



Council **reverses decision** that blocked St. Davids project

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Town councillors admit they messed up. In the process of trying to approve part of a controver-

sial development application in St. Davids, they say they inadvertently made an error and rejected something that actually had already been approved. That led them to get legal advice and then reverse a

decision they made just two weeks ago. It's all very complicated, but the result is the entire Tawny Ridge development – which residents campaigned vehemently against – now has the green light.

Two weeks ago, only 12 homes in the first phase were approved and 74 units were rejected – but councillors say they made a procedural error and now they have corrected it. Council emerged from a

closed session on Tuesday, Feb. 6 and reversed a decision to deny planning applications for the controversial subdivision project put forward by developer St. Davids Riverview Estates Inc.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said there was nothing nefarious about the reversal and the town was just ensuring all decisions on the project were consistent with

Continued on Page 2



The Lake Report honoured with **27 more awards** for journalism

Staff
The Lake Report

The Lake Report has again been honoured for its journalism excellence, earning a “phenomenal” 27 awards from the Ontario Community Newspapers Association.

The association on Wednesday unveiled the finalists in its annual Better Newspapers Competition.

The Lake Report is a finalist in 26 categories in addition to receiving one honourable mention award – more accolades than any paper in the province for the fourth consecutive year.

Continued on Page 3

NOTL artist leads **Arctic expedition**



On the upcoming expedition, Edward Spera will be providing guests with guidance on how to capture images of wildlife. JULIA SACCO

Julia Sacco | The Lake Report

Thirty years ago, Edward Spera – then a recent graduate of philosophy and psychology – decided to pick up a paintbrush and create something. His life was changed forever.

“From memory, I did a painting of a wolf that I saw on a program,” Spera told The Lake Report. When his wife saw it, she asked where he had bought it. “I told her I had painted it

about an hour ago,” Spera said. “That was kind of the eureka moment.” At this point, just coming out of university, he wasn’t sure of his life’s direction. “I had just finished a degree

in psychology and philosophy – nothing related to what I do now, besides analyzing everything to the nth degree,” he said. “My wife had a stable job as a

Continued on Page 19



Ross's Ramblings

Going to Mexico to avoid Canada's overpriced **dental cartels**

Ross Robinson
Columnist

So many of us have inaccurate ideas about life in other countries.

For example, it is easy to believe there are murder-

ous cartels in Mexico, often controlling the illegal drug and arms businesses.

Perhaps true along the borders, but so inaccurate when describing most of that wonderful country and its fine and peaceful citizens.

I just returned from Chapala, in central Mexico, after 19 days of dental treatment.

The cost was less than half what I would have paid in Canada.

Why did I get 16 crowns, six root canals and two

plates in Chapala instead of Niagara?

Back in October, I went to a highly regarded dentist's office here in Niagara-on-the-Lake to get a quotation for required dental work.

One of the receptionists

was a total professional and enthusiastic about my plan to improve my fairly pearly whites.

The other receptionist? Not so much.

Continued on Page 24

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 **STANTON** **Rosecore**

DISTINCTIVE CARPET | CUSTOM RUGS CARPET • CUSTOM RUGS • RUNNERS LUXURIOUS CARPET & CUSTOM RUGS

<p>Serving Niagara Since 1977 SIMPSON'S Pharmacy: 905.468.2121 Apothecary: 905.468.8400 Shop from the comfort of home www.simpsonsparmacy.ca In-store Curbside pick-up or FREE local delivery * Orders over \$35</p>	<p>FREE Regional Delivery* </p>	<p>Join us for monthly Customer Appreciation Days: Every 3rd Wednesday of the Month Customers 60+: Every Last Thursday of the Month ONLINE & IN-STORE</p>	<p>Curbside Pick-up Available </p>
---	---	--	--

Council reverses decision to reject St. Davids development

Continued from Front Page

each other. As things stood before the meeting on Feb. 6, the application had two stamps to approve it and one stamp to deny it.

Though council had the option to refuse the application at that point, Zalepa said councillors decided to approve it.

After emerging from the private session, they gave a third stamp of approval, effectively green-lighting the whole project – all 86 units.

The decision was made with little public discussion and left residents questioning what happened.

The developer submitted its project application in two parts consisting of 32 single-family homes, 24 townhouses and 30 units in the form of stacked townhouses.

The proposal needed two zoning changes and two official plan amendments to move forward.

At the end of a meeting on Jan. 30, council approved bylaw changes for the first phase of the project, 12

single-family homes, and rejected those for the second phase.

This, however, was out of step with previous decisions.

By the time the bylaws were on the floor, council had already supported the application – twice, according to Zalepa.

A majority of council endorsed staff recommendations to approve the entire project at a committee of the whole meeting Jan. 16.

“Council members could have spoken against it then,” Zalepa said.

The recommendation to approve, with council’s first stamp of approval, was brought to council Jan. 30, attached to the agenda with the minutes of previous meetings.

Council gave the recommendations a second stamp of approval when it voted to approve the minutes.

The bylaw changes were put on the floor later that same meeting to receive the third stamp from council.

Town spokesperson Marah Minor said when council signed off on the

minutes attached to the council agenda, it “indicated a direction to approve the bylaws.”

Zalepa noted, “When the council got to the bylaws, they, for some reason, voted for accepting the bylaw for phase one approval. But they didn’t approve the bylaw for phase two.”

