS CARPET & CUSTOM RUGS

Serving Niagara Since 1977
SIMPSON'S
IN-STORE ONLY! | BOTH LOCATIONS
*Valid on February 6, 2024, on regular retail only. Restrictions apply. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Please see store for full details.

PHARMASAVE
Customer Appreciation Day

ONE DAY ONLY
FEBRUARY 6
25% OFF*
Most Regular Priced Products*

Council partly approves Tawny Ridge development

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors want to keep St. Davids small.

After residents campaigned against a mixed residential development proposal in St. Davids, council on Tuesday night approved a low-density portion of the

Tawny Ridge project and rejected the higher-density parts of the plan.

The project, proposed by St. Davids' Riverview Estates Inc., would add 32 single-family homes, 24 townhouses and 30 stacked townhouses.

The contentious plan was submitted to the town in two phases, each requesting different bylaw amendments.

The applications approved by council would permit the construction of 12 single-family homes fronting Tanbark Road.

The remaining 74 residential units proposed to fill out the area between Tanbark Road and Warner Avenue were rejected.

The decision was made after four separate, complicated votes on four bylaw

amendments, all of them split.

Couns. Wendy Cheropita, Maria Mavridis and Nick Ruller voted in favour of the entire project. Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Coun. Erwin Wiens were absent for the votes.

Couns. Tim Balasiuk and Adriana Vizzari voted for the 12 low-density units but against the rest.

The density of the project proposal was greater than that permitted by the low-density zoning but lower than medium density, Craig Rohe, an Upper Canada Consultants planner said in a report filed with the project application.

The project would help the town meet its intensification targets and diversify the housing stock, he said.

Couns. Sandra O'Connor and Gary Burroughs voted against the entire project.

O'Connor said she was concerned the flooding infrastructure would not be able to support the increased density.

And, "I believe that in any intensified developments of that size, that there should be a park," she added.

evanlore@niagaranow.com

St. Davids residents upset by response to development concerns

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

As a controversial Niagara-on-the-Lake residential development winds its way through the approval process, some residents of St. Davids are feeling left in the dark.

Heading into a council meeting on Jan. 16, residents were frustrated to have only been given four days to prepare responses to a staff report that was months in the making.

That report recommends approving the Tawny Ridge Estates project, a major new development that neighbours have been raising concerns about for months.

The subdivision, proposed for the corner of Warner and Tanbark roads in St. Davids, consists of 24 townhouses, 30 stacked townhouses and 32 single-family units.

"I got, basically, one-and-a-half business days to read everything, make a presentation and have it uploaded on the town's website by noon Monday," resident Gienek Ksiazkiewicz said in an interview.

In an email responding to his complaints, Coun. Maria Mavridis said council works under the same time constraints as residents, "sometimes reading through hundreds of pages in a few days."

"I'm kind of skeptical that town staff would give councillors that short amount of time to read all that information," said Ksiazkiewicz.

If there was too much information to process,



Bill Krahn, left, and Tony Taylor are worried the intersection adjacent to Taylor's driveway is unsafe. They say the proximity doesn't comply with provincial safety standards. EVAN LOREE

even for council, the St. Davids resident suggested the meeting should have been delayed.

Town spokesperson Marah Minor said there is no requirement for the town to inform residents about the release of a recommendation report like the one council discussed on Jan. 16.

"When a recommendation report is released, staff provide a courtesy email to anyone who has participated in the public meeting or submitted comments on the application," Minor said in an email.

Resident Mike Pearsall thinks that is "not practical at all."

All changes in the project up to this point are, in his words, "lip service."

"They took a lot of input and they didn't react to it at all," he said.

Initially, the developer had a four-storey apartment included in the proposal, but this has been axed in favour of stacked town-

house units.

"The changes they've made are very, very minimal," Pearsall said, adding it would be easy to get the four-storey apartment back on the table if the property were to change hands.

"They put it on the back burner for now," said another resident, Bill Krahan. "How do we know we're not going back to that original design?"

He and neighbour Tony Taylor, who both live near the intersection of Tanbark and Hickory Avenue, say they're fine with more homes going up so long as the infrastructure of the community can support them.

But as it stands, the neighbours are concerned the intersection they live at is unsafe and the storm sewers are insufficient.

Taylor, who lives at 144 Tanbark Rd., said his driveway is dangerously close to the adjacent intersection and does not meet provincial safety standards.

Krahn wants to know if the town could be liable if someone gets injured at the intersection of Hickory and Tanbark.

Both men said the storm lines can't handle the runoff coming down the nearby Niagara Escarpment.

Taylor said he has seen manholes blown open by intense water pressure.

After heavy rainfall and snow melt Friday, Ksiazkiewicz shared photos of an overflowed stormwater pond on Sandlewood Crescent.

"We have had rain recently and contrary to what (Upper Canada Consultants) and (town planner) Rick Wilson had indicated, existing water runoff is a problem," he said in an email.

"The proposed densification of the Tawny Ridge will undoubtedly overload the hydrological capabilities of what exists now," he added.

Krahn shared video foot-

age of flooding problems along Tanbark at a previous public meeting on the project, however, Craig Rohe, a planner representing the developer, has said the footage is misleading because it was taken before storm sewers had been installed.

Pearsall said he and his neighbours have similar footage which is much more recent.

Ksiazkiewicz also told The Lake Report he reached out to the town on Oct. 20 with a series of questions on the proposed development.

While staff responded, he said they didn't answer specifics about property ownership and application status. The project is being proposed by St. Davids' Riverview Estates Inc.

Wilson responded to Ksiazkiewicz saying the town had received a resubmitted application and staff were "continuing the review of the applications."

He did not answer the resident's questions about the property owner.

Pearsall thinks residents are not "getting value for money" and questioned why elected leaders don't seem to be listening to residents' concerns.

"I really don't think that the lord mayor is looking after the public. He's looking more after developer's interests," he said.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa told The Lake Report he is always open to help people "who are willing to work inside the confines of the planning regulations that the municipality has set forward."

"If that's the definition

of pro-development, then I would say that ... that might be a way to characterize it," Zalepa said.

As is the case with many projects, residents opposing the development in St. Davids have opinions that differ from those of town staff.

"I'm going to lean towards the professional planning advice," Zalepa said.

The lord mayor said he's open to hearing out a resident's concerns but the "major components" of development should be steered by planning experts and legislation.

Despite residents saying they feel ignored, Zalepa said there has been "significant opportunity for public engagement" for the Tawny Ridge project.

Ksiazkiewicz said Coun. Adriana Vizzari, a St. Davids resident, has dropped the ball representing her constituents.

In an email exchange obtained by The Lake Report, he accused the councillor of being unresponsive to the residents of St. Davids.

"You have not been an advocate for St. Davids residents," he said.

In an email dated Jan. 13, she invited the resident to call her and voice his concerns. But Ksiazkiewicz declined.

"The time to discuss with residents, when they were looking for your support, would have been months ago," he said.

In an interview, Vizzari said she always takes constituents' concerns seriously, but said she didn't want to get into a public dispute with Ksiazkiewicz.

evanlore@niagaranow.com



HIRING KITCHEN STAFF!



Wed - Sun, 5 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Dine-in and take-out

Tel: (905) 468-3871

390 Mary Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Serving Fresh Asian-Fusion Cuisine In a Cozy Atmosphere

Subscribe to our free daily newsletter. Just visit www.niagaranow.com and you'll be prompted to sign up.

Council **rejects** King Street proposal

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Council has chosen to fight, not settle. Niagara-on-the-Lake's elected officials have voted to combat a developer's project application at an upcoming legal hearing, despite town staff recommending they settle.

"I think that this motion is telling a group of people what they want to hear, but I'm afraid that massive disappointment will hit them when the (Ontario Land Tribunal) hearing is concluded," Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said during a special council meeting. Coun. Sandra O'Connor made the case that the town should reject staff recommendations that the town approve a three-storey, 17-unit condo proposal submitted by Bice Builders in July 2023.

"I do not feel that it follows our official plan," O'Connor said. "I do not feel that it is compatible with the neighbourhood," she said. When the vote was called, Counc. Tim Balasiuk, Gary Burroughs, Wendy Cheropita and Maria Mavridis all agreed with O'Connor to reject the condo proposal.

Coun. Adriana Vizzari and the lord mayor supported the project and the staff recommendation. Counc. Nick Ruller and Erwin Wiens were absent.

"I just wasn't happy with the process and how this all took place," said Balasiuk, though he worries about taking the project to the tribunal.

Residents have been concerned about the process behind the project since news first broke of it last July.

The land was consolidated from three lots into one by the committee of adjustment in October 2022, on the condition that future development on the lot not exceed 15 per cent coverage of the land.

Applicant Josh Bice, who owns Bice Builders, did not unveil the condominium plans at the time.

Those plans were brought to staff in a pre-consultation meeting in December 2022,



From left, Sullivan Mahoney lawyer Tom Richardson, NPG planner Aaron Butler and NPG founding partner John Henricks. Richardson and Butler represented Josh Bice of Bice Builders at the Jan. 24 meeting. EVAN LOREE

and then made public last July.

The developer also chose to appeal the project to the tribunal once council failed to make a decision on it within provincially prescribed deadlines.

The town was waiting on a resubmitted application from Bice when the deadline passed.

“We don't have an issue with meeting any provincial targets that are assigned to us. Why does it have to be there?”

COUN. GARY BURROUGHS

Asked to respond to concerns about the process, NPG planner Aaron Butler and Sullivan Mahoney lawyer Tom Richardson declined to comment.

To date, Bice has not spoken publicly about the project and has not responded to interview requests from The Lake Report.

Richardson told council on Jan. 24 the condition under which the consolidation occurred would not prevent the present application from moving forward.

Zalepa voted against the majority of his peers, saying staff had made a “very strong case” for why the application was consistent with provincial requirements.

He argued it's better to keep working toward a compromise with Bice.

Vizzari agreed staff made a strong case for why the project is consistent with

planning legislation and said she is concerned about spending public money on tribunal hearings.

Mavridis voted to fight the project at the tribunal, but in a follow-up interview said she also is worried about the cost of litigation.

She said the town is budgeting about \$500,000 for legal fees this year and most of it was spent in the first few weeks of January fighting projects at the tribunal.

Richardson noted there is a “crying need” for more homes in Ontario, but several councillors said Niagara-on-the-Lake is on track to hit the housing targets assigned by the upper levels of government.

“It does not rest on any of us to say, ‘We've done our bit,’ ” Richardson said in response.

The region mandates that 13.5 per cent of the town's units should be apartments, but only 5 to 6 per cent of the town's units were for apartments, Richardson said.

“There is, in short, an issue of housing mix or choice, which our client is attempting to address,” he said.

Zalepa said he had spoken to many people who were struggling to find a home in NOTL because the dominant form is out of their price range.

Cheropita also agreed there was a need for more apartments but, in relation to the Bice project, said, “This is really the wrong area for it.”

She and Burroughs both said King Street was not designated as an appropriate target for intensification.

“We don't have an issue

with meeting any provincial targets that are assigned to us. Why does it have to be there?” Burroughs asked of Butler during the planner's presentation.

Butler said the developer is primarily interested in providing people with additional housing choices. He did not say why it needs to be on King Street.

Though the urban design committee asked the developer and his team to decrease the height of the project to two floors, Butler said his team felt the current design — with its higher unit count — was “more in the public interest” given how few housing choices people have in NOTL.

He was interrupted by residents laughing at his use of “public interest.”

The seven residents who spoke at the meeting raised concerns similar to those aired at a public meeting in September, including building size and impact on storm infrastructure.

A few residents objected to the new orientation of the building, which repositions the entrance to face away from King Street, contrary to town policy.

The staff report said the repositioning is “appropriate” given the shape of the land.

In response, resident Erika Alexander said this is “nonsense” given the previous layout pointed the entrance toward King Street.

Resident Endre Mecs said the shape of the land had been configured by the developer through a series of purchases and lot consolidations.

Before that, Mecs said the land was made up of rectangular-shaped lots.

John Henricks, a founding partner of Niagara Planning Group who is now retired, was at the meeting with Butler and Richardson.

He said there is an ongoing narrative in NOTL that paints planners as hired advocates for developers.

“Our job is not to be advocates for a specific client,” Henricks said.

“That's unfair, given that our professional responsibility is to the broader public interest,” he added.

evanlore@niagaranow.com



Romantic Dining in February

Celebrating your love with Vintage Hotels means romantic dining rooms, exceptional service, gourmet feature menus, and indulgent desserts!

Valentine's Day Dinner

AT NOBLE, TIARA & CANNERY RESTAURANTS
February 14th, 2024 | 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Date Night
AT NOBLE RESTAURANT
Tuesdays & Thursdays*
5:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Tiara-Licious
AT TIARA RESTAURANT
Monday - Thursday*
5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

RESERVE YOUR TABLE TODAY

*Some blackout dates apply. See website for full details.
Menus available online. Reservations required on February 14th.

vintage-hotels.com | 1.888.669.5566 | Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON



St. David's VETERINARY CLINIC

stdavidsvetclinic.com



Where's the cat?

House-calls available ☎ 905.262.8777

Proud to support local news!



WAYNE GATES

MPP Niagara Falls proudly representing Niagara-on-the-Lake
☎ 905-357-0681

airway CPAP inc



CPAP and sleep apnea supplies.

Free delivery in NOTL and VIRGIL.

11A Garrison Village Dr., Suite 202

For appointment call 289-868-9212.

St. Davids-Queenston United Church

1453 York Rd. St Davids
905-262-5242

www.stdavids-queenstonuc.ca
Minister: Rev. YongSeok Baek

Sunday Worship

10:30 a.m.

Also online

Visit our website



Pauline Reimer Gibson
Audiologist

Pauline Reimer Gibson is an Audiologist with over 20 years of experience who loves helping people of all ages in the community. Julia Dick is the Front Office Coordinator and a longtime resident of Virgil. Call Julia today to book a complimentary hearing test.

Book a complimentary hearing test today at 905.468.9176

504 Line 2 Road, Virgil ON

A global leader in hearing healthcare.

amplifon

MENTION THIS LAKE REPORT AD
AND GET A

FREE

BOTTOMLESS

COFFEE

A \$2.99 VALUE PER PERSON

Breakfast
Specials

FROM 9.99

Monday to Friday before 10 am

(EXCEPT HOLIDAYS, DINE-IN ONLY)

		CALC	
1	THREE EGGS Home fries and thick toast	690	\$9.99
2	WITH PANCAKES (2) no toast	600	\$10.99
3	WITH BACON (2) OR SAUSAGES (2)	890	\$11.99
4	WITH BACON (2) OR SAUSAGES (2) AND PANCAKES (2) no toast	800	\$12.99



©2023 Sunset Grill Restaurants. All rights reserved.

High schools unaffected by cap

Continued from Front Page

he said the increasing number of international students in Canada has put pressure on the housing market and health care, among other things, and is threatening the sustainability of the student permit program.

Under the temporary plan, which would last two years, individual provincial and territorial caps have been established, weighted by population.

That means provinces such as Ontario, where there has been what the feds called “unsustainable growth” in the numbers of international students will mean the cut to student permits will be much deeper.

In Ontario, that is expected to result in a decrease of 50 per cent.

Niagara College has two campuses, its main campus in Welland and the Daniel Patterson campus in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

International students make up 50 per cent of the students enrolled across Niagara’s 130 programs between both campuses.

“One of the effects of the implementation of the cap is that (the federal government) essentially has frozen visa processing,” Coote said. “And certainly that visa processing will cause a short-term challenge of trying to make sure all of our students coming in May to be able to get through these.”