“If council agrees to do something, it must do it,” he told The Lake Report.

And Coun. Erwin Wiens said it all puts the town in a bit of a legal bind.

“You wouldn’t vote against the bylaw after you’ve approved the report, because they’re contradictory,” he said.

Wiens and Zalepa were both on vacation on Jan. 30 and attended the meeting virtually.

Wiens was present to vote on the minutes, but Zalepa was not.

Zalepa said he was having connection problems that night.

Both were absent for the vote on the bylaws.

Wiens said he was surprised to learn the next day that the bylaws were not

approved, because, in his words, they are a “house-keeping” item.

Coun. Tim Balasiuk initially voted not to approve bylaws for the second phase of the project, but reversed his decision after the closed meeting.

He said council was told passing the bylaws was just “protocol” and they had already passed the point of approving the project.

Had he known that, Balasiuk said he would have voted to pass the bylaws at the previous meeting.

“The way that it happened – the process happened – I think there was just some confusion,” he said.

He also said the layout of the subdivision, with townhouses instead of an apartment, was “a little bit more appropriate.”

In its closed session meeting, council decided to approve the bylaw amendments the developer requested, Zalepa said.

One additional condition of the approval was that the owner complete a stormwater management plan to the satisfaction of

the town, said town clerk Grant Bivol, who read from a motion to approve the project.

The town decided to use a zoning tool called a “Holding symbol” to prevent development on the site until the town’s conditions are met.

The holding provision would not be removed until the town was satisfied with the developer’s stormwater management plan for the site, Bivol read from the motion.

Coun. Sandra O’Connor, who has consistently voted against the project due to concerns with the developer’s plans for flooding infrastructure, told The Lake Report the holding provision addressed her remaining concerns and was the reason she voted to approve the bylaws after the closed meeting.

Residents, meanwhile, think there’s something rotten in Denmark.

Gienek Ksiazkiewicz said the proceedings were a case of either “gross incompetence” or a “deliberate strategy.”

He maintains that residents have not been properly consulted on the project’s proposed official plan changes throughout the approval process.

In an email to residents obtained by The Lake Report, Zalepa attempted to explain the proceedings to a resident, who accused Zalepa and Wiens of sitting out the bylaw vote to avoid the optics of voting in favour of an unpopular development.

Zalepa stated council voted on the planning report for the application on Jan. 9, but it actually was on Jan. 16.

Resident Bill Krahn remains unconvinced that the stormwater management infrastructure along Tanbark Road will be able to accommodate more homes.

In an interview, he told The Lake Report the road is “already over capacity.”

The town trusted the consultants and engineers over his and others’ eyewitness and photographic accounts of the road’s conditions during past storms, Krahn said.

evanlore@niagaranow.com

Path to justice takes unwanted turn for family of Ashley Simpson

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The pathway to justice for the family of a St. Catharines woman who was murdered in British Columbia by her boyfriend took another unwanted turn earlier this week when a travel booking site refused to change the family’s travel plans.

Members of Ashley Simpson’s family – mother Cindy Simpson, daughters Amanda and Amy, as well as several nieces and nephews – intended to attend the sentencing of Derek Favell, who pleaded guilty to a second-degree murder charge in the disappearance and death of Ashley in late October last year.

Favell was due to be sentenced on Feb. 15 after two days of hearings but the hearings were postponed until May, pending the completion of a Gladue Report.



John Simpson said his family is not being allowed to rebook flights out west so his family can attend the sentencing of the man who murdered their daughter Ashley. FILE

Such reports “contain information on the unique circumstances of Aboriginal people accused of an offence or Aboriginal offenders,” Legal Aid Ontario states on its website.

Courts can refer to the report’s findings in determining sentences for offenders.

The family had hoped that with Favell’s sentencing, they would finally be able to move another step forward in their lives and

gain some sense of closure. Ashley’s father, John Simpson, who lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake, was not going to attend.

He has stated that seeing Favell found guilty and visiting the spot where Ashley was found brought him enough closure.

“He will pay for his crime, I’m sure of that,” Simpson, the father, wrote in a post to the Justice 4 Ashley Simpson Facebook page. “I need not waste

anymore of my time on him.”

The postponement of the hearing – it will now be held in May – meant new travel plans for the family had to be arranged.

They had been booked to be on a WestJet flight from Toronto to Calgary and then on to Kelowna, B.C. via WestJet.

The flight had been booked through the travel website FlightHub.com.

“We got a phone call (Tuesday) morning (from WestJet) telling me they weren’t going to refund the tickets,” Simpson told The Lake Report on Tuesday afternoon. “WestJet said it was FlightHub’s responsibility and FlightHub said it is WestJet’s.”

When he pressed the issue, the airline said it was “not their problem,” he added.

On Wednesday morning, FlightHub had reached out to Simpson to say the company would not rebook the

flights, which set the family back close to \$1,500.

Cindy Simpson, meanwhile, said the family had submitted a letter to the airline from the Crown counsel who prosecuted the case outlining why the change was being made.

“WestJet said they didn’t receive the letter,” Simpson, the mother, said. “We were told, your seats are still booked.”

When contacted by The Lake Report, a spokesperson for WestJet said the airline staff could not locate the Simpsons’ booking in their reservation system without a “PNR (Passenger Name Record) number” that is created when a flight is booked.

“We would like to assist, however without the required information to find their reservation we are unable to,” said Madison Kruger, a strategist with WestJet media relations.

An inquiry to Kruger regarding the letter was left

unanswered.

A representative from FlightHub, Ayob Cesar, responded to inquiries from The Lake Report and said the company would look into the situation and requested information on the booking.

Ashley Simpson vanished in April 2016 and was missing for five years until her remains were found in a remote area of B.C. in 2021.

Since then, members of Simpson’s family have been flying back and forth between Niagara and B.C. with the help of donations from supporters in both Niagara and Salmon Arm.

The Simpson family is still welcoming donations to support their travels back and forth from British Columbia.

The family will accept Air Miles and any donations to their GoFundMe page at gofundme.com/f/ashley-simpsons-family.

hutton@niagaranow.com

		<p>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</p>
--	---	---

NOTL brings up priority problems

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Town leaders had an audience with the Ministry of Housing in late January and used the opportunity to ask the government to change a rule concerning municipal development applications — one connected to an upcoming, contentious project in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Senior town staff and councillors returned from a conference held by the Rural Ontario Municipal Association on Jan. 23 where they lobbied provincial ministries for support on this and other issues.

“Niagara-on-the-Lake was well represented, attending seven delegations and meeting with six provincial ministries to advocate for local priorities,” spokesperson Marah Minor said in a press release.

Zalepa and other town leaders spoke to representatives from the housing ministry about amending the Planning Act so towns can “stop the clock” on project applications.

“We’re asking the government to consider putting a stop time in when there’s feedback given to the developer from the staff or the public from a public meeting,” Zalepa explained in an interview.



Town chief administrator Bruce Zvaniga, left, with Coun. Wendy Cheropita, provincial finance minister Peter Bethlenfalvy and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa at the Rural Ontario Municipal Conference. EVAN LOREE

Bice Builders, owned by Josh Bice, appealed a project application to the Ontario Land Tribunal for a non-decision while the town was waiting for his team to respond to public feedback.

This, Zalepa said, was not the reason for the town’s pitched policy changes. The issue was bigger than just one project proposal.

“We’re seeing it all across the planning files because of the short, new time-frames that the government has put in,” he said.

Zalepa was referring to legislative changes passed by the province in July 2023.

The changes force towns to refund application fees to developers when they can’t process the applications according to prescribed deadlines.

“Discussions also took place about prioritizing funding for infrastruc-

ture and transit to support higher-density housing,” said Minor’s news release.

Minor said the town also pushed for more time to get heritage status for all the properties on its registrar, under the Ontario Heritage Act.

The province passed legislative changes in November 2022 that force the town to designate properties on its registrar in two years or be forced to remove them for five years.

“The bill says we have to have all our properties reviewed by the end of the year,” Zalepa said.

“We probably have the most in any municipality in Ontario, and it’s not going to be physically possible to renew all of them before Dec. 31,” he added.

The town has about 200 properties on its heritage register.

This is the second year

in a row the town has advocated this issue to Michael Ford, the minister of citizenship and multiculturalism.

“Discussing challenges can be difficult, but it is crucial for progress and growth,” Zalepa said in the press release.

The town also advocated for support of irrigation infrastructure, changes to alcohol legislation, the need for medical professionals and the threat of oak wilt, a fungal disease, to town trees, Minor said in the press release.

The town asked Sylvia Jones, the minister of health, to finalize the placement of a nurse practitioner in NOTL “immediately,” the release said.

The town is also looking for additional grants to help towns “increase recruitment efforts” for physicians.

The town also asked Infrastructure Minister Kinga Surma to make sure irrigation infrastructure continues to be eligible for funding through the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

Town officials also expressed thanks to the ministers of finance and agriculture for their support in eliminating a 6.1 per cent tax on VQA wines, of which NOTL is Ontario’s leading producer.

evanloree@niagaranow.com



Sip & Savour Passports

The exclusive Sip & Savour Signature Event is back this February, but only for two days! Once again, 15 local tastemakers will be showcasing some of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s finest wines, beers, cream whisky, and gourmet chocolate-themed culinary delights among The Gardens at Pillar and Post.

\$85*

6 Beverage +
6 Food Vouchers

February 23 & 24, 2024

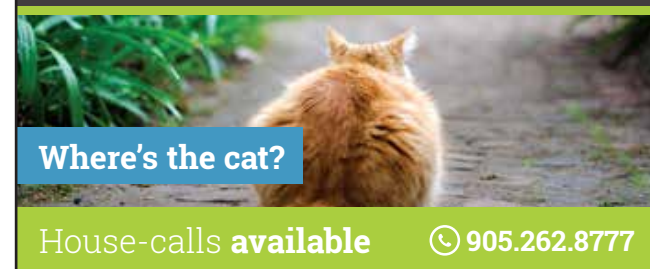
CALL 1-888-669-5566 TODAY
TO PURCHASE YOUR PASSPORTS.

*Plus taxes, per person.

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



CPAP and sleep apnea supplies.

Free delivery in NOTL and VIRGIL.

111A 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

The Lake Report wins 27 more awards

Continued from Front Page

The first, second and third-place winners from among the finalists in each category will be announced in the spring.

Since 2020, the newspaper has received 96 provincial and national awards, more than any publication in the country.

“This is phenomenal news,” said Richard Harley, the founder and editor-in-chief of The Lake Report and its news website, niagaranow.com. “Once again, we are flattered and grateful for the recognition from our peers.”