Colleges Ontario, the provincial organization of which Niagara College is a member, was critical of the move, calling the cap “a moratorium by stealth that is already causing significant and unnecessary upheaval for students, employers and communities.”

In a statement on its website, the organization said that the federal government failed to recognize that public colleges have a year-round intake of students, “designed specifically to meet employer needs.”

The requirement for letters of attestation from provincial governments – something the Ontario government currently doesn’t have a process in place to do – has resulted in “total chaos” for students.

“The entire system for Ontario is frozen,” the group said.

Colleges are a year-round concern for students, the group said, meaning some who will begin studies in May are already well into the application process.

Coote, meanwhile, said that Niagara’s programs



A spokesperson for Niagara College said more details are needed to gauge the impact of a federal government cap on international student permits. RICHARD HUTTON

are designed to help the region’s employers – in construction, health care and tourism sectors to name a few – by providing them with the necessary number of employees to support the growth of those sectors.

“It will mean more challenges for employers to be able to find that skilled labour,” he said.

And it’s not just colleges that are being affected.

In a statement, Universities Canada said it was “concerned that the cap per province is going to add stress on an already stressed system.”

“When we first heard about the cap I was concerned. But it only affects colleges and universities. International high schools are not affected.”

HOLLY ROWE
ADMISSION CO-ORDINATOR
VINERIDGE INTERNATIONAL

The organization added it would be difficult to assess the effect the move would have on universities across the country without more as to how the program would be rolled out in each province.

Like Niagara College, Brock University is home to thousands of international students.

In a brief emailed statement to The Lake Report, a spokesperson for Brock said the university “is concerned about the impact the cap on international study permits announced recently may have on the university and is awaiting further details.”

Back in NOTL, it’s a different story at the town’s secondary school which provides a high school education for international students.

Holly Rowe, admissions

and events co-ordinator at Vineridge International said that as a high school, Vineridge will not be affected by the changes.

“When we first heard about the cap I was concerned,” Rowe said. “But it only affects colleges and universities. International high schools are not affected, thank God.”

And that is good news for the academy, where enrollment has yet to return to pre-pandemic numbers. Currently, there are 42 students attending classes at Vineridge.

“We’re still climbing back from COVID,” Rowe said.

Miller, in announcing these changes, said they are meant to provide protection for the students and bring some stability to the international student intake process.

“We have an obligation to ensure that (international students) have access to the resources they need for an enriching academic experience,” he said. “In Canada, today, this isn’t always the case.”

Other steps taken by the feds to bring about more order to the permit system include a requirement for post-secondary institutions to confirm every letter of acceptance submitted by an applicant outside Canada directly with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

The enhanced verification, the government said, is to protect prospective students from fraud.

It also “ensures that study permits are issued based only on genuine letters of acceptance,” the release stated.

At Niagara, the needs of international students are indeed being met, Coote said.

“We just brought a large group of students in January to our campuses and all of our students are housed well, and we still have surplus housing on campus and in our community,” he said.

hutton@niagaranow.com

NOTL Museum celebrates **Black History Month**

Continued from Front Page

they said. "People should not be threatened by past history but use it to determine current history."

And when actor, writer and educator Marcel Stewart said, "When I think of Black history in Niagara, I think of textbook pages that have been glued together," the museum's curator and managing director, Sarah Kaufman, knew her organization was uniquely placed to tell those stories.

"It was the voices of people like Chloe Cooley and Solomon Moseby right here in Niagara, that brought to light the injustices and inequities of a system here in Upper Canada that was discriminatory and racist," said Kaufman.

In each case, their actions changed the course of history.

The passionate cries of resistance by the enslaved Cooley initiated the first anti-slavery legislation in the British Empire, right here in Upper Canada in 1793.

And Canadian extradition and refugee policies being used today were first in-



Jan King-Watson speaks at Voices of Freedom Park.

roduced in 1838 to secure the release from a Niagara courthouse of the enslaved Solomon Moseby, following a public riot led by area residents.

The museum has been sharing these rarely told stories, with exhibitions, lectures and interpretive experiences (such as the Voices of Freedom Park in NOTL's heritage district), with its annual July 9 Chloe Cooley Day commemorating the 1793 Act to Limit Slavery.

In this way the museum is hoping to preserve and promote the diversity of local history, ensuring that educators, residents and tourists alike, all benefit from the knowledge.

The museum works closely with scholars,

experts and representatives of the Black community, such as the Ontario Black History Society; Rochelle Bush, a freedom seeker descendant, and trustee/historian of the Salem Chapel, BME Church, Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad national historic site in St. Catharines; and Natasha Henry-Dixon, author and lecturer, and PhD candidate in the department of history at York University.

Together they offer guidance and invaluable research to museum projects, helping to tell the stories, "and open those textbook pages," said Kaufman.

Recently at the museum, a mixed medium original art piece from Wayne Moore recreated the Chloe Cooley story; a musicology lecture from Carlos Morgan told the history of Black music in Canada; and regular Black history walking tours offered an in-depth look at early Black settlers who made significant contributions to Niagara, from teaching and farming, to business and local politics.

The "Belonging" discussion will be followed with a virtual lecture on Feb. 7

featuring Julian Sher, author of "The North Star: Canada and the Civil War Plots Against Lincoln," which tells the story of Canadians and Confederate agents working together here in Canada, and the role they played in supporting the enslaved South.

And on Feb. 21, the Niagara Falls (N.Y.) Underground Railroad Center will present "The Borderland: Black Agency and Resistance Between Two Nations," a virtual lecture on the fiercely passionate Black resistance movement on Niagara's border with Upper New York.

See the museum's website, notlmuseum.ca, for more details on current and previous Black history programs, including past lecture recordings, short documentaries and research into early Black settlements.

"Another visitor said to me, thank you for telling these stories of humanity, struggle, transition and freedom," noted Kaufman.

"And that's exactly what the NOTL Museum intends to keep doing, and not just for one month, but throughout the year."

Valentine's Gift Guide

Cake Cafe

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

1615 Niagara Stone Road

TUES - SAT 10-6 SUN - 10-4

905-468-0979

7 PIECE
CUPCAKE
BOUQUET
\$46.00



4" HEART CAKE
FOR TWO
\$26.00

ORDER BY FEBRUARY 11TH

VALENTINE'S DAY DELIVERY AVAILABLE

NOTL!

BAR + RESTAURANT

PRESENTS

Sunday Brunch

BY

 **treadwell**
farm | to table | cuisine

3-course plated brunch

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

\$65 plus taxes and gratuities



Scan here to book your reservation

124 |  | HOTEL & SPA

 **SPONSORED**

Valentine's Day is every day at **AMO Wines**

Sponsored
The Lake Report

From the moment you walk through the doors of AMO Wines, passing under its heart-shaped window, you're struck with the sensations of comfort and a warm embrace.

Relaxing music is playing while elegant scents flow through the air. Visually, you're greeted by the sight of a lounge with luxurious, blue velvet seating.

"We want people to feel the love in AMO, we want them to feel that hug — and it does feel like a hug in here," Tara Colaneri, AMO Wines' co-owner, told The Lake Report.

In opening her own, first-ever business, Colaneri's goal was to create an ambience of love for every guest who visits.

AMO's "mascot," a gold statue named Fred, greets guests with love as soon as they enter.

"We say he drank our 24-carat gold and turned gold," Colaneri said. "He's looking for true love so whoever takes a photo with him or pretends to kiss him, if they take the spell off then that was true love."

"Obviously, he is still gold so he hasn't found it quite yet," she joked.

Last June, Colaneri, along with her brother Michael, opened the doors to Niagara-on-the-Lake's newest winery, fittingly named after the Latin word for love.



Tara Colaneri and Tony Milana show off AMO's statue named Fred. Fred is a popular photo op for visitors — he's said to bring true love to those who pose with him. THE LAKE REPORT

"A is for my mom's name: she passed away in 2009 and her name is Angie. The M is Mike, my father and the O is for myself and my brother, the offspring," she said.

"They are the two people who taught us to love life," she said of her parents. "It's not about two people, it's about loving life."

Every detail of AMO's aesthetic — including the wine bottles and the throw pillows on lounge couches — has been tended to and curated with affection and precision.

Colaneri and gen-

eral manager Tony Milana showed The Lake Report some of the highly stylized wine bottles available at AMO.

Each bottle's unique label has to be hand-applied by staff due to the delicate nature of the design and square bottle shape, she said.

"It's a little extra effort but a whole lot of love," Colaneri said.

Many customers often choose to repurpose the bottles after finishing their wine, Milana added, as water bottles, olive oil bottles, table decor and more.

When it comes down to it, such intense attention to detail is a product of family love, said Colaneri.

"We all worked together, my sister-in-law and I worked on the aesthetics. My brother and my dad were the construction guys," she said.

"We made everything look pretty and my dad and my brother made sure it worked."

Colaneri took influences from places such as Las Vegas to put together a venue that was more than just a winery — but an immersive experience.

"It's not driven only to female customers, we've got something for everybody's taste," she said. "That's why we brought in some of the leathers. It's a little bit of everything for everyone."

The theme of love is everywhere inside the winery. Not just romantic love, but love as an action word.

Before the Colaneri siblings opened the winery's doors last June, they launched the AMO brand on Feb. 14, Valentine's Day, three years ago.

To celebrate the month of love, the winery has

partnered with The Lake Report to offer an extra-special experience.

Throughout February, anyone who submits a love letter to "The Love Report" may bring proof of their submission to AMO Wines to redeem a complimentary tasting flight.

Colaneri said love notes can be simple and still capture the feeling of affection.

"Like yesterday, I wrote to my father and said, 'Sorry Dad for giving you all the grey hair. Love you, hope I don't give you any more in the coming years.' It's the little things like that," she said.

Throughout February, AMO will also allow guests to write love messages on their glass cellar doors for everyone to see in a beautiful gold colour.

Every week of the month, AMO will be offering 2-for-1 flights of wine. On Sundays, it will be doing complimentary six hors d'oeuvres with the purchase of two flights.

Colaneri highlighted special gifts available for those "last-minute gentlemen," which feature a box of fresh roses, a bottle of wine and a handmade ring from Barnhouse Jewelry, available for pre-order.

AMO Wines is located at 976 York Rd. Reservations are recommended on weekends but walk-ins are always welcome.

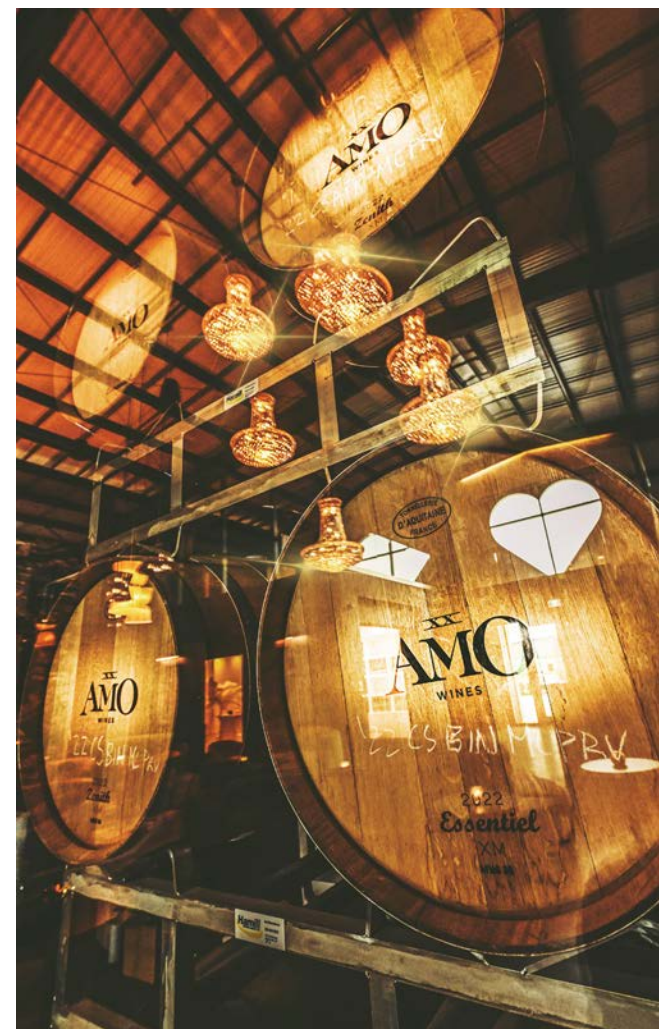


AMO
Share the Love

Submit your love note to
The Lake Report
& receive a complimentary
tasting flight for 2 at
AMO Wines.
(valid throughout February)



976 York Rd, NOTL
289.547.9696 (xoxo)
amowines.ca



For the month of February, guests can leave messages of love on AMO's glass doors.

Second week of Icewine fest a little damp

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Icewine Village drew crowds for both weekends running.

Despite rainy conditions on Saturday and Sunday last weekend, Queen Street saw some of its biggest crowds of the entire festival.

Volunteer Patricia Fraser thinks much of it was due to the popular food stands.

"People are still lined up for the grilled cheese from Cheese Secrets. I don't know what their secret sauce is

but it's amazing," Fraser told The Lake Report.

Crowds lined up along the street for food from Cheese Secrets, Doughvine, PigOut and Aura on the Lake.

The oh-so-popular grilled cheese at the Cheese Secrets booth featured a seven-cheese mix atop fresh sour-dough bread and an icewine secret sauce.

Crista from Cheese Secrets was busy grilling the sandwiches on Sunday and said that around 250 were sold the day before alone.

"We ran out of bread and

cheese. We had to go get them this morning and grate them this morning," she said.

Fraser said that she saw a large number of people from not only out of town, but all over the world while working the second weekend.

"What I'm amazed at is how many people who said it's their first time in Niagara-on-the-Lake and they all say they're going to come back," she said.

Jo-Ann and Tim Caron didn't trek too far — coming from Niagara Falls.

"These (grilled cheeses)

are just amazing. The cheese and the icewine jelly," said Tim Caron.

"We actually came from the Irish Harp, we weren't even hungry but we had to get this," added Jo-Ann Caron.

Fraser extended admiration for her fellow volunteers who helped make the event so special for the large crowds, even during the rain.

"This is the greatest group of volunteers ever," she said.

"Today I've been here since noon, I was here til five yesterday and the people are just amazing."



Even in the cold, the seven-cheese mix in Cheese Secret's popular sandwich stretched and pulled. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Reports show Natalia Benoit had links to far right groups

Continued from Front Page

statements last June 14, four days after the audit was ordered, and included the previously undeclared expenses, the report said.

Though Fraser requested an interview with Benoit on Aug. 31, her agent Jeff Loucks declined it, saying she was on leave from her position as trustee until Jan. 29

The auditor sent Loucks and Benoit written questions on Oct. 4, 2023, and requested responses by Oct. 25.

"As of the date of this report, we have not received a response from Benoit," Fraser wrote.

The audit was requested by St. Catharines resident Christine Campbell, who was represented at the meeting by Ann-Marie Zammit.

"At no point in this entire audit process has she stepped up to take any responsibility for her actions," Zammit said, reading a statement from Campbell. "She has essentially disappeared." Zammit asked the board to remove Benoit as trustee and bar her from running in any municipal election again.

Daniel Freiheit, a lawyer representing Benoit, said his client was dealing with the aftermath of a miscarriage, which was the reason for her silence.

He recommended the board not pursue any further legal action.