“It has been disheartening in the past year to see so

many print publications and broadcasters close across the country,” he said.

But the residents and advertisers in Niagara-on-the-Lake continue to embrace the high-quality journalism that The Lake Report provides in its weekly print edition and daily online, he noted.

“Succeeding as a print newspaper and sustaining that success is challenging in the online news era, but thanks to our loyal readers and advertisers, The Lake Report has defied the odds and flourished over the past six years.”

“And we owe a great debt to the people of NOTL who regularly allow us into their

lives and trust us to tell their stories,” Harley added.

These provincial awards are for pieces published between October 2022 and Sept. 30, 2023.

Harley and former reporter Somer Slobodian were honoured in six categories, reporter Evan Loree was named in four categories, and reporter Julia Sacco and photographer Dave Van de Laar received two finalist nominations each.

The Lake Report has many community contributors and one of them, Frank Hayes, was nominated for a feature photo and for a guest column he submitted.

As well, Rene Bertschi’s online video of our In-

ternational Women’s Day celebration last March was a key component of the paper’s submission for best online experience.

And artist Alperen Albayrak, a high school student who spent a semester at The Lake Report as part of a District School Board of Niagara internship program, received a finalist nomination for one of his editorial cartoons.

In Wednesday’s announcement, one other area publication, the NOTL Local, received five award nominations.

See next week’s edition for full details of The Lake Report’s awards.

editor@niagaranow.com



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



Football fans come out to Sandtrap for Super Bowl mania

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Super Bowl Sunday started slow for Ginny and Guy Robins, who made the trek from Port Dalhousie to Sandtrap Pub & Grill to watch the big game.

The Robins' came decked out in red for the Kansas City Chiefs, who squared up against the San Francisco 49ers in Las Vegas.

"I'm a Denver fan, so I'm just doing this all for my wife," Guy Robins joked.

The couple watched the screen in the busy bar throughout the night, going through a range of cheering and frowning.

"As long as Kansas City wins it'll be a good game,"

Ginny Robins said.

The couple went home happy, after a 25-22 win for the Chiefs.

Sandtrap co-owner Matt Dietsch said while the game had a first half that was "dry to start," the excitement of the second half made up for it.

"It was certainly a fun night," he said.

Sunday marked Sandtrap's 13th annual Super Bowl celebration in partnership with Red Roof Retreat.

"Raffle tickets and 50/50 are where the bulk of our funds are raised," Dietsch said, "and Paul and I always pitch in a little extra money from our profits of the day."

Many prizes included were from the bar's sup-

pliers and wine companies in town like Konzelmann, Peller Estates and Jackson Triggs, he said.

"We had a beer fridge, a flat-screen TV, a Coors Light cooler, gift baskets, Steam Whistle coolers and bottles of wine," he said.

The total amount raised for Red Roof Retreat has not been tallied yet, but they are expecting close to \$5,000 raised.

Around town, NOTLers enjoyed parties at their own homes, or at Legion Branch 124, where drinks were had and another draw was held.

As for next year's Super Bowl, Dietsch said people can look forward to another party at the pub.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



Guy and Ginny Robins watched intently before the Super Bowl game picked up speed Sunday night at the Sandtrap Pub & Grill. JULIA SACCO

Town prepping for once-in-a-lifetime eclipse in April

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

While Niagara-on-the-Lake won't be promoting visits to the town to view the solar eclipse on April 8, work is still going on behind the scenes in preparation for this rare celestial event.

A report by fire chief Jay Plato, which came before town politicians at Tuesday's committee of the whole meeting, stated that staff "are working to ensure that visitors will have a pleasant and safe experience" if they visit that day.

"Staff are liaising with community partners to understand and manage information received regarding proposed events and activities during the days surrounding the eclipse," the report added.

Plato, the town's emergency management co-ordinator, has been meeting regularly with counterparts from across the region before the big day.

Members of the town's emergency control group have been meeting to make sure essential services in Niagara-on-the-Lake are active on the days leading up to, during and following the eclipse, the report added.

Plato, when contacted by The Lake Report, said discussions with other



A pinhole projector, like this homemade one set up in Ryerson Park during the partial eclipse in 2017, is a safe way to view an eclipse — and it's easy to make. FILE

municipalities are ongoing but one thing is for certain: the eclipse is going to draw throngs of people.

"Neighbouring municipalities such as Niagara Falls are being promoted as being one of the hot spots for it," Plato said. "Because of that, we are all meeting about how we're going to mitigate that."

Once plans are finalized, he said, members of the public, businesses and other stakeholders will be

advised.

Traffic flow is a top priority, Plato said: "We're trying to manage what that will look like."

Niagara-on-the-Lake is no stranger to events — ones happening down on Earth — that draw crowds.

Plato said the town has the advantage of experience in this field, citing the Mumford and Sons concert held at The Commons back in 2015.

"That attracted 25,000

people so we've had large volumes (of traffic) before," Plato said.

Minerva Ward, president and CEO of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL, said while there will be no active promotion of the event, big crowds are still expected to come to town and that Tourism NOTL will be providing information to visitors.

"Our accommodation sector is seeing high occupan-

cy," she said. "We believe that by that time they will be almost filled up."

That means little needs to be done in the way of active promotion.