Peter Taras, a former candidate for the controversial People's Party of Canada, seen here in 2021 at an all candidates meeting hosted by The Lake Report. He has been linked with NOTL Catholic board trustee Natalia Benoit. FILE PHOTOS



The revised statements from Benoit referenced in Fraser's report attribute the \$260 expenses to signs contributed by GE Group, a company that makes custom apparel, signs and flags for promotional purposes.

The company website lists the People's Party of Canada as one of its customers and has a full webpage for products targeted at supporters of the Freedom Convoy protests of 2022.

The company is owned by Glen Ellsworth, who has expressed support for the People's Party and the Freedom Convoy movement on his personal social media pages.

Benoit was endorsed by the Campaign Life Coalition in her run for trustee in 2022.

Campaign Life Coalition is an anti-abortion lobby group that also espouses anti-trans and homophobic talking points on its site.

As well, on Monday the

board released the full report of the independent investigation into the Benoit's code of conduct violation.

Cenobar Parker, an investigator with Parker Sim LLP, concluded in her report that Benoit violated the board's code of conduct when she compared the Pride flag to the Nazi flag after a board meeting May 23.

"Trustee Benoit was drawing a comparison, despite her belief to the contrary, between the Nazi flag and the Pride flag, as both being controversial symbols," Parker said in her report.

She also found the trustee had failed to demonstrate support or understanding of LGBTQ students.

The contents of the report were discussed by board members Jan. 23 but the report was released Monday along with the meeting's official minutes.

The investigation into Benoit follows a complaint

filed by fellow trustee Paul Turner.

Benoit's comments came after a meeting in May where she proposed policy changes that would have prevented school board staff from advocating partisan social or political policy to students.

The policy would also have prevented staff from displaying any symbols that advocated for any political or social cause, including the Pride flag.

"This policy is designed to promote education, not indoctrination," Benoit said in her proposal.

The proposal was silent on students expressing themselves through similar symbols or acts of social advocacy.

In an interview with the investigator, Benoit said she based her suggestion on a similar policy passed by the Central Bucks School District Board in Pennsylvania on Jan. 10, 2023.

That policy received immense pushback from

students and parents advocating on behalf of the LGBTQ community the day it was passed.

Benoit told the investigator she enlisted the support of Teresa Pierre, president of Parents as First Educators, in crafting her proposal.

Parents as First Educators is an advocacy group that promotes "the authority of parents over the education of their children through grassroots activism" and encourages people to "push back against gender identity theory in whatever form it enters our schools."

The group organizes social campaigns against the teaching of critical race theory, gender identity and sex education. It also opposes legislation banning conversion therapy and making gender affirming counselling services more accessible.

In her report, Parker identified Peter Taras as the author of a video in which Benoit compared the Pride flag to that of Nazi Germany.

The video of Benoit has been scrubbed from the internet, though the investigator made attempts to recover it from Benoit and others linked to the investigation.

None provided a copy, the report said.

"I find it troubling that she was unable to locate a copy of the video, particularly when she acknowledged having the ability to contact its

owner," Parker said in her report.

Taras is an active member of the People's Party of Canada, a right wing party that gained notoriety during the 2021 federal election for its opposition to transgender rights.

"I believe there is no such thing as a trans kid. There are boys and there are girls," Taras said at a recorded rally posted to his YouTube channel.

He also has expressed support for the Freedom Convoy protests and opposition to vaccine mandates.

Taras spoke in favour of Benoit's motion at a board meeting last June 20.

In a video posted June 21, also on his channel, Taras spoke to Jason Benoit, the trustee's husband, outside the board's office in Welland.

"They want your children in the worst way. It is sacrificial almost," Jason Benoit said in the video.


He ran unsuccessfully for St. Catharines council in 2022 and described the board's choice to fly the Pride flag as a form of indoctrination being shoved down the throats of parents.

He also said the Catholic board would "ruin your child."

In her investigation, Parker also concluded Natalia Benoit violated her responsibilities under the Education Act when she "encouraged a parent to remove their child from the board" if it chose to fly the Pride flag.


NIAGARA ON THE LAKE MUSEUM

Free FEBRUARY For residents of the Niagara region
905-468-3912 | notlmuseum.ca | Hours: Daily from 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.


STRIKE A POSE The Art of Self-Obsession
December 1, 2023 to April 29, 2024
Exhibition sponsored by Selfie Mode



Publisher: Richard Harley
Editor-In-Chief: Richard Harley
Managing Editor: Kevin MacLean
Design & Layout: Richard Harley
Advertising: Megan Vanderlee, Lindsay Le Blanc
Contributors: Dr. William Brown, Brittany Carter, Penny-Lynn Cookson, Kevan Dowd, Linda Fritz, Patty Garriock, Steve Hardaker, Zahraa Hmood, Richard Hutton, Evan Loree, Brian Marshall, NOTL Museum, Ross Robinson, Julia Sacco, Kyra Simone, Tim Taylor, Jill Troyer, Dave Van de Laar, Janice White, Joanne Young and many more members of the NOTL community

Canada The Local Journalism Initiative is funded by the Government of Canada.

News Media Canada
Médias d'Info Canada



Your Lake Report is the proud winner of 69 national and provincial awards for journalism and advertising excellence.



Contributed by Patty Garriock

“No matter who you are, no matter what you did, no matter where you’ve come from, you can always change, become a better person.”
 - Madonna

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

Email:
 Letters: editor@niagaranow.com
 Story Ideas: editor@niagaranow.com
 Advertising: advertising@niagaranow.com
Phone
 Newsroom: 905-359-2270
 Advertising Department: 905-932-5646
Office Address
 496 Mississagua St., NOTL, Ontario, Canada.
Mailing Address
 PO Box 724, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S1J0

Have a lead on a story?

Call 905.359.2270 or send an email to editor@niagaranow.com

Levee’s going to break



Photographer Dave Van de Laar captured this image of flooding at the dam on Line 2 Road on Jan. 26.

Editorial

Pride, leadership and a Catholic trustee

Kevin MacLean
 Managing Editor

In the Ontario political realm, school trustees are often considered the lowest rung of the democratic order.

Their job generally attracts little attention — yet these elected officials are responsible for overseeing the educational services of one of society’s most precious assets. Our children. As such, we should expect and ask a lot of these people — as individuals and as public representatives. As leaders.

The case of Natalia Benoit, a Niagara Catholic District School Board trustee who represents Niagara-on-the-Lake and St. Catharines, is troubling on many levels.

As our headline last week indicated, an independent investigation found that, Benoit, who is adamantly against flying the Pride flag on Catholic school property, had “compared” the rainbow flag to the Nazi flag.

In her defence, Benoit and her supporters, have said she basically misspoke



The Pride flag flies at NOTL town hall. FILE

and didn’t mean to be comparing the two ensigns, but rather voicing the concern that in today’s society flying the Nazi flag would never be allowed.

After a long, in-depth investigation, the firm hired by the board to assess the situation concluded that, notwithstanding her explanation after the fact and to investigators, Benoit had indeed compared the two and had violated the board’s code of conduct.

We can all agree that the Nazi flag is symbol of hate. But likening it to the Pride flag, a symbol of acceptance, is odious.

Benoit’s inability or lack of willingness to produce the now-deleted video of her Nazi remarks is also troubling.

On top of this, when she filed her election financial details, Benoit claimed no donations and no expenses. After a complaint, the board ordered an audit.

Four days after the audit was announced, Benoit submitted about \$260 in expenses — and thereafter pretty well ignored any other entreaties or questions on the subject.

In addition, in delving into the reports on both Benoit’s Nazi comment and her election expenses, this week The Lake Report found some connections to organizations and people on the far right of the political spectrum.

There’s nothing illegal or wrong with that. In Canada, you’re free to support whomever you like.

But it’s somewhat ironic that while Benoit and some supporters say they simply are pushing back against “social advocacy” on issues such as homosexuality, gender identity and “indoctrination,” actually they in turn are adopting an advocacy approach to the things they claim to believe in.

The bottom line in all of this regarding Benoit is, rather than exhibiting leadership and attempting to do what is best for all the children whose interests she is sworn to represent, she has opted to try to impose her political ideals on the rest of us.

Now, we don’t ever expect Benoit or her zealous supporters to agree with this argument. Their own beliefs are simply too well entrenched. Perhaps they would say the same of us. So, where do we go from here?

The next election is well over two years off. If voters disagree with Benoit, and if she is running again, electors will have the chance to make their voices heard.

We hope they’ll be paying attention.
 editor@niagaranow.com

Correction: A story about NOTL Cats looking for help from the community in the Jan. 25 edition The Lake Report contained an incorrect email address to contact the organization. The correct email address is notlcatrescue@hotmail.com. The Lake Report apologizes for the error.

WEDNESDAYS & THURSDAYS

2 FOR 1 PIZZA PASTA PARMS

RESERVATIONS - 289-819-0179 | dine-in only with purchase of a beverage



OK to connect Rand and heritage trail



John Morley
Special to The Lake Report



Guest columnist John Morley says connecting the heritage trail to the Rand Estate is a good idea. FILE

In 1985, during the centennial year of the Niagara Parks Commission, I and my assistant laid out the Niagara River Recreation Trail from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Fort Erie along the Niagara Parkway.

I can well remember the day when chair Pam Walker took the late James Harris and myself on a trip along the parkway to discuss her expectations and vision for the trail.

Once plans were finalized, approved by the commission and construction was underway, this 56-kilometre pathway was met with some opposition as well as a lot of support by nearby residents who realized the inherent value of having such a trail near their properties.

Co-operation and compromise was the order of the day.

Today, after close to 40 years, it's safe to say the Niagara River Recreation Trail has been a wonderful recreational asset for cyclists as well as nearby residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

I was also involved with a committee from the Region of Niagara in the development of the Welland Canal Parkway Trail from Port Dalhousie to Port Colborne.

This project, chaired by a former regional councillor, has also undeniably contributed to the recreational fabric of Niagara.

This ambitious project involved working with municipalities and businesses along the Welland Canal. Compromises had to be made and various land use concerns had to be resolved.

Full co-operation as well as a clear understanding of operational issues and development responsibilities

by all participating partners was essential in the planning process. This was successfully achieved by co-operatively and closely working together.

I have also been involved in work along the Friendship Trail in Fort Erie as well as providing advice for the development of a trail from Queenston Heights Park along Portage Road to Stanley Avenue in Niagara Falls.

Here, linkage would be beneficial to provide connection to an outstanding trail system that is found in Niagara Falls.

In addition, the construction of a trail by the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake as well as the Region of Niagara along Portage and Town Line Roads to Creek Road would provide trail users with a safe route to the village of St. Davids, a fast-growing community that is bereft of any trail system.

The Upper Canada Heritage Trail, located along the Michigan Central Railway Line, has been in the news for some time.

I can well remember when trains would infrequently use the long-since abandoned tracks and come huffing and puffing with billowing clouds of black smoke to the edge of the Niagara Escarpment.

While this route has been abandoned for many years, it's interesting to note that in several recent editions of The Lake Report, opposition exists to connecting the heritage trail to the Randwood Estate near where remnants of the former Whistle Stop train station exist today.

While this development could potentially provide access for cyclists as well as people who enjoy walking for pleasure, it's a wonderful way to allow the public access to this unique property that I have enjoyed for over 60 years.

I'm very disappointed that NOTL council flip-flopped and rescinded its Dec. 15 decision to potentially connect the heritage trail and a roadway off Charlotte Street into the Randwood Estate.

They easily could be functionally and aesthetically connected without damaging either property and allow generations to come to enjoy both.

Elected councils should act for the good of the community.

Importantly, if any roadway is ever approved or allowed off John Street, I feel that the cultural and natural landscape of the Randwood Estate would be significantly compromised.

To me, as I'm sure it's obvious to many others as well, the magnificent brick wall along John Street is the character-defining element of this property.

It's the bricks and mortar of the entire site and establishes a sense of mystery and magic for the landscape beyond it.

The natural landscape and character-defining buildings found on this property are what makes the Randwood Estate truly unique, truly special.

Not to be forgotten, the granddaddy of them all, the Bruce Trail starts at Queenston Heights Park and ends in Tobermory.

It traverses a part of the Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve on top of the Niagara Escarpment with a portion of its boundary in Niagara-on-the-Lake. This trail is more than 900 kilometres long with another 450 kilometres of side trails. These trails provide an educational and recreational opportunity for visiting unique attractions along the way.

Such would be the case with access to the Randwood Estate – one of the most significant properties in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

As for the future of trails in our community, I would like to see an east-west connecting link at the southern edge of NOTL to provide a safe connection to St. Davids.

The Town Line route would cross over the former Michigan Central Railway line, not only connecting to the heritage trail halfway down the slope, but also provide safe access to St. Davids by means of Creek Road at the toe of the Escarpment.

At the northern edge of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail already exists.

I would also like to see a quick conclusion to constructing the Upper Canada Heritage Trail, with money coming from the municipality instead of using the "cap in hand" fundraising method to complete this important link.

Co-operation, compromise, consensus, common sense, as well as a knowledgeable, well-informed, decisive council is necessary to construct and complete a unified trail system for the benefit of all residents of NOTL.

Obstructing creative ideas is not in our best interest. It never has been. It never will be.

Everyone should be taking the high road once in a while. Take a hike on the high road.

John Morley has a master's degree in park administration and is a practising landscape architect. He lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

LETTER OF THE WEEK

We need to demand more accountability from public sector

Dear editor:

I must applaud columnist Brian Marshall for his insightful takedown of one of the foremost fads of the '90s-era, dubbed "mergers" in business and "amalgamation" in the public realm, ("Health care and amalgamation show bigger is rarely better," Jan. 25).

And I applaud him, in particular, for pointing out how a system supposedly based on public accountability has actually incorporated various end-runs around that pesky responsibility so that it can just keep doing what it's been doing.

One noteworthy departure from his analysis I might take is that, in the business sector, the practice has long been to both set very explicit targets on multiple fronts and track/report on them going forward, with meaningful reckonings to be had for failures and corrective measures being demanded, where needed.

Granted, the practice can be uneven in application, but it is, nevertheless, expected and fairly widely enforced.

Not so in the public sector, however, as the author rightly points out.

In fact, the more ambitious (read costly) the proposal, the less likely the accountability and, likewise, the increased prospect of those senior staffers presiding over projects that hugely overshoot their budgets and schedules "failing up" into even more senior and influential roles.

If that were just an occasional phenomenon, one might reasonably chalk it up to chance and circumstance. But its near-reliability in the public sector exposes it as a systemic issue. Put another way, it's not a fault; it's a feature.

Now, I could go on at



some length as to why these things are the way they are – none of it original to me and much of it already in print courtesy of far more capable scholars, analysts, journalists and commentators.

But letters columns are places best suited to brevity, so suffice it to say, here, that there is a pretty robust "Cui bono?" (who benefits?) element to it all, one that ascends well up and tends, almost unerringly, to bypass the folks whose funds finance it all, i.e., the likes of you, Dear Reader, and me.

That said, and given that the revealed pattern is likely to continue unless it's duly addressed, it only makes sense that looking to its beneficiaries to rectify the status quo is a non-starter.

Instead, we the financiers of all these grand plans, policies and schemes need to borrow that attribute found commonly in business but currently MIA in the public sector: the setting of hard targets and effective accountability for hitting them.

For that, my friends, the looking needs to be in a mirror. It's a task for us and us, alone.

And the more we shirk it or think to fob it off on others, the more we're guaranteed to receive more of the same.

Anyone else interested in such an undertaking? Here's a great place to raise your hand.