Instead, Ward said businesses are being canvassed to find out what type of events are being planned with the goal of putting together an information package for visitors.

"It's a great opportunity for the private sector to get those visitors through their doors," Ward said.

Once that list of events has been compiled, an eclipse landing page will be created for the Tourism NOTL website.

"Our ambassadors will be present during that period," she added.

Regardless of where people are viewing the eclipse in Niagara, preparation is the key to safely viewing the eclipse, a Brock University expert said.

Barak Shosany, assistant professor of physics at Brock, said people can watch the eclipse safely by purchasing certified eclipse glasses through a verified distributor or can plan to project the image of the eclipse on a white piece of paper using a pinhole projector.

"Using these methods, it should be 100 per cent safe to watch the entire

eclipse," he says. "During the precious few minutes of totality itself, when the moon completely covers the sun, it is safe to watch the eclipse directly, but care must be taken to return to safe viewing methods as soon as totality ends."

Looking directly at the sun can cause permanent eye damage, Shosany said.

During the solar eclipse, the sun will be much less bright than usual, but still just as dangerous.

Looking at the sun through sunglasses, binoculars, telescopes or optical camera viewfinders is also dangerous, unless they are covered with professional solar filters.

Shosany, a member of the Ontario Eclipse Task Force, said that while a total solar eclipse takes place roughly every 18 months, it rarely happens this close to Niagara.

A total solar eclipse occurred over Ontario in 1979, and the next one won't happen again over the province until 2099.

In NOTL, the website Eclipse2024.org said totality is expected to occur at 3:18 p.m. and to last for about three minutes.

Council, meanwhile, voted to accept the Plato report for information purposes.

hutton@niagaranow.com

Corks
Winebar & eatery

CELEBRATING
15 years
OUR ENTIRE MENU
BUY ONE GET ONE
FREE

Fridays in February

EQUAL OR LESSER VALUE. EXCLUDES DRINKS & ALCOHOL. DINE IN ONLY.

NOTL closing Dyck Lane access to Tanbark

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Despite objections from residents, Niagara-on-the-Lake council has decided to block road access to Dyck Lane from Tanbark Road in St. Davids.

Residents of Dyck Lane showed up to a town meeting on Jan. 30 with objections to a plan that would close their only legal exit from the neighbourhood.

“You may not think it’s a big deal, but it is a big deal,” said Mike Maves, who lives in one of three homes on Dyck Lane.

A staff report attached to the meeting agenda states that residents of Dyck Lane will have access to their homes via Hickory Avenue.

But Cam Clayton, the other resident to speak up during the town meeting, said access from Hickory Avenue is illegal: it would require him and his neighbours to trespass on Maves’ property on their way in and out of their homes.

“If you vote to block Dyck Lane, you will deprive us of the only legal



Mike Maves raises concerns about plans to close access to Dyck Lane from Tanbark Road. EVAN LOREE

access we have to our home,” Clayton said.

Part of Dyck Lane crosses Maves’ property.

Residents are only permitted to drive through it because of a legal contract signed in 1969 that allowed residents to use a 10-foot-wide lane to pass along Maves’ lot when coming home.

Though the town’s legal counsel has stated that Hickory Avenue abuts the lane, Maves said there is an eight-foot-wide gap between the edge of the lane and Hickory Avenue.

That eight-foot gap is also part of Maves’ property.

“Obviously, we cannot drive anywhere we want on the Maves property,” Clayton said.

A provincial court would

have to remove the legal right of way if the town and residents wished to close Dyck Lane, Clayton said.

This is not the first time the town has considered closing Dyck Lane.

Resident Bill Krahn has been part of previous efforts to close the lane because traffic on the gravel street kicks up dust, which then settles on the properties that back the lane.

Krahn said he and his neighbours submitted a petition to close access to the lane from Tanbark, but town staff advised them that it wasn’t possible due to the same legal right of way cited by Maves and Clayton.

Complaints about the dust date back to 2017, the staff report said.

The access issues for

Dyck Lane residents came up last January at a public meeting on a subdivision proposal from Gatta Homes.

Clayton said closing Dyck Lane was only urgent now because it would help move the Gatta project forward.

Krahn agreed.

“It’s not ‘cause of the dust, it’s because there’s a new subdivision going in,” he said.

Closing access from Tanbark would “effectively expropriate a portion of our property,” Maves said.

“We also have safety concerns about the use of the new proposed intersection that the town will in effect be installing on our property,” he added.

Clayton told council the legal right of way could be removed by appealing the issue to a provincial court.

Coun. Gary Burroughs, who voted against closing the access, said he was convinced the path suggested by Clayton was the best way to fix the problem.

“I’m not against closing it up but we’ve gotta get access for the couple of houses that are there onto Hickory,” Burroughs said.

evanlore@niagaranow.com



DR HOPKINS & ASSOCIATES
OPTOMETRY
— Sight for Life —

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

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>



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
TONYBALDINELLIMPCA

Advertising inquiries?
Email advertising@niagaranow.com

LAURA SECORD PRESENTS

February 22, 23, 24, 29
March 1, 2
Curtain at 7pm

Sunday Matinee
February 25, Curtain at 2pm

TICKET PRICES
Adults \$20
Seniors \$15
Students \$10

For more information
and ticket sales:

www.laurasecord.dsbn.org



Legends and myths loom large in Sir Isaac Brock's story

Evan Loree

Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A fabled horse and a mysterious love interest were the spotlight of a fireside talk Friday afternoon at Navy Hall.