Bruce Dickson
NOTL

Use speed humps to help slow traffic

Dear editor:

Excellent commentary on the new proposed speed limits for Chautauqua streets and the tireless work of the Friends of Ryerson Park, especially Brian Crow, Shaun Devlin and John Scott.

But, as you mentioned, enforcement is another issue, ("Finding ways to ad-

dress speed concerns," The Lake Report, Jan. 25).

You touched on this in your editorial, but I feel that we need to press on with a tried and tested method, i.e. street humps.

The arguments that these make snow plowing difficult and cause motorcyclists to become airborne don't cut it.

According to the fount of all knowledge – Google – there are 522 streets in Toronto with humps. The residents really appreciate them, especially those with kids.

So, "let's hump the streets."

Richard James
NOTL

Have an
opinion you
want heard?



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

The pipe dream of affordable housing in Ontario



Brian Marshall
Columnist

There is an unspoken but generally accepted assumption among most Canadians that housing is a commodity traded on the open market with the objective of generating profit.

This consideration of housing as an investment that will yield financial returns (whether or not you actually live in it) has created a speculation-driven marketplace.

In early 2023, Statistics Canada published compiled statistics looking at investor-owned properties – an investor, in this case, is defined as an owner who owns at least one property that is not their principal residence.

What it reported was that in Ontario, 20.2 per cent of all properties were owned by investors in 2020. And, when considering only condominiums, that number jumped to 41.9 per cent.

Further, an article published in Better Dwelling on July 25, 2022 reported:

“Most of Ontario’s recently built condo apartments were bought by non-occupying owners. There were 58,100 units built since 2016 with known ownership, and 59.8 per cent had non-occupying owners in 2020. Ontario’s recent condo building boom only saw two in five units bought by end users.”

The report continued: “The trend applied to cities of all sizes, even small and secondary markets. Small cities like Woodstock, one of the fastest growing for price, saw 100 per cent of its 225 new condos bought by non-occupying owners.”

“London saw over four in five (82 per cent) of its 1,360 recently built condos suffer a similar fate. Investors in the much larger



Brian Marshall says investors like to buy up old apartments, renovate and displace long-term tenants, taking the apartments off the list of affordable housing units. The units often become short-term rentals. MIDJOURNEY

Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo region owned 81 per cent of the 3,210 condo units recently built.”

While many of these units are rented out by their investor owners to full-time tenants, a significant number of these investment property units have been placed into the short-term rental market.

I suggest that some may count the latter as adding to the “housing supply” but they cannot be considered “dwellings.”

Moreover, the sheer volume of speculative investors looking to add units to their portfolio creates a competitive supply and demand real estate market, which drives real estate acquisition prices – and subsequent carrying costs – higher, in turn resulting in escalating rents for tenants.

Another phenomenon spawned by this “investment marketplace” assumption has been the development of large, multiple investor-financed “landlords” such as real estate investment trusts.

These investment trusts commonly promise – and deliver – high annualized returns to their shareholders.

One way these organizations accomplish such high returns is through the canny acquisition of apartment buildings (or purpose-built

rental complexes) in neighbourhoods on the cusp of gentrification.

They renovate these buildings – generally displacing long-term, often lower-income, tenants in the process – and subsequently rent out the “gentrified” units to higher-income households that can afford to pay going market rental rates.

So, while dwelling units are not removed from the housing stock, the units can no longer be considered “affordable.”

This depends, of course, on who is defining the meaning of “affordable.”

Both the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Statistics Canada define this term – as applied to housing – as a ratio of cost to income, specifically mortgage-carrying cost or rent, being less than 30 per cent of a household’s total before-tax income.

Statistics Canada also uses this formula to calculate the number of households in “core housing need” (households that pay more than 30 per cent) and additionally uses the same data in a slightly different formula (shelter-cost-to-income ratio) to define housing affordability (the proportion of total household income that is spent on shelter costs).

StatsCan reported that

in 2021 – the most recent year on their web platform with data available – 5,968,550 Canadians lived in unaffordable housing and 2,682,765 Canadians fell into the category of “population in core housing need.”

Note that 63 per cent of those in core housing need happen to be renters and, as a proportion of the total tenant population, 27 per cent (more than one in four) live in unaffordable housing.

Now, while to myself and most other folks I speak with, this definition of “affordability” is the most financially logical and embracing, there is a second market-based definition that is used to underwrite both private development overtures, some federal programs and most provincial policies.

This second definition, rather than basing “affordable” in accordance with the householder’s ability to pay, suggests that housing is affordable if it is priced at a discounted level of full market rates.

In Ontario, the Doug Ford government used this market-based definition to define “affordable” housing as any offering priced at 80 per cent of current market rates.

Applying this criterion to the real world, a detached

single-family home in a development which might be market-priced at \$1 million is classed as affordable at \$800,000.

Similarly, if the market price for apartment rental happens to be \$2,000 per month, then according to this definition, \$1,600 would be affordable.

Let’s consider that \$1,600 per month equals \$19,200 annually and if we apply StatsCan’s shelter-cost-to-income ratio, that government agency would state that it is unaffordable for any household income below \$64,000 per year.

I’d argue that, given a \$64,000 gross income in Ontario equates to roughly \$45,750 net take-home pay, shelling out 42 per cent of your net income on rent would be tightly living paycheque-to-paycheque, particularly if that rent did not include utilities.

However, provincial governments, many federal government agencies and developers insist on the continuance of the market-based definition as their “golden standard.”

Witness this fact when, in November of 2021, the City of Toronto amended their official plan to redefine the assessment criteria of affordable rental and owned housing in accordance with

the definition utilized by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Statistics Canada, developers appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal the amendment bylaw within five weeks.

To my knowledge, there has been no decision rendered on this appeal to date, but Ford’s Bill 23 (More Homes Built Faster Act) did legislatively gut Toronto’s plan for affordable units in new residential projects, lowering the percentage down to a mere five per cent from 22 per cent.

Bluntly, relying on private developers to build enough truly “affordable” housing (under our first definition) to fully meet the needs of the people of Canada is a complete pipe dream.

That said, I would be one of the last people to ask a corporation to broadly sacrifice their shareholders’ return on investment upon the altar of public service.

Such an undertaking by a Canadian corporation would be contrary to its corporate fiduciary responsibilities under law.

A real, viable and lasting solution to our housing conundrum will require a complete rethink of public/private partnership collaborations, with the public side providing land, goals, criteria and oversight, while the private side supplies the focus, logistics and expertise to get it done on time and budget.

And, here in Ontario, the sadly deficient Landlord Tenant Act and the associated administrative bodies, which subject both landlords and tenants to inexcusable challenges and financial burdens, must be completely restructured.

Stay with me, folks! Next week, we’ll explore the inequities of Ontario’s Landlord Tenant Act, an example of a Canadian city that has successfully rethought its affordable housing program and consider a few forward-moving options for Ontario.

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



VALENTINE'S WINE & DOUGHNUTS

Join us for a Valentine’s pairing like no other. Beechwood Doughnuts and wine... what could be better? **Only \$30/person**

konzelmann.ca





Kudos to council for **rejecting** King St. plan

Dear editor:

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake staff's report to council regarding the proposed King Street apartment project strongly favoured supporting the proposed complex as submitted by the developer, Josh Bice of Butler's Gardens Development Inc., ("Staff supports King Street condo," The Lake Report, Jan. 25).

In response to the town's staff report, a special council meeting was held on Jan. 24.

First: kudos to council for having open public discussions and comments regarding the staff report before making the final decision to support the project or not.

In preparation for this meeting, a number of residents prepared a list of concerns to the staff response and my presentation focused on the four additional amendments to the proposed building plan – even though the developer constantly insisted that he was in compliance with the official plan with no need for additional amendments.

But on Dec. 21, 2023, he requested four additional



A 3D image of the King Street condominium project as it was initially proposed, shared at a council meeting by resident Kevin Van Niekerk in September. SOURCED

amendments to the official plan because he had now decided to change the orientation of the building.

New requests included access to a local street, parking on the front and side of the building, moving the main entrance to the side of the building and, lastly, to increase the rear setback.

All these requests legally require the town to hold a public meeting and therefore the full proposal should be halted until such a meeting is held.

But the staff report felt the requests were "appropriate" or just chose to not comment and thereby recommended that the proposal move forward with the proposed changes to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Ultimately council voted in favour (5-2) of Coun. Sandra O'Connor's motion to NOT support the staff recommendation to accept the developer's proposal and NOT redesignate the lands from low density. (Couns. Erwin Wiens and Nick Ruller were absent.)

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa indicated that the tribunal's impending decision will lead to massive disappointment.

I guess that could be interpreted to mean some town officials have already given up and now should just roll over to allow the developer to control our community growth at the expense of our heritage, official plan, tourism industry and whatever pleases the developer.

Congratulations to Couns. Tim Balasiuk, Gary Burroughs, Wendy Chero-pita, Maria Mavridis and O'Connor, who took a stand to promote, protect and preserve our town from those who lack the understanding, appreciation, insight and pride in our town being the first capital of Upper Canada and Canada's most unique and living heritage community.

I trust that notwithstanding the staff recommendation was not accepted by council, the town will now put its full efforts into winning in front of the land tribunal.

Erika Alexander
NOTL

Disappointed about planning process

Dear editor:

In reference to the Lake Report article "Staff supports King Street condo," (The Lake Report, Jan. 25), I am disappointed, but, if I'm honest, not surprised, that our town council does not truly understand or appreciate the quality of what Niagara-on-the-Lake has to offer as this has not just occurred by happenstance.

The quality of our town has been created by many years of planning, some good, some not so good,

but, always by standards set by the earnest planning endeavours of the council and NOT by amended planning laws crafted by developers.

I am in total agreement with letter writers Bill French, Judy McLeod and many others who are wondering: where is our town council when we need them?

This development needs to be brought back in line with current town planning requirements.

Ken O'Malley
NOTL

Is Niagara-on-the-Lake due for a **name change**?

Dear editor:

Now that the St. Catharines hospital has been renamed the Marotta Family Hospital, isn't it time for our town council to change the name of Niagara-on-the-Lake to

Marotta-on-the-Lake?

Of course, the idea would be voted on in camera, so none of the residents would know.

Elizabeth Masson
NOTL

Advertising inquiries?

Email advertising@niagaranow.com

Call the brand that gets your home

NOTICED!



NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE
404 Line 2 Road
3+1 Bedroom • 2 Bath • \$1,295,900



NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE
6A Circle Street
3+1 Bedroom • 4 Bath • \$1,398,900



NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE
1882 Creek Road
3 Bedroom • 4 Bath • \$1,399,000

#1 Real Estate Team**

#1 on Google Trends***

#1 in Client Service***

#1 in Web Traffic***

#1 RE/MAX Team Canada†

#2 RE/MAX Team Worldwide†

#2 on Toronto Real Estate Board**

Million-dollar marketing system!

Rob Golfi SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Born, raised and living in Niagara and loving it!

FREE HOME EVALUATION!

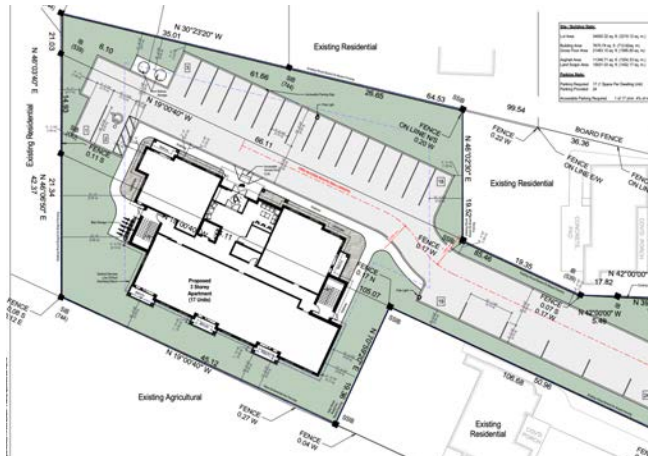


Call **905-641-0308**
or visit **RobGolfi.com**

GOLFI
TEAM

Council steps up to **vote down** King St. condo

Dear editor:
Thank you to the “people’s” councillors (Tim Balasiuk, Gary Burroughs, Wendy Cheropita, Maria Mavridis and Sandra O’Connor), who passed a motion against the town staff’s recommendation to approve the King Street condo/apartment proposal.
The town planning department’s ill-advised recommendation made light of the developer’s request for a 277 per cent increase in density and failed to recognize that this gross over-development isn’t required to meet our intensification goals.
Councillor Burroughs established the fact that we are well-positioned to meet our intensification goals (population growth of 9,900 by 2051) based on the current proposed and known projects in the pipeline.



A new sketch of the proposed building shows the entrance will face into the side yard, and will back onto agricultural lands to the west. SOURCED

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa opposed the motion. He demonstrated that his personal opinion supersedes the fact the community is adamantly opposed to the proposed development, which is wildly inconsistent with the official plan.
During Zalepa’s run for the leadership of council, he campaigned on adopting the

official plan and “listening more.” In this instance, he failed on both accounts.
Our official plan has now established the accepted and reasonable plans for the future development of Niagara-on-the-Lake in a way that best serves the needs of its residents. It must be respected.

I would like to thank the councillors who had the courage and insight to support the motion by Councillor O’Connor.
The NOTL official plan was years in the making. It is a contract among the town, our represented officials and the residents.
I’d like to ask all our town council to respect the wishes of our community and the integrity of our official plan in the future to preserve the quality of life that our residents deserve.
I’d also like to thank those developers who work with the town and community in the context of the official plan.
Their projects get approved quickly with limited extra expenses, completed much faster and have solid community support.
Bill French
NOTL



Letter writer John McCallum says residents in his area are concerned about water and flooding problems worsening if the estate is developed as proposed. SUPPLIED

Rand Estate neighbours worry about **more flooding**

The following letter was sent to members of Niagara-on-the-Lake town council. A copy was submitted to The Lake Report for publication.
I am including photographs in the hope a picture is better than 1,000 words.
After last week’s rains, in talking to my neighbours on Weatherstone Court, none have previously had water in their backyards or in the easement around the development.
The inundation shown is after a not particularly bad rain storm, but the reality is the issue of standing water in the Rand Estate has been getting progressively worse.
All of the residents in this development are very concerned about the impact of a building proposal for 202

units, densely packed, with lots of hardscape in an area with known water issues.
Further, an emergency access road from 588 Charlotte St., with its attendant swales will simply ensure more water is pushed toward the Rand Estate’s heritage wall on one side and homes on the other.
In an era where governments are warning of the issues around climate change this kind of development is hard to comprehend.
Weatherstone Court residents will not be the only ones impacted as this significantly increased surface water seeks an outlet. Already parts of John Street East are regularly seeing water pooling.
John McCallum
NOTL

Sometimes trees just need to be **taken down**

Dear editor:
The fact that some people have nothing better to do with their time than complain about the removal of trees on other people’s property, just amazes me.
Look at town council’s time being wasted, when there are so many more serious issues they should be dealing with.
Every building, every orchard and vineyard is built on land where trees have been removed in this town.
Many of the trees were hundreds or even thousands of years old. There are more orchards and

vineyards in town than ever. Are these not trees? We never had a problem with trees in this town until the tree huggers moved in. If they want to save a neighbour’s trees then, they should buy the adjoining lots or properties.
If a tree can lead to damaging a building or infrastructure in any way, it should come down. No one should have to pay to have someone make a report to say they can take down a tree.
There are trees along the Upper Canada Heritage Trail that need to come down because they are interfering with a main

hydro transmission line. Do you wait until they take down the line in a storm and we are without power for days? You take them down and replace them where they do not interfere with anything.
The trees along the heritage trail from Charlotte Street south are almost all from natural regeneration.
When the railway was running along that route, all the ditches and the railroad right of way were kept clear of trees.
Trees growing in ditches and dead fall branches from them impede water flow and defeat the purpose of the ditches.