Amanda Gamble, the executive director of the Friends of Fort George, gave a crowd of almost 40 plenty to talk about after exploring the life and accomplishments of Maj.-Gen. Sir Isaac Brock – including some of the myths that surround the famed army officer.

Linda Hill and her husband Ken Woolley were visiting from Toronto and bought tickets to the talk just so they could see the inside of Navy Hall.

"I had no interest in Brock," Hill told The Lake Report. "Actually, I had an interest in the building. But then we got here and were like, 'Wow, this was fascinating.'"

Woolley said much of the information was new to him, as he hadn't learned much about Canadian history when he was in high school.

"Now I understand why there's so much streets, towns, schools all named after Brock," he added.

Brock is most remembered for leading the defence of Upper Canada in the battle of Queenston Heights, which took place Oct. 13, 1812.

He died of a gunshot wound during the battle



Replica's of Maj.-Gen. Sir Issac Brock's uniform were on display during the Friends of Fort George fireside talk at Navy Hall. EVAN LOREE

where American soldiers attempted to cross the Niagara River and capture Queenston Heights.

"His death became a rallying cry in the Battle of Queenston Heights and further unified the people of Upper Canada in the resolve to protect their homelands," Gamble said.

Gamble shared a few tales of the man's approach to leadership, but the myths surrounding Brock's story appeared to draw the most attention from the crowd.

One myth she addressed was that Brock had a favour-

rite horse named Alfred.

"Alongside Brock, Alfred has become part of Brock's story and has been immortalized on stamps, in paintings and in statues," Gamble said.

According to historical records, the horse was left to Brock by former governor general Sir James Craig when he left Upper Canada for Britain in 1811.

But Gamble said she could find no documents that show he accepted the gift of Craig's horse and no first-hand account of the battle that named Brock's

horse among the cavalry.

Another myth Gamble brought up was that Brock stopped to share coffee with a love interest on his way to the battle.

"This one makes me mad," Gamble said to a few laughs.

Brock's alleged relationship with Sophia Shaw, daughter to one of Brock's contemporary generals, originated in "The Story of Isaac Brock" by Walter R. Nursey, Gamble said.

"No primary source documents mentioned Brock being affiliated

with or engaged to anyone," she said.

Furthermore, Gamble said Brock's family was in financial trouble at the time, and the 42-year-old military officer was in "no position to get engaged" at the time.

Gamble laughed at the idea that the major-general – who has been described as a "man of action" in so much of the historical record – would have stopped for a romantic cup of coffee on his way to battle.

Nursery had no historical records to substantiate the romantic story when he

added it to his biography, Gamble said.

After the talk, Gamble said people seem to know Brock best through myths like these.

"Some of the myths have just kind of taken over and that's what people know," she said.

For her, it was "really interesting" to dig into the story of Sophia Shaw and bring things back to "original historical documentation."

"There's a lot of mystery about (Brock) that I like."

evanlore@niagaranow.com

Police warn of increase in 'driveway scammers' across Niagara

Staff

The Lake Report

Niagara Regional Police are alerting residents across the region to the rising incidents of scammers bilking consumers out of payments for driveway repairs or resurfacing jobs that are never completed.

"The public should be aware of driveway scammers who frequently approach homeowners unsolicited, employing deceptive tactics such as overpromising, underquoting, and ultimately failing to deliver on their commitments," Niagara police said in a news release. "These scammers typically operate door-to-door, offering driveway paving or resurfacing services," the release continued.

While homeowners are presented with what seem



With scams on the rise, Niagara Regional Police recommend avoiding cash deals and being leery of unsolicited offers over the phone or at the door. SUPPLIED

to be competitive quotes for work, those homeowners are often pressured into agreeing to have the work done — and, into making a substantial downpayment, police say.

Although work on the project may commence quickly, the quality of the

work is often subpar and the job remains incomplete.

The homeowner may be pressured to make additional payments for the unfinished work.

Once payment is received, the so-called "contractor" typically disappears, ignoring phone calls and leaving

the consumer with driveway damage or an unfinished project, the police said.

"Victims often recount aggressive and pushy encounters with these contractors, who eagerly seek the initial cash deposit," police said in the release. "The scammers frequently distribute business cards, pamphlets, and rudimentary printed contracts during their door-to-door sales pitch."

Police said the information given to homeowners says little about the company or its owner or employees.

Research often reveals a lack of any official online presence or registration with local chambers of commerce, Better Business Bureau, or similar entities.

Phone numbers for the contract appear functional

for a brief period — to secure a deal with homeowners — but later are disconnected or calls go unanswered.

"It is important homeowners remain vigilant against these scams to protect themselves and their property," police said.

There are steps consumers can take to protect themselves, police said, including seeking recommendations from friends and trusted sources and getting multiple written estimates.

Consumers should also ensure the contractor is insured before initiating work and check references of past jobs.

Other steps police recommended include avoiding cash deals and being leery of unsolicited offers over the phone or at the door.

Consumers should also

be aware of and understand the scope of any work being undertaken.

If city property is damaged as a result of the work, the homeowner can be held liable.

It is also advised that consumers take photos — before, during and after a job — and also consider photos of contractor vehicles and licence plates if something seems suspicious.

Consumers are advised also to get details such as the work requested and agreed to, start/finish dates, exact cost and payment schedule in writing.