They have just planted replacement trees along this section of the trail. Some are planted under the hydro line again. What a waste of time and money.
Trees have been regenerating themselves for millions of years.
I do not know a farmer who does not like trees. They just have to be the right kind and in the right place.
No one understands the environmental issues and climate change better than most farmers, because they are dealing with them every day.
Kip Voegel
NOTL

Catholic board trustees **wrong** to suspend Benoit

Dear editor:
This is an open letter regarding the news story about Niagara Catholic school trustee Natalia Benoit, “NOTL Catholic trustee suspended for Nazi and Pride flag comparison,” (The Lake Report, Jan. 25).
I may find your positions absurd but I find it abhorrent that an elected body can suspend a member.
As S.G. Tallentyre wrote in “The Friends of Voltaire” in 1907: “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”
Those who elected you should have their representative’s voice at the board.


Natalia Benoit.
You referenced authoritarianism. If member by member exclusion is passed by the majority, the strength of pluralism disappears into that hole. Shame on your fellow members.
Good of The Lake Report to report on it, reinforcing the importance of local media.
John MacBeth
NOTL

LIVE MUSIC FRIDAYS IN THE CLUBROOM
Buzz Hummer
Friday, February 2nd
6 P.M.- 9 P.M.
ALL WELCOME- FOOD AND CASH BAR
Feb 9: John Claus
Feb 16: Don Sexsmith
Feb 23: Martin Murray
FISH FRY EVERY THURSDAY 4-7 P.M.
410 King St NOTL | 905 468 2353



CONDO FOR RENT AT AVE MARIA
Stay & Play in Naples, Florida

Unit is locally owned in NOTL
Monthly stays available 2023-2024
Golf at The National Golf & Country Club included
Kelli | 615-715-6115

GAUGHILL
FULL SERVICE REPAIR SHOP
905-687-9456
www.caughillauto.com
256 East & West Line
Niagara-on-the-Lake


DON'T WAIT!
GET YOUR WINTER TIRES FOR THE SNOWY SEASON

NEW tires available.
FREE summer storage with purchase.
INSTALL ON RIMS: \$45/set

Warren
RENOVATIONS
905.468.2127
PLUMBING, HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING

D-Handyman Services
“Pass me the Job Jar, enjoy your spare time.”
289-929-hanD (4263)
d.handyman.denis@gmail.com
PO Box 1088
Virgil, Ontario
LOS 1T0
Denis Curtis
Proprietor
http://dencurtis.wix.com/d-handyman






A vineyard off Lakeshore Avenue is partly submerged after the heavy rainfall last Thursday. PHOTOGRAPHY BY EVAN LOREE

NOTL gets flooded out



PHOTO GALLERY
See more pictures at niagaranow.com

Is our climate changing? Last week's torrential rain caused flooding all over NOTL. Clockwise from top left: A Town of NOTL vehicle hydroplanes down Concession 4 Road. A stretch of bike lane near the Village is more useful to swimmers than bikers. Simcoe Park is awash thanks to runoff and melting snow. A flooded vineyard on East and West Line Road.



RIDDLE ME THIS

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

In the Harry Potter books, he's the dark lord.

Last issue:
Category: HONOUR

Clue: This biblical king judged a child should be split in two. He didn't go through with it, however.

Answer: What is King Solomon?
Answered first by: Claudia Grimwood

Also answered correctly (in order) by:
Lynda Collet, Bob Wheatley, Margie Enns, Mike Gander, Brianna Rhi, Pam Dowling, Jim Dandy, Maria Janeiro, Sheila Meloche, Wade Durling, Sylvia Wiens, Soleil Chauncey, Marla Percy, Jeff Lake, Jane Morris, Katie Reimer, Nancy Rocca, Catherine Clarke, Edna Groff, KC King

***REMEMBER TO PUT "WHAT IS" FOR JEOPARDY QUESTIONS!**

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)

Love games? Join us for fun events every week at the Irish Harp Pub. Details at www.theirishharppub.com

Niagara-on-the-Lake
CARPENTRY

CARPENTRY • CABINET MAKING
• BUILT-INS • KITCHENS
• FLOORING • RENOVATIONS
• BASEMENT CONVERSIONS



Niall Broughton  289-690-0660
facebook.com/notl.carpentry

Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre

THRIVE - Introduction to Creativity for Seniors
Participate in beginner-level workshops!



Register at no charge
Spots are limited

Funded in part by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program

Canada

To register, visit niagarapumphouse.ca/programs
905.468.5455 office@niagarapumphouse.ca

J&S Performance

SALES & SERVICE




905-468-9735
901 East/West Line, NOTL



GRACE UNITED CHURCH

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONTARIO
222 VICTORIA ST. 905-468-4044

Sundays at 10:30 a.m.
www.graceunitedchurch.com
Our 201st anniversary | 1823-2024

Pauline Reimer Gibson is an Audiologist with over 20 years of experience who loves helping people of all ages in the community.



Book a complimentary hearing test today at 905.468.9176

Pauline Reimer Gibson Audiologist
A global leader in hearing healthcare.

504 Line 2 Road, Virgil ON 



LIDA KOWAL
CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANT

1627 Niagara Stone Rd., Unit B2
Virgil, ON L0S 1T0
905-468-5300
Monday to Friday
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

LIDA KOWAL
MBA, CPA, CMA

*Accounting *Taxation *Business Services *Estate Planning

J&S CONSTRUCTION

PUTTING NIAGARA RESIDENTS FIRST!

Renovations • Additions
Custom Homes • Kitchens
Decks, Fences & much more!



289-697-5757 | JS-CONSTRUCTION.CA

Questions about Tawny Ridge and NOTL development

*Paid for by Gienek Ksiazkiewicz,
St. Davids resident*

By Gienek Ksiazkiewicz
St. Davids Resident

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake seems to be acting in ways that are highly questionable and appear not to be in the best interests of the Community. And it is extremely difficult to figure out Council's thinking/rationale in their deliberations at most meetings. There appears to be an over-reliance on Town Staff's recommendations.

The Tawny Ridge Development in St. Davids is a microcosm of what might be happening in other parts of NOTL. We all present well-thought-out arguments regarding topics being deliberated by Town Council, and we're upset at Town's approach to things.

One of the reasons is because the status quo is changing. The homes that we built or bought were in neighbourhoods that had specific zoning restrictions pursuant to the Town's approved Official Plan. We all abide(d) by those rules except for, it appears, the developers.

Good governance and decision-making starts by allowing and listening to and questioning criticisms/critics, learning from those criticisms, conducting unbiased due diligence, and incorporating changes learned from everything into acceptable well-thought-out decisions that benefit both the residents and Town of NOTL.

In the eyes of residents, the Town's actions and approach to issues seems to defy rationale thinking, among other things. This perception is reality to residents.

Resistance to Providing Information: For example, Town Staff were working with the Tawny Ridge developer for over 6 months before the January 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting, but wouldn't answer specific questions (an update on potential developments) in October last year. Council also ignored a request to direct Staff to specifically answer these questions. Why?

The Town's actions appear to indicate an unwillingness to interact in a constructive manner with Community members. They appear to show a lack of transparency and an unwillingness to share important information. Why?

Restrictions on Community Feedback: Residents are given the minimal amount of time to write rebuttals, their times to speak at Council are constricted, and they are restricted in what they can say. With Tawny Ridge, residents were given one and a half business days and a weekend to review, digest, and assess the revised, undated Staff Recommendation



The Town of NOTL's website says, "Town Council is here to help! There's no ward system in Niagara-on-the-Lake, so residents and community members are welcome to contact any Member of Council with questions, suggestions, or concerns." TOWN OF NOTL PHOTO

tions comprising 345 pages of information.

In order to register as a speaker, a written presentation had to be uploaded on the Town's website by noon one and a half business days later, or potentially you were not permitted to speak. A request to extend the date of the Meeting to enable residents to digest the revised application and Staff Recommendations was ignored/denied. A speaker's late presentation has been excluded from the Agenda's website. The Lord Mayor restricted speakers to present only new information (whatever that meant) and placed a 10-minute speaking time limit.

Councillors seemed to ask very few in-depth questions of resident speakers/presenters to challenge their statements, assertions, criticisms and concerns. The majority of questions were directed to Town Staff, but didn't seem incisively challenging enough.

Over-reliance on Consultants: Residents' concerns regarding sewage capacity for a high-density development, water runoff/flooding and water pressure were offset by assurances from the consultants that everything was hunky dory. However, the consultant is being paid by the developer which one would think would be a natural recipe for an inherent bias in their "statements of fact" and recommendations.

After all, they're being paid to act on behalf of and argue in favour of the developer's requests, rather than the residents of the Town. Their job is to convince Town Staff and Council that the developer's Zoning Amendments are acceptable, to minimize/nullify/reject resident's concerns, and to maximize profitability for the developer.

That's their job – it's not unbiased. It would be fair to say Town Staff used the consultant's presentation as justification for recommending the

Zoning Amendments without seemingly critically assessing the merits.

For example, and there are undoubtedly others, recent water drainage pictures vividly show that the existing capacity of the Sandalwood reservoir is inadequate, disproving Upper Canada Consultants' assertions of adequate drainage. The credibility of UCC's justifications is therefore all brought into question. All of this seems to make Town Staff look like an advocate for the developer, and not for the reasonable expansion and protection of St. Davids. Why?

A traffic study conducted by Paradigm, and paid for by the developer, concluded additional traffic volumes generated by the proposed increased density would continue to provide a safe and efficient environment (meaning there will be no traffic congestion).

Town Staff has relied on that study as justification for their recommendations, despite contrary video evidence, from Courtland Estates residents. The Paradigm report had significant shortcomings, but Town Staff, seemed to ignore those concerns and used that report to justify their recommendation advising Council there would not be any traffic issues. Again, UCC is paid by the developer to present the developer's agenda and financial interests and doesn't represent the residents of NOTL.

Justification of Zoning Amendments Using a "Creeping Approval Strategy": This approach allows Town Staff and UCC to argue that zoning amendments "minimize" the impact on the Community because they are nominal increases, even though they exceed standards in the Official Plan. But a 10-metre height restriction pursuant to existing bylaws etc., becomes 11 metres, which becomes 12 metres, and so on. Where and when will it end, or can it?

Revising the Zoning for St. Davids (like height) sets a precedent for other developers to do the same. Individual homeowners are rigorously obliged to abide by the existing Zoning requirements which are strictly enforced with variances discouraged and not approved – for heights of residential buildings, etc. But this doesn't seem to apply to developers. This dual approval approach appears to be selectively discriminatory and biased. It sets precedents for other developers to push the envelope further and further.

Blame it on the Land Tribunal: It's been said that the Town cannot fight Zoning Amendments from developers because they will appeal the Ontario Land Tribunal, where developers always win. These comments, in essence, are saying that all of the Town's Zoning and the Official Plan are irrelevant and should be disregarded in favour of developers, but not individual homeowners. As resident Judy McLeod stated in the Jan. 25 edition of The Lake Report, "why do we need a planning department at all ... A few administrators to simply rubber stamp applications with whatever a developer wants would suffice. And why have an official plan – if every amendment application is simply allowed?"

Leave Some Development Aspects Amorphous and Unaddressed: Staff is recommending the removal of 99.14% of the trees in Phase 1, and 94.82% of the trees in Phase 2 for Tawny Ridge. The Official Plan states that existing trees must not be unnecessarily removed and that wherever possible existing trees would be preserved and protected, and where it is unavoidable that trees be removed, the applicant shall plant trees of a similar or **comparable species** acceptable to the Town.

There doesn't appear to be any requirement in Town Staff's

recommendations as to **where** the substitute trees will be located, their **size**, etc. A 50-foot maple tree could be replaced with a 2-foot shrub. While it would be logical for the **Urban Design Committee (UDC)** to approve these kinds of things, including the design of the buildings themselves, the committee is excluded from any approval process. How does this make sense?

Use UDC For Favourable Optics: The UDC rejected the proposed Tawny Ridge Zoning Amendments. Their recommendations were ignored/rejected by Town Staff. But, optically the Town can say that it sought out Community feedback from the UDC. The Urban Design Committee is composed of extremely qualified residents of the Town of NOTL appointed by the Town and are supposedly relied by Town Councillors and Town Staff for their expertise and guidance. But they have no approval authority. Why?

Grab the Cash: The Tawny Ridge Development will not have any parkland, but cash in lieu will be provided as per regulations – north of a million dollars, perhaps. I believe at the council meeting held Jan. 16, 2024, Staff indicated these funds would go into the general account of the Town rather than toward the swimming pool, Sparky's Park, etc. of St. Davids. So, Council densifies St. Davids (with the Cannery, Courtland Estates, Angelo Fiorucci's development, etc.) but does not improve the Community with the cash these developments produce. What other developments in NOTL have had similar fates?

Every decision-making process that I've ever been involved in as a corporate banker in Toronto required a justification for that decision to be made. Justification for an approval and justification for a decline. It is difficult for residents to understand the rationale being employed by the Town when they can't see it, or the logic in it, which leads to frustration, distrust and resentment, among other things.

There are a lot of questions and a lot of reasons to change the dynamics of how the process works. Why doesn't Council approve housing density in areas that don't conflict with the character of a neighbourhood and its residents? Residents aren't asking for exceptions, developers are. Development is welcome, but it has to be the right kind.

Your comments regarding similarities in other developments would be appreciated. I can be reached at the following email address –

Unhappynotresident@gmail.com

THE LOVE REPORT

VOLUME 1 COMING SOON

The Lake Report is looking for a bit of romance this Valentine's Day.

We're asking NOTL residents to submit their most romantic photos, love stories and artwork to be published in our Feb. 15 issue.

Know a good love story? Want to surprise a friend or family member?

Send us your creative content by Feb. 8 to be considered. There is a limited amount of space available, so hurry to get your stories to us! Send them to editor@niagaranow.com

While this feature is themed to Valentine's Day, The Lake Report will be working on a monthly "good news" report to accompany our regular news content.

Likewise, send us all of your good news and we'll consider it for a future edition.

Much love,

- The Lake Report Team



**Send your love story
and be entered for a
chance to win dinner
for two at Ruffino's
Pasta Bar & Grill!**

The
Lake Report
The Heartbeat of our Community

FREE AMO TASTING!

For the month of February, if you send your love story (500 word max) to The Lake Report, you'll receive a free wine tasting at AMO Wines.

XX
AMO
WINES



DR HOPKINS & ASSOCIATES
OPTOMETRY
— Sight for Life —

Vision problems in children are often misdiagnosed as learning disabilities. Book an appointment today with Dr. Hopkins & Associates Optometry to help improve your child's vision and quality of life.

NOTL: 905-468-8002 | 358 Mary St. | www.theeyedoc.ca
St. Catharines: 905-682-9119 | 8 Secord Dr.