They should also demand a receipt for payment and guarantee/warranty information.

More information can be found via Consumer Protection Ontario and the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre.

NOTL kids try tai chi for Chinese New Year

Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Lunar New Year was a big draw for the NOTL Youth Collective on Monday night.

Almost 20 kids came out to the old Cornerstone Church location on Niagara Stone Road to learn about the annual Chinese New Year celebration.

Those who made the trip got to try out the Chinese martial art of tai chi and taste some homemade Chinese cooking as well.

Dorothy Soo-Wiens, one of the collective's volunteers, came up with the idea to teach kids in Niagara-on-the-Lake about the Lunar New Year, often referred to as Chinese New Year.

"I think when we find out and are educated about other people – other cultures – we put more value on who they are as people," she told The Lake Report.

The celebration of the first new moon of the year is observed by multiple nations and cultures that follow either a lunar or lunisolar calendar, including in East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

Soo-Wiens said people in China get eight days of holiday to celebrate the Lunar New Year, which lasts 15 days in total.

This year, following the lunisolar calendar, it began on Feb. 10.

"I know in China, all the cities, all the big cities, they empty out because everyone's going back to their home villages," she said.

Soo-Wiens, who was born to Chinese and Malaysian parents before moving to Canada when she was three, said there is value in learning about other cultures.

"There's not a lot of Asians in our community," she said. "It's a very white, white community."

Molly Yen, a tai chi instructor with about 15 years of experience, led the kids in a demonstration at the start of the evening.

Tai chi is mostly used as a form of exercise, Yen told the group, but has its origins in martial arts.

"I just learned tai chi for health and healing and exercise," Yen told The Lake Report.

Yen is also Soo-Wiens' instructor and said when her student asked her to show it to the kids at the youth col-



Greta Sobol looks up the length of a collapsible sword as her peers close in for a look. EVAN LOREE

lective, she couldn't say no. "They were following really, really well," Yen said of the young participants at the Lunar New Year celebration.

Yen also gave a sword routine demonstration.

Following that, the kids got to sample some Chinese dumplings and noodle dishes, cooked by Soo-

Wiens and her friend Lena Gemmrich.

Each person in attendance received a "hongbao," a gift of money shared in a red envelope,

Soo-Wiens said. It's traditional in Chinese culture to gift people with hongbao on special occasions and holidays.

evanloree@niagararow.com

More people are working than ever before.

Over 700,000 more people are working today than in 2018.

It's happening here.

Paid for by the Government of Ontario

Ontario 



TLR

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 96 national and provincial awards for journalism and advertising excellence.

**POSITIVE
POWER+**

Contributed by Patty Garriock

"I suspect that the most basic and powerful way to connect with another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we give each other is our attention." - Rachel Remen

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 Mississauga 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

February? Or May?



After a tip from local resident Stan Harrington, The Lake Report's Julia Sacco headed down to the Niagara River and snapped this photo of a tour boat taking a cruise on Monday. A strange sight to see in February.

Editorial

The future of news in NOTL

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

The media business is one of the most highly competitive forums on Earth.

News hounds like us strive to bring readers, viewers and listeners all the latest, up-to-the-minute information. Plus we want to do it exclusively and first – to give our loyal followers all the reliable info they want and need.

We're also competing in the marketplace, relying on advertisers to help cover our costs, while those advertisers in turn rely on our products and readership to get their messages out, thereby maintaining and growing their businesses.

It has been sad to watch large corporate owners shutter dozens of print newspapers in the past year – and Bell Media announced the closure of numerous broadcast operations just a few days ago.

The thirst for reliable, unbiased information produced by dedicated, professional journalists has not waned. If anything, it has grown. People want the news – but many deep-pocketed corporate owners

apparently are unwilling to continue to provide it.

That's not new. In fact, it's the very reason why The Lake Report exists.

Our news website, Niagaranow.com, already was established when Torstar and Postmedia on Nov. 27, 2017, carved up the media landscape and shut more than 35 newspapers, including the long-established Niagara Advance.

That prompted young Richard Harley to launch this newspaper a few months later, in 2018.

Interestingly, a year ago at this time, Niagara-on-the-Lake had three hyperlocal weekly print publications serving the community. Now there are two and after Feb. 28, there will be just one – The Lake Report.

The NOTL Local on Wednesday announced it is ceasing publication of its weekly print edition on that date. Having sold its website to a company called Village Media a year ago, it was an inevitable move.

The Local, led by its venerable editor, Penny Coles, has been dedicated to providing a voice in the community every week in print – and plans to now

continue doing that online-only.

We wish them well.

Perhaps it could have turned out differently. Twice in the past four years we broached the idea of combining forces with the Local to offer Niagara-on-the-Lake a stronger, united news publication. Alas, it was not to be.

Yes, online-only news is probably the future for many communities.

But not every community, not yet.

Just as hybrid work has become the norm thanks to COVID, hybrid news publications like The Lake Report – with a strong print presence every week and an award-winning news website available 24 hours a day – are not going away.

Thanks to our loyal readers and dedicated advertisers we continue to flourish and grow as your community newspaper. And those same readers and advertisers keep telling us they want their Lake Report in its tangible, printed format.

It's part tradition, part demographics and partly that people in smaller communities really do embrace

the concept of viewing news about themselves and their neighbours via an old-school printed product.