TEAM OF THE WEEK

NOTL Wolves U18 Local League 1



The NOTL Wolves U18 Local League 1 squad is The Lake Report's NOTL Minor Hockey Association Team of the Week. They have been one of the top team's in the Niagara District Hockey League for most of the season and are currently tied with Stoney Creek for first place overall. Two weeks ago the Wolves competed in their first tournament of the season and returned home as champions. They won the Nelson Emerson Tournament in Waterford, Ont., with a dominating performance: They were victorious in all four games, shutting out the opposition in every contest, while scoring 19 goals. Goaltender Brice Nolan notched all four shutouts. The team is looking forward to two more tournaments this year and the upcoming playoffs, said coach James Cadeau. Meet the Wolves, standing: Jacob Dulas, Mario Galbraith, Thomas Munera, Jacob Cook, Sheldon Walker, Malcolm Bruce, Nolan Grealy, Braden Grealy, Brice Nolan, Josh Dulas, Cooper Ostromecki and Sawyer Hoadley. And kneeling in front row: Phil Leboudec, Austin Leboudec, James Cadeau, Sam Jones, Liam Cadeau and Aaron Jones. SUPPLIED

New pro hired at NOTL Golf Club

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report



The Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club has a new head pro.

Max Murphy, a native of Thorold and graduate of Georgian College's business golf management program, starts as NOTL's pro on Feb. 5, the club announced Tuesday.

He succeeds Keith Vant, who left to become the pro at Clublink's Glendale Golf and Country Club in Hamilton.

Murphy has been an assistant pro at the Cherry Hill Club in Ridgeway for the past seven years. He also spent one season at the Banff Springs Golf Course.

"This announcement marks a significant step forward in our commitment to delivering an exceptional golf experience for all of our members at

Max Murphy has been hired as the new head pro at the NOTL Golf Club. SUPPLIED

North America's oldest golf course," NOTL club owners Marc Forbes, Eva Kessel and Rob DiDomenico said in a notice to members.

The owners added "Murphy will play a pivotal role in elevating our golf operations by providing a welcoming atmosphere and contributing to the overall success of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club."



the IRISH HARP pub

SUBMIT YOUR BALLOTS

12 Days of St. Patrick's Day Giveaways

Order a Guinness, Harp, Smithwick's, or Kilkenny & Receive a Ballot for Entry

ENTER FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN* A TRIP FOR 2 TO IRELAND WITH A TOUR OF THE GUINNESS STOREHOUSE AT ST. JAMES GATE + 11 Other Amazing Prizes

Accepting Ballots February 1 - March 16, 2024.
No Purchase Necessary. *Full Contest Details Available Online.
Must Be 19 Years of Age or Older. Skill Testing Question Required.

*Ballot winners have a 1-in-12 chance of winning the trip to Ireland and a 100% chance of winning a prize.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
THEIRISHHARPPUB.COM
(905) 468-4443 • FULL CONTEST RULES ONLINE



Chocolate & CHEESE | **Twenty Wineries Participating**

WINERIESOFNIAGARAONTHELAKE.COM

Choose Wine, Chocolate and Cheese Experiences from over Twenty Niagara-on-the-Lake Wineries!

INDULGE IN THE PERFECT PAIRINGS!

Explore the decadently sweet and savoury art of pairing wine with chocolate & cheese.

Use Promo Code "WINE20" for bookings on Fridays & Sundays

SAVE 20%
SCAN HERE FOR TICKETS

Wineries OF NIAGARA ON THE LAKE

Ontario  TOURISM NIAGARA CANADA

Predators win big as playoffs loom

Kevan Dowd
The Lake Report

Short and sweet is one way to describe this past week for the Jr. A Niagara Predators, who played just one game but came out of it with a 9-2 win against the Toronto Flyers.

Playoffs are coming up fast and the Predators need all the points they can get if they want to finish the season in the upper half of the Greater Metro Hockey League's south division.

Although they are in sixth place of eight, they trail fourth and fifth by no more than four points with five games to go.

While the Flyers are in last place in the division, Predators head coach Kevin Taylor does not think this diminishes their win Saturday.

"It was a good game," he said. "We played well, we did all the little things that would make us successful against anyone. They're not the strongest team but they played well. We just capitalized on the opportunities they gave us."

Niagara's Isaac Locker opened up the scoring two

minutes in, with Toronto answering back not long after but any indication it may have been a close game ended quickly with Reese Bisci and Cameron Savoie each getting one in the later half of the first period.

In the second, Tyler DeCoff, Nolan Wyers, Georgy Kholmovsky, Luca Fernandez and Tyler Gearing joined the scoring parade. Toronto managed one goal of its own.

With the clock running for the whole third period, Predator Nicholas Nicoletti netted one more for his team's ninth and final tally.

"The guys were happy, the coaching staff was happy, I was happy. It was an enjoyable game," said Taylor. "Now we just have to go and do it again on Sunday."

The Predators play Toronto for the last time this season on Sunday but more interesting is who else is on their schedule before the playoffs.

In their last four games, Niagara play the St. George Ravens twice and Tottenham Railers once. Those teams sit in the two spots above them.

A few decisive wins

would be enough to move them up as far as fourth place and with the third-place Durham Roadrunners eight points ahead but facing a tough final stretch, Taylor thinks even a third-place finish is not completely out of the question.

Although where they finish is still to be determined, they can expect to square-off against either Durham, St. George or Tottenham.

"Each team you have to prepare for differently," he said. Tottenham is a big team, "I think they intimidate teams a lot but I also think that if your powerplay is working, it will be a short series."

St. George is a hard-working team, so "it's not going to be an easy win."

"Durham, I find they're a wildcard just in the sense where you don't know if you're going to get the team in the past who just steamrolled over teams or a team that struggles to get wins out."

In a rare afternoon game, the Predators play the Toronto Flyers this Sunday, Feb. 4 at 3:30 p.m. at the Meridian Credit Union Arena.

Free February returns as NOTL Museum waives admission fee

Staff
The Lake Report

You won't have to spend a dime this month to enjoy all the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum has to offer.

The museum is once again waiving its \$5 admission charge for all Niagara residents during February to give residents an affordable way to learn about Niagara's unique history.

While the museum is home to more than 50,000 artifacts, limited space means that only certain items can be exhibited at a given time.

Current exhibits include a chronological history of the town, Indigenous artifacts that date back more than 10,000 years and what is considered the best War of 1812 collection in Canada.

The Student Education Gallery, located on the second floor, features various exhibits: a quirky and adventurous look at moving on two wheels called "A History of Cycling," a massive wooden rowboat that belonged to the historic



"A History of Cycling" is currently on display at the NOTL Museum's Student Education Gallery. SUPPLIED

Queens Royal Hotel and a panoramic photo display that shows how Queen Street has changed through the years.

Visitors can enjoy the museum's current feature exhibit, "Strike a Pose – The Art of Self-Obsession," which shows how humans have documented themselves over the centuries using paint, pens, photos or pixels.

Visitors are encouraged to take a family selfie, and then add their photo to the exhibit using the social media hashtag #StrikeaPoseNOTL.

Young visitors can also take up the scavenger hunt challenge, and along the way learn about Niagara's early history while finding unusual artifacts throughout the museum.

There is also a dress-up trunk' filled with garments that will transform anyone into a soldier or a settler, even brave parents.

Also during February, the museum's popular virtual lectures series continues, with weekly lectures held via Zoom on Wednesdays at 11 a.m. Details on the series lineup can be found at notlmuseum.ca.

UPCOMING DAY TOURS

Join us for an unforgettable day!

JOURNEYS

BY CAA NIAGARA

A Day in Elora

May 16

Don Pasquale Opera - COC.

May 18

Toronto Blue Jays vs Chicago White Sox

May 20

St. Lawrence Market & Distillery District

May 31

Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird

May 29

Lockport Locks & Erie Canal Cruise

May 30

Cirque du Soleil: ECHO

June 9

TSO: Broadway Blockbusters

June 26

Comedy in Jamestown NY

August 18 to 19

Stratford Festival Overnight

October 22 to 23

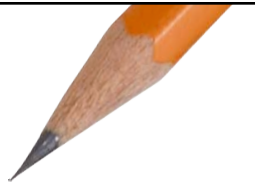
Whether you prefer live performances, professional sports games, local festivals or relaxing boat rides, there is a Journeys day tour for you!

For a complete list and more information on upcoming Journeys tours please call **905-322-2712** or visit caaniagara.ca/journeys



SCAN HERE

Have some fun



Across

- 9. Icon (5)
- 10. Dealers to spare or shuffle (9)
- 11. Part of a journey (3)
- 12. Disney classic set in a forest (5)
- 13. Garments that zip up to go down? (9)
- 14. The former Mrs. McCartney (5)
- 15. Long periods (9)
- 16. Authority (3-2)
- 18. Give up (5)
- 22. Woebegone (9)
- 25. Fold-up bed (5)
- 27. The Crimea, for example (9)
- 28. Mixes gin or produces beater (5)
- 29. Amp input label (3)
- 30. Close by (2,3,4)
- 31. Musical first lady (5)

Down

- 1. Tough terrier (3,4)
- 2. One not of the cloth (6)
- 3. Requirement for a Catholic priest (8)
- 4. Bottleneck (6)
- 5. Engage afresh (2-6)
- 6. Wee girl (6)
- 7. Gesticulated (8)
- 8. The same old way (2,5)
- 16. Head count of an army (8)
- 17. Not vigilant (3,5)
- 19. Implemented (8)
- 20. Sterile (7)
- 21. Overall (2,5)
- 23. Old weights (6)
- 24. Andean beasts (6)
- 26. Start to pay attention (4,2)

Crossword Puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9				10			
		11					
12				13			
14				15			
	16			17		18	19
20							21
22			23			24	25
27						28	
					29		
30						31	

Last issue's answers

1	P	A	I	N	K	I	L	L	E	R	7	E	A	S	T
	I	I	N	A	E	U	M								
9	B	R	A	N	D	T	10	S	Y	N	O	P	S	I	S
	L	J	E	S	E	H	T								
11	D	I	C	A	P	R	I	O	12	W	R	E	A	T	H
	F	C										M	E		
13	A	T	O	M	14	E	X	E	M	P	T	I	O	N	S
	I	D	R	E	S										
18	I	N	A	N	Y	E	V	E	N	T	20	M	A	P	S
	O	I													
22	A	S	I	A	N	S	23	W	H	O	L	E	H	O	G
	T	T	K	A	L	X	S								
26	A	R	O	U	S	I	N	G	27	C	A	T	N	A	P
	I	R	E	E	A	R	I								
28	E	L	S	E	29	R	E	D	U	N	D	A	N	C	Y

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



MEDIUM



FREE HOME EVALUATION

CALL OR TEXT GREG DIRECT

905.329.3484



RE/MAX
NIAGARA
REALTY LTD., BROKERAGE
INDEPENDENTLY OWNED AND OPERATED

When you call Greg, you get Greg.

GREG SYKES real estate TEAM



STEPHANIE FARR MARIO SOLDO* DEBI CHEWERDA* GREG SYKES* CAMERON JONES* SHANNON LEIGH BEATTIE*

Regional council **should have** debated Israel-Palestine motion: Kaiser

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



NOTL regional Coun.
Andrea Kaiser.

Andrea Kaiser says she simply wanted people advocating for Israeli and Palestinian victims of the ongoing war between Israel and the terrorist group Hamas to be heard.

That's why Niagara-on-the-Lake's regional councillor joined St. Catharines regional councillor Haley Bateman in voting against a motion, put forward by St. Catharines Mayor Mat Siscoe, to remove Bateman's motion that called on the region to, among other things, show support for victims on both sides of the conflict.

The motion also urged the region, via the United Nations Security Council, to call for a ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid to be brought into Gaza and that the federal government should remove a cap on the number of Palestinians seeking refuge with extended family in Canada.

It also wanted regional headquarters be lit in the colours of the Palestinian flag and that council affirm the motion not be used to

foster racism or antisemitism but rather to "show solidarity and compassion for those who are living in Israel and Palestine."

Siscoe's bid to remove Bateman's motion from the agenda passed 26-2 with just Kaiser and Bateman voting against it.

Dealing with this kind of motion isn't new for the region.

In 2022, it passed a motion expressing support for Ukraine in its war with Russia, which included lighting the regional headquarters in blue and yellow, the colours of the Ukrainian flag.

Kaiser said she wasn't sure how she would have voted had the Bateman motion come to the floor for a vote.

What she did know is that she wanted it to be discussed.

"For me, that's part of my process in terms of determining how I'm going to vote," she said.

"Do I know exactly how I was going to vote that night? No, I don't. But again, I didn't really have the opportunity to hear the delegates, nor other perspectives from other councillors."

In total, 18 delegations were on hand at the Jan. 25 meeting waiting to speak, but when the motion was removed from the agenda, they no longer had that opportunity.

For her part, Bateman remains frustrated that her motion was dumped from the agenda.

"I'm bothered by the narrative around it," Bateman said. "Now, I'm bothered by councillor Siscoe saying that it's going to cause divisiveness. It's not."

Siscoe, however, disagreed.

"Whether council approved the motion or voted against the motion, it was going to divide the community," he said.

Prior to the meeting, Siscoe said he consulted with the clerk's office to find out

what his options were as he felt the motion did not fall within council's purview.

"There's no call to action here that lines up with the regional council's mandate," Siscoe said. There's no part to it that we have any power over."

As for having passed a similar motion in support of Ukraine, Siscoe said that should not have happened.

"When it comes to international geopolitics, those motions shouldn't be coming to the council chamber," he said.

Bateman said residents who came to speak at the meeting but lost that opportunity when it was removed from the agenda are now being labelled as protesters after they gathered outside regional headquarters in Thorold and said their piece.

"I'm bothered by the narrative around the residents from Niagara, who showed up to that council meeting, to meet councillors and to talk to them about their experiences," she said.

Regional chair Jim Bradley, meanwhile, said council has made its decision and the matter should be considered closed.

"I believe that council simply viewed this item as outside our jurisdiction and I would be cautious of trying to read any additional meaning into their decision," Bradley said in an email to The Lake Report.

He acknowledged some were disappointed by council's decision but there was little chance of a motion unrelated to council's mandate being discussed.

"I would encourage all members of regional council to be cautious of setting unrealistic expectations with members of the public regarding agenda items that are unlikely to be discussed," Bradley said.

The group Niagara Palestine Coalition issued a statement, saying it was "extremely disappointed" by the action taken by regional council but also praised the efforts of Bateman and Kaiser.

It also thanked Bateman for bringing the motion forward and Kaiser for voting against the motion that Siscoe and Coun. Laura Ip brought forward.

Furthermore, the group felt council's actions are indicative of a double

standard, as council showed support for Ukraine in the wake of the Russian invasion, as well as support for Israel after the attacks by Hamas last October.

That attack claimed the lives of 1,200 Israelis and resulted in the kidnapping of more than 200 people.

Since then, the Gaza Health Ministry has reported that more than 26,000 people have died in Gaza during Israel's war on the Palestinian territory.

"It is shameful that this council only shows empathy for people that look like its own members," the coalition's statement reads.

"There is clearly a blatant disregard for the more than 25,000 people that have been killed and for the residents of Niagara, many of whom have personal loved ones killed or trapped inside Gaza."

Kaiser, meanwhile, said she wasn't about to try to determine why her fellow councillors voted the way they did.

"At the end of the day, I respect my colleagues' opinions and perspectives," she said.

hutton@niagaranow.com

»»»» AHOU TRAVEL ENTHUSIASTS!

Embark on the ultimate getaway with **CAA Travel** and experience cruising like never before! Picture sailing through crystal-clear waters, basking in breathtaking sunsets, and exploring exotic destinations—all with unparalleled comfort and luxury. Make waves and create memories that last a lifetime!

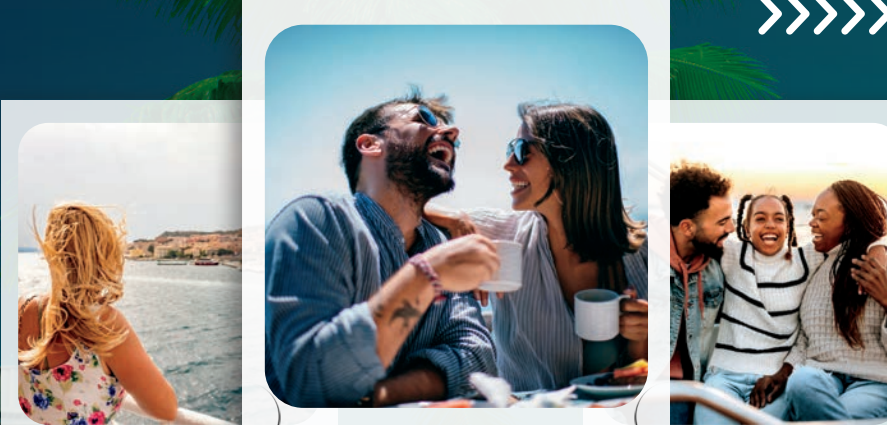
DESTINATION PARADISE: Choose Your Cruise Escape!

Explore dreamy destinations—Caribbean beaches, Alaskan fjords, European ports, and beyond. **CAA Travel** offers an extensive selection of ocean, river, and small ship luxury cruising, ensuring there's a perfect cruise for every explorer. Whether you seek relaxation or are embarking on a family adventure, set your course for an unforgettable journey!

• • • Your adventure awaits—book now and make your *travel dreams come true!* ✈️



»»»»



RESERVE TODAY & UNLOCK CAA MEMBER BENEFITS!

Don't miss the boat on incredible deals.

«

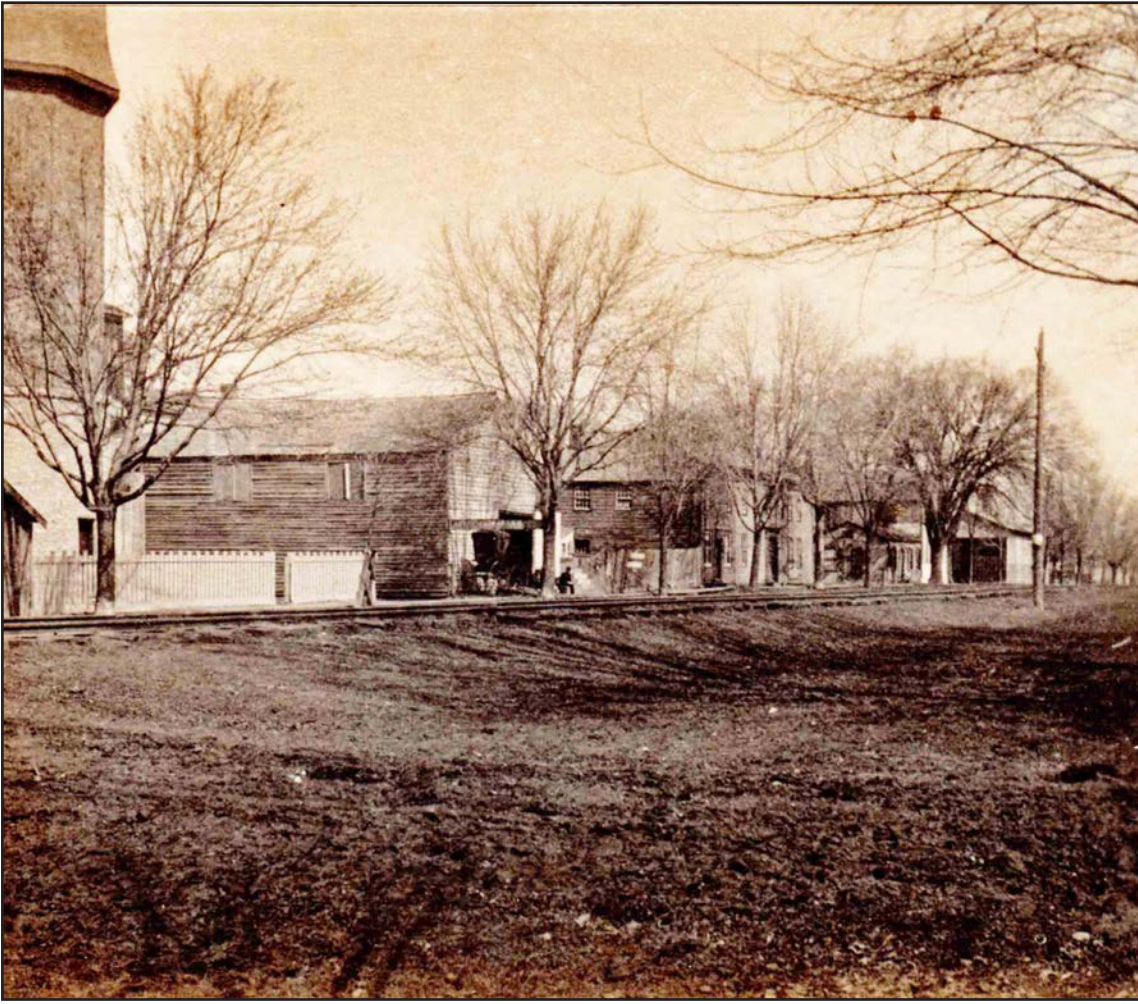
»

Contact: **CAA Travel** at 1.800.263.7272
or
visit caaniagara.ca/travel to set sail with added benefits as a CAA Member.





EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM



King Street c. 1890

This photograph of the commercial block on King Street in 1890 shows (L to R) the water tower, Mike Greenes' livery stable (currently Aura on The Lake, the restaurant), the Pacific Hotel, the rear of George A. Clement's Queen Street building and the apothecary. The Pacific, built circa 1850 at the southeast corner of Market Street, was replaced in 1914 by the station for the Niagara, St. Catharines and Toronto Railway Company. A section of the old hotel was moved to form part of 66 Prideaux St. Note the train track running down King Street at the base of the buildings.

Why this Niagara-on-the-Lake lad **loves to travel**



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson
Columnist

St. Augustine, it is said, wisely wrote, "The world is a book. The person who does not travel reads only one page."

Travelling is a great teacher, and my recent 19-day dental trip to Mexico became a valuable and spontaneous opportunity to mitigate my long-held ignorance about that country and its people.

I had lots of time to read and to be reminded how little I know.

Despite my 14 years in the retail travel business, and so many adventurous trips to many parts of our world, I had always avoided going to Mexico, mainly due to real and perceived problems with "the water."

Too many stories of gastrointestinal disasters and vacations ruined by too much time spent sitting in small rooms, on toilets: the

agua, I believed, wasn't safe to drink.

Also, stories and images of violence by murderous drug cartels, usually along the borders where smugglers and criminals do their best work.

A few weeks ago on Boxing Day, I enjoyed excellent flights with AeroMexico from Toronto to Mexico City and Guadalajara. Clean aircraft, professional and attentive staff, and on-time departures and arrivals.

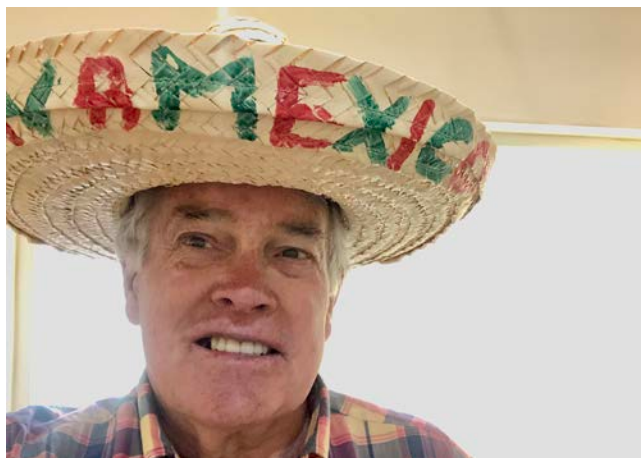
It's a mystery to me how more than 100 million people, the population of Mexico, can be so organized and how I knew so little about their way of life and standard of living.

I had preconceived notions about life in Mexico. I won't bore you with them, but will briefly attempt to paint a picture of life in Chapala, central Mexico.

Situated on the hilly and dry north shore of Lake Chapala, the largest lake in Mexico, about 45 minutes south of Guadalajara, and an easy day's drive by car southwest of Mexico City. It's a country town of some 50,000 residents, with a very temperate and relaxing climate.

Even during my stay in January, at noon each day, the thermostat was predictably indicating about 20 C.

I rented a small apartment



Ross Robinson says travel — to any destination — is one of life's greatest teachers. SUPPLIED

in central Chapala, close to the lake and its long, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly Malecon, handy to public buses, and near to bakeries and cafes called El Burrito and El Patio. And American Legion Post 6.

Lots of new friends, cold beer and reasonably priced meals, plus karaoke every Thursday from 3 to 6 p.m. What was not to like?

I really didn't know what to expect from the Mexican people in this rural and provincial town in Jalisco. It wasn't at all what I expected.

This is just like how the great majority of Mexicans don't have much accurate information on Canada. They generally think of two images: our beautiful snow and cold weather, and our hockey fights.

Why do generally peace-

ful and law-abiding Canadians allow our highly skilled and overpaid hockey players to fight and commit assault and battery, trying to concuss one another?

Just asking.

The adjectives that come to mind to describe Mexican people after my dental trip are pleasant, polite, relaxed, well-turned out, family-oriented, obsessively clean, law-abiding, hard-working and helpful.

(I eventually realized that Mexicans are kind while offering seats on the crowded public buses, partly because I have somehow, without realizing it, become an older man.)

And I assume Mexicans are very well-spoken. I do know that during my 19-day stay in their well-organized country, I didn't hear even one vulgar F-bomb while

listening to a sporting event on TV. A vast change from the sports bars around Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Going forward, I guess that's just the way it's going to be now for me. I must adjust and be more tolerant.

Speaking of the public bus system in Chapala, Jalisco and Mexico: the buses are utilitarian and a bit rough while going through their gears, but the drivers are well-trained and safety conscious.

For 12 Mexican pesos, about one Canadian dollar, it is essentially a hop-on, hop-off system.

The buses run on a frequent basis, with only a rare wait of more than 10 minutes.

Here we arrive at the great housing contradiction in Niagara-on-the-Lake: we want public transit to get us to hospitals and shopping and here and there.

But, we don't want what the Mexicans have figured out is required over the years: intensification.

If we want more services at realistic prices, we need to create more accommodations for more people. It's pretty simple.

Almost all Mexicans live in modest apartments and attached accommodations. Often two or more levels.

The streets are busy, with generally smaller cars and

two-wheeled conveyances. Thousands of people live in various types of accommodations.

The infrastructure seems to be efficient, with water and sewer pipes doing their thing, food and other goods arriving on time to the stores, and garbage being removed efficiently.

It seems that our recent suburban-type developments use the least-efficient and sustainable model possible. Wide lots, long infrastructure service pipes, wide driveways? Why?

When we travel, the neighbourhoods we most enjoy visiting all have very narrow lots. Illegal to build now.

Think Cabbagetown and the Beaches in Toronto, Paddington and Woollahra in Sydney, the Garden City of "N'Awlins" and downtown Charleston, S.C.

But I have rambled into territory where I don't really understand the issues.

I have been reminded that travel is a great teacher. Not just international travel, but even here and there in Ontario and our magnificent Canada.

Get off the couch, get out and about, go on a trip and meet new people.

It makes reading the newspapers and watching the television news much more interesting.

Gateway church introduces **new pastor** in new location

Continued from Front Page

the Niagara Christian Assembly in the former Eden High School on Niagara Stone Road.

Over the years, the church has found homes in the theatre at the former Niagara District Secondary School (now Royal Elite International Academy), the old Virgil Public School on Field Road and the plaza at 1615 Niagara Stone Rd.

It became Gateway Community Church in 1999 and while the services have moved to the community centre, Gateway's offices will remain at the plaza location.

The move to the community centre will give it a greater presence in NOTL and allow the church to



Gateway church introduced Pastor Dan Magcalas to the community during an open house on Sunday. JULIA SACCO

direct more of its resources to community projects, most notably the work the church does for migrant farm workers.

"(The move) lets the community see that the church is a part of the community," Keller said.

The move was also made to allow for more room.

The location on Niagara Stone Road only had a capacity for upwards of 60 people.

"We would have outgrown that (space) with 10 or 20 new people," Keller said.

As a part of its community outreach, the church also has been providing bicycles

for migrant farmworkers since 2020.

The Bikes for Farmworkers shop is still located at the former Virgil Public School.

"We're very involved with the migrant workers," Keller said. "We help with welcome bags and we have our own migrant worker outreach director, Donna Brown. She's originally from Jamaica and knows the needs they have."

And with the change of location, there has also been a change behind the pulpit.

Rev. Dan Magcalas stepped forward in December to take over pastoral duties on an interim basis after the departure of Rev. Michelle Mercer last June.

He said the congregation

has gone out of its way to welcome him and his wife, Alma, to NOTL.

"It's been great. It's been good so far," he said.

He views his role as that of a transitional pastor, a role he slid into after he left his most recent job with a church in Windsor.

"It's almost like I am the pastor, but I know it's not permanent," he said.

He has been a pastor with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, of which Gateway is a member, since 1989.

In NOTL, he will assume most pastoral responsibilities until a new, permanent pastor is brought in.

That search has already begun and church leadership has already been going through resumes from

potential replacements. Magcalas will be assisting in the process.

But for now, he is happy to be at Gateway and getting to know the 40-member congregation.

"It's a fun part of the job," he said. "I am able to help."

And getting to know the congregation, he added, is an important part of the church.

"We want to make sure people can socialize, have time to talk," he said. "It's fellowship and we want to find out what's going on in the lives of the congregation."

More information on Gateway Community Church can be found on its Facebook page and at gatewaynotl.com.

hutton@niagaranow.com

Valentine's Gift Guide



YOU'RE INVITED TO A VALENTINE'S LUNCH

Love is in the air, and on your plate! Please join us at Amica Stoney Creek, a senior lifestyles residence, and fall for our culinary creations. Bring a special someone to enjoy a four-course, chef-prepared meal while socializing with our wonderful team.

Be sure to stay for a guided tour of our premium suites and amenities.

Wednesday, February 14 | 12:00 – 2:00 PM

Visit us to experience a taste of Amica.

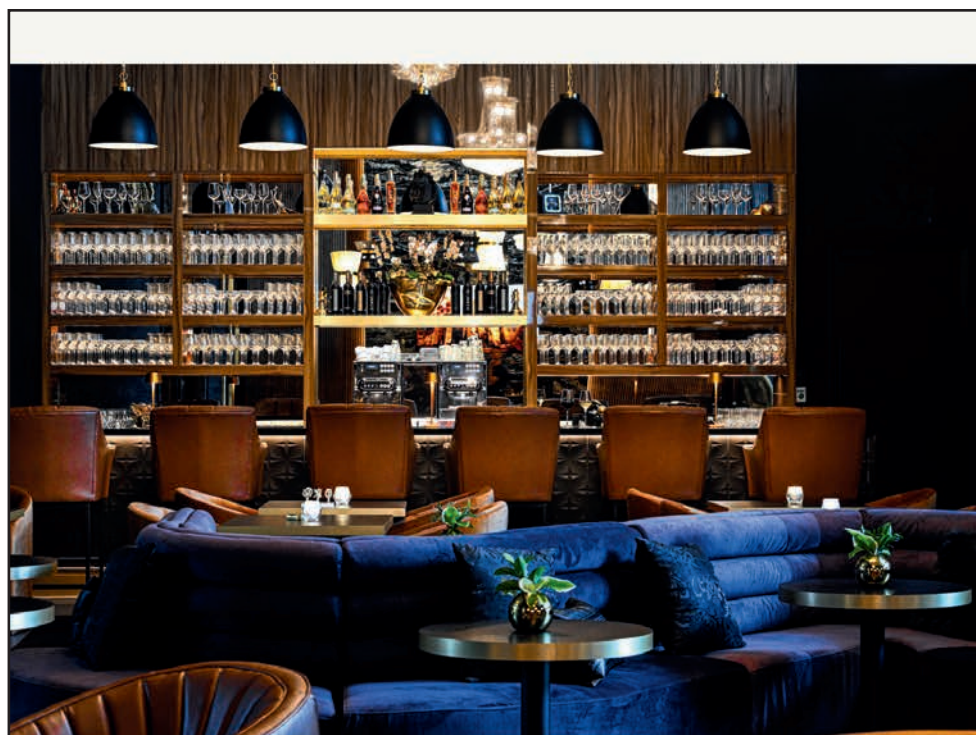
We look forward to seeing you!

SPACE IS LIMITED—PLEASE RSVP BY FEBRUARY 9
TO LESLEY OR CARLY AT 905-664-8444.

AMICA

STONEY CREEK

135 KING STREET E, STONEY CREEK
AMICA.CA/STONEYCREEK



AMO is Love Celebrate this month with us

February Features

Two for One Flights - Monday to Friday

Sunday Funday - complimentary 6-piece hors d'oeuvres with a purchase of two flights

Feature Wine of the Month

2021 Sparkling Rose

2021 Rose

20% off purchase of 6 bottles

25% off purchase of 12 bottles

BOUTIQUE & LOUNGE HOURS

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK 11:00AM - 6:00PM

AMOWINES.CA

289.547.9696 (xoxo)

976 YORK RD, NOTL

 **FEATURED**

Valentine's Gift Guide



BLOOM & CO

Pre-order for Valentine's Day
by February 7th
and save 10% with code

LOVE 10

www.bloomandco.ca
289-296-2372

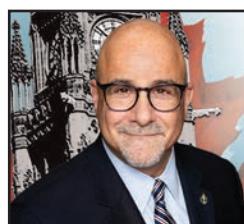
247 Four Mile Creek Rd.,
St. Davids, ON

CONDO FOR RENT AT AVE MARIA
Stay & Play in Naples, Florida



Unit is locally owned in NOTL
Monthly stays available 2023-2024
Golf at The National Golf & Country Club included

Kelli | 615-715-6115



HONoured TO BE YOUR VOICE IN OTTAWA

TONY BALDINELLI, M.P.
NIAGARA FALLS

NIAGARA FALLS/NOTL OFFICE
4056 Dorchester Road, Suite 107
Niagara Falls, ON L2E 6M9
Tel.: 905-353-9590

FORT ERIE OFFICE
48 Jarvis Street
Fort Erie, ON L2A 2S4
Tel.: 905-871-9991

TONY.BALDINELLI@PARL.GC.CA
TONYBALDINELLIMP.CA

Obituary

Paul Joseph Green



GREEN, Paul Joseph
July 3, 1938 – January 25, 2024

As ever quietly, courageous, and loving, Paul Joseph Green died peacefully at home, on January 25, 2024. His beloved wife and best friend, Ginny Medland Green, was by his side.

He is survived by his only sister and most cherished ally, Ann (Green) Kelly, brother-in-law, 'best man' and respected friend, Frank Kelly; and the "apples of his eye" nieces; Kate Kelly (Gord Truffen) and Kris Kelly (Sean Westerhoff) and great-nephews Ryan and Justin Truffen and Ben and Josh Westerhoff.

Also fondly remembered by New York cousins, Susan, Patricia and John Walker, offspring of Jud Walker, a kindred spirit in Paul's childhood. Ginny's step-mom Julie Medland, cousins Sally Hawks (Ralph Anzarouth), Tom Hawks (Sheila Baudisch), and Julie's son Brian Eby (Andrea) all felt great affection and respect for Paul.

Paul was born in Port Colborne, Ontario, the son of Harold and Mary Green. Harold was the youngest of nine children which meant Paul and his sister grew up

surrounded by a joyful abundance of aunts, uncles, and cousins. It was an idyllic childhood on the shores of Lake Erie and rooted in Paul a life-long admiration for family and a passion for the sea and sky. He became a sea cadet at age 12 which is also where he learned to box - a pugnacious skill that may have helped him years later as a lawyer in Toronto!

His strong work ethic and stamina were further developed when he chose to postpone high school graduation and work the merchant ships that ply the Welland Canal, St Lawrence River and Great Lakes.

He completed his education in Buffalo and graduated from Temple University in Philadelphia, going on to study at the University of Toronto and graduating from Osgoode Law School (LL.B., 1966). Paul was a good and loyal friend and the relationships he formed in law school lasted a life time – especially the annual Georgian Bay weekends; his fraternity, Phi Delta Phi was the backdrop for their notorious "Wednesday Nights".

He practiced Civil Litigation for 40 years in Toronto and served the province by sitting on the Health Professions Appeal and Review Board.

He was a man of discretion, integrity, and good humour. His quick intelligence, curiosity and humility opened his mind and heart to people from all walks of life. He read widely and always enjoyed stimulating conversations on current topics of the day, responding in a thoughtful and thought-provoking manner.

Paul and Ginny met in 1990 and love blossomed overnight. They married in 1991 and committed themselves to living life to the fullest and a mutual dedication to their careers. They shared a love of friends and family, supporting young people, artists, international travel, concerts, golf and the visual arts. Ginny devoted full-time care to Paul in his last months.

In retirement, Paul developed a love of painting and spent many days on their back porch in Thornbury, Ontario at his easel. He expanded his creativity to include painting the kind and generous people of Mexico, the vibrant sky and cobbled streets there, and his paintings were part of an exhibition in Mexico.

Paul was above all else, a good sport! He was a member of Queen City Yacht Club, home to his beloved "Kailo," a 27-foot C & C boat – joyfully circumnavigating Lake Ontario each summer. He skied at Craighleith Ski Club and revelled in the camaraderie there, and to Ginny's delight, he took up golf, (he didn't want to do it - but he did it!) joining the Malanquin Club de Golf at their winter home in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, such a place of warmth, friendships and colour.

When Paul and Ginny moved to Niagara on the Lake in spring 2016 they joined the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club and began attending the Niagara Symphony Orchestra and Music Niagara concerts. Paul's quiet respect for all people meant that later-life friendships took root on the golf course and at concerts and these brought a calm and joyful happiness (sushi too!) to Paul "on the back nine" of his life.

The last three years were arduous – chronic diseases of heart, lung and liver caused much change in Paul's life: He and Ginny were deeply grateful for the steadfast support – physical, emotional and spiritual – from their loving family and very special friends during these difficult times.

Paul was a generous, kind and honorable man. His friendship and good loving heart will be missed by all who knew him; as will his welcoming smile, his understated intelligence and curiosity, and the ever-present twinkle in his eye.

Special thanks to the compassionate care of Dr. David Dec, Donna Sherbok, Rebecca Petherick, and to the understanding and reliable caregivers from Bayshore and Roschill Lane.

A Celebration Mass at St. Vincent de Paul Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, will be planned for a time mid-February. Arrangements will be confirmed with Morgan Funeral Home in the near future at (www.morganfuneral.com). In lieu of flowers, if you so choose, donations may be made in memory of Paul Green to the Medland & Green Inspiring Artists Bursary at Brock University, c/o Niagara Community Foundation, 8 Church Street, St. Catharines, ON L2R 3B3.

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



FISH FRY

THURSDAYS 4 - 7 P.M. TAKEOUT/EAT-IN
1 PC \$12 | 2 PC \$17 | CASH ONLY (TAXES INCLUDED)



Legion 
BRANCH 124
NIAGARA ON THE LAKE

HALL RENTALS AVAILABLE!

Royal Canadian Legion Br. 124 | 410 King St.
Phone: 905-468-2353 | E-mail: legion124@gmail.com

 **SOKO**
bakery cafe

Korean-themed bakery & cafe
roll cakes | scones | pastries | buns
coffee | tea | smoothies

358 Mary St. | 289-241-7789 | sokobakerycafe.square.site



Understanding the **magic** of trees



GROWING TOGETHER 

Joanne Young
Columnist

troubles just don't seem to be as big as when you started and stress levels have come down.

Sometimes, all it takes is just pulling off the road for 20 minutes, say along the Niagara Parkway, parking under a giant red oak tree and taking in its beauty.

It is a great opportunity to take time to get away from noise and distractions and to meditate or maybe even do some journaling.

It is that quiet time that you need to have just to be alone with your own thoughts. It is a time to rejuvenate and feel refreshed.

There is more and more information out there about a newer practice called "forest bathing."

The Japanese practice of shinrin-yoku, commonly translated to English as "forest bathing," has been well documented and studied.

Japan's forestry ministry coined the term in 1982, as part of an effort to promote public health as well as forest conservation, formally branding a concept that already had deep roots in Japanese culture.

The Japanese government spent about \$4 million on shinrin-yoku research between 2004 and 2012, and the country now has at least 62 official forest therapy sites "where the relaxing effects have been observed based on scientific analysis conducted by a forest medical expert."

Those sites draw millions of visitors every year, but you do not have to spend time in "an approved forest therapy site" to benefit from the effects of spending time surrounded by trees.

Here are just a few benefits that you will experience:

One of the most noted effects of forest bathing is that it provides stress relief.

Even just sitting underneath the canopy of a tree can lower your levels of cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone.

What a great way to destress after a tough day at work, by going for a walk in a forested area.

Another benefit one can get by spending time surrounded by trees is that it will lower your pulse rate and blood pressure.

A 2010 study published by Environmental Health and Preventive Medicine stated that forest bathing was responsible for significant drops in the average pulse rate by 6 per cent.

Spending time in the presence of trees can even strengthen your immune system. It has been repeatedly shown to enhance the activity of natural killer cells and enhance anti-cancer proteins.

Natural killer cells are a key part of the body's innate immune system, prized for attacking infections and guarding against tumors.

In a 2007 study, nearly all participants had roughly 50 percent higher natural killer cell activity after a three-day forest trip, a benefit that lasted anywhere from a week to more than a month in follow-up research.

Another benefit of being out in nature is sleeping better. In a 2011 study, a two-hour walk in a forest could significantly lengthen and deepen your quality of sleep, especially for people with insomnia.

The effect, which was



Columnist Joanne Young says trees like this majestic oak help us deal with stress. JOANNE YOUNG

stronger from afternoon walks than morning walks, is likely due to both the exercise and an emotional improvement by walking in forested areas.

Spending time among trees can make a big difference for people with chronic, widespread pain, according to a 2016 study published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.

People in the study who took a two-day forest therapy retreat not only showed lower heart rates, and lower stress levels, but also reported significant decreases in pain and depression and

a significant improvement in health-related quality of life.

We are in a time when mental health issues are sharply rising. There is a definite need for people to find ways to lower their stress levels and an outlet to process their thoughts.

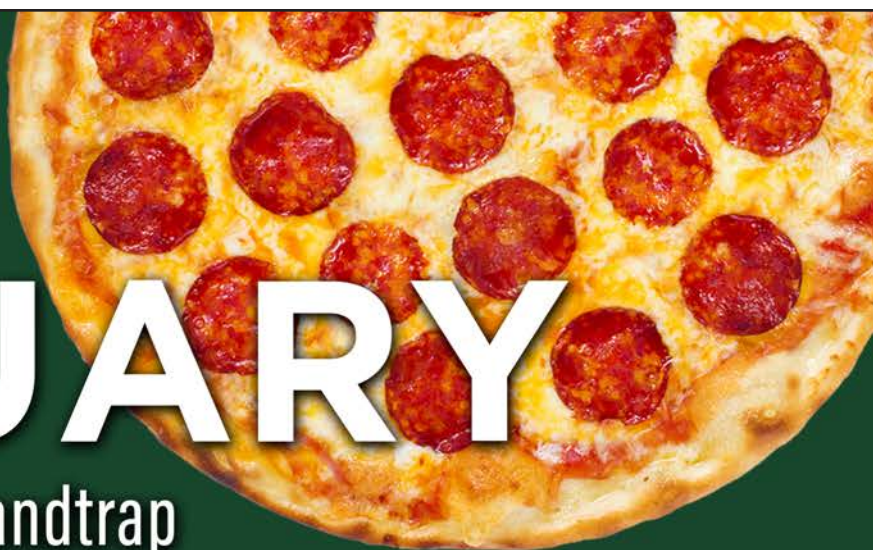
What better way is there than spending time out in nature, appreciating the beauty around us, soaking up some sun and getting some exercise at the same time?

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

Fabulous

FEBRUARY

is back at Sandtrap



\$6 domestic pints | \$7 premium pints | \$6 local wines (6 oz) | \$8 local wines (9 oz)

\$4.50 domestic bottles | \$6.50 assorted appetizers and 4-slice pizza

All day everyday in February



Join us for **Super Bowl Feb 11**
in support of Red Roof



Keeping it local.

Open daily from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m.

358 Mary St. NOTL - 905-468-8727 - sandtrappub.com



REVEL ON-THE-LAKE REAL ESTATE GROUP



THE FINE ESTATES TEAM'S 2ND ANNUAL FREE FAMILY SKATE DAY

FEBRUARY

19TH

FAMILY DAY

1-4PM

BRING YOUR
FAMILY & BRING
YOUR SKATES!

SNACKS & HOT
CHOCOLATE
PROVIDED!

MERIDIAN CREDIT UNION ARENA:

1567 FOUR MILE CREEK, NOTL

289.868.8869



\$899,900

LISTED BY: WOLF GUEMBEL &
SHANE WALL



6461 O'NEIL ST
NIAGARA FALLS

\$3,299,900

LISTED BY: CRYSTAL SIMONS &
ANDREW PERRIE



1559 YORK ROAD
ST. DAVIDS

\$2,999,000

LISTED BY: TEAM MAC
JESSIE & EVAN MACDONALD



6 DAVID LOWREY CT
ST. DAVIDS

\$1,080,888

LISTED BY: ALEKSANDRA ZDJELAR



6383 CONNOR CRES
NIAGARA FALLS

\$1,349,900

LISTED BY: CRYSTAL SIMONS &
ANDREW PERRIE



OLD TOWN
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

\$4,999,000

LISTED BY: TEAM MAC
JESSIE & EVAN MACDONALD



4 FIRELANE 4B
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

\$1,075,000

LISTED BY: ALEKSANDRA ZDJELAR



9349 MADISON CRES
NIAGARA FALLS

\$1,899,000

15 ACRES
LISTED BY: ANDREW PERRIE &
CRYSTAL SIMONS



3820 NUGENT ROAD
PORT COLBORNE

\$1,850,000

LISTED BY: ANDREW PERRIE &
CHARLES PLANTE



LOT 2 ANCHOR RD
THOROLD | BUILD TO SUIT

\$699,900

LISTED BY: JON OLSSON



57 HARCOVE ST
ST. CATHARINES

\$1,750,000

LISTED BY: ANDREW PERRIE &
CHARLES PLANTE



LOT 4 ANCHOR RD
THOROLD | BUILD TO SUIT

\$2,275,000

LISTED BY: ANDREW PERRIE



2600 BAXTER AVE
EXCLUSIVE