And let's not forget that Ontario's first newspaper, the Upper Canada Gazette, was published here in NOTL starting in 1793.

But we're not dinosaurs. We recognize there also are people who enjoy the convenience of reading The Lake Report online – whether they live in town, have moved away or are travelling the world.

That's why Niagaranow.com (and our print archive at lakereport.ca) continue to carry all the news that's in The Lake Report, plus a whole lot more.

But there's no news or features about St. Catharines, the Falls, Fort Erie or the GTA and beyond. You can find all that in any number of places online.

What The Lake Report offers is true, hyperlocal NOTL news that you cannot find anywhere else. News that affects those who live here, work here or visit Niagara-on-the-Lake.

That was our promise six years ago and it remains our promise today.

editor@niagaranow.com

WEDNESDAYS & THURSDAYS

2 FOR 1 PIZZA PASTA PARMS

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

Ruffino's PASTA BAR & GRILL



LETTER OF THE WEEK

What provincial housing target is NOTL so concerned about?

Dear editor:

There has been a lot of talk in various circles about the pressure on Niagara-on-the-Lake from the province to meet housing starts and increase density.

Consultants acting on behalf of various high-density developers have seemingly referred to their high-density developments as a tangible avenue to meet these targets.

It's a narrative that they are well-paid to advocate for. It is their job to do so.

The provincial government does track housing supply progress for each designated municipality.

Oddly, the Town of NOTL (a municipality) did not appear on Ontario's web page that tracks the municipalities that have been assigned housing targets.

Thinking that this was some administrative shortcoming, contact was made

with the market housing policy branch of the ministry of municipal affairs and housing. It generated these statistics.

The ministry was asked whether NOTL was in compliance with the housing start goals.

A ministry official responded that "The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has not been assigned a housing target," a stunning, gob-smacking statement.

There is no provincially mandated target for housing starts in NOTL.

So what is motivating town staff to recommend and town council to approve high-density developments helter skelter and to ignore the official plan?

In Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa's presentation to the Ontario government's Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy at the Holiday Inn in St. Catharines he stated that "NOTL

is on track to meet the growth and housing forecasts set by the region and province."

What provincial targets would he be referring to — because the ministry hasn't set any targets? As well, the region does not mandate housing targets to the town and set growth/housing targets.

As a result, it seems like all this talk, angst, pressure, urgency to build homes and the need for more housing and high-density developments in NOTL in order to meet the province's housing starts is a bunch of nonsense.

It really is perplexing why residents, town staff and councillors in NOTL are going through these costly, time-consuming, agonizing processes and deliberations when there doesn't appear to be a need for any of it.

Developers want to maximize profitability —

that's their business and modus operandi. The Town of NOTL needs to abide by its official plan and not continually gut it.

But then again, Lord Mayor Zalepa et al. can change the zoning for vacant pieces of land to make things work for high-density developments, can't they?

This is an issue that all residents of NOTL should be very concerned about, including how decisions are made. There are a lot of unhappy residents in NOTL.

Does council think that the aging retirees of NOTL will develop Alzheimer's or dementia during the time leading up to the next election, or maybe they think voter dementia already exists as a systemic condition of the residents of NOTL?

Maybe they don't care.

Gienek Ksiazkiewicz
St. Davids

What's not to like about trees?

Dear editor:

Reading Kip Voegel's letter, "Sometimes trees just need to be taken down," (The Lake Report, Feb. 1) was disheartening if not downright bewildering.

What an attitude. Trees sometimes do need to be cut when they are diseased or pose the threat of falling, endangering lives or causing problems with drainage, but the writer's misconception defies reason.

His disregard of the multiple benefits that trees provide shows a serious lack of understanding. Trees are our natural heritage. Why wouldn't we expect to see them along the Upper Canada Heritage Trail?

To quote from a recent publication of Stewards of Sustainability in Chautauqua: "Trees act as filters and are of critical importance in protecting us from the harmful effects of a wide range of pollutants and contaminants such as potassium, phosphorus and nitrogen."

"Trees protect our homes from floods by slowing down the flow of water and reduc-

ing erosion, which helps to hold on to land and soil."

"Trees help us breathe clean air by storing carbon and regulating the corrosive effects of extreme temperatures.

Trees block strong winds and in turn reduce our heating costs by as much as 25 per cent. Trees also offer shade to our houses and keep them cool in summer, thereby reducing hydro bills as well."

"Trees help hospital patients recover more quickly. Studies demonstrate that patients with a view of trees recover significantly more quickly and with fewer complications than those without a tree view."

"Trees help to create beautiful streetscapes."

"The sheer beauty of tree canopies and leafy greens stimulates our senses, reduces levels of stress and brings tranquility and more green spaces into our daily lives."

What's not to like about trees?

Mary Kilmer
Tree hugger
NOTL

Let's work together to support Royal George revitalization



Wayne Gates
MPP, Niagara Falls riding
Special to The Lake Report

On Feb. 13, I celebrated the 10th anniversary of my election to represent Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie as your Member of Provincial Parliament.

It has been the honour of a lifetime to represent this community for four terms — and one of the privileges of my time has been to be the provincial voice of a community as unique, historic and beautiful as Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Niagara-on-the-Lake has

so much to offer visitors and residents alike: dining in the "Culinary Capital of Canada," our wineries, breweries and cideries, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, historic attractions like Fort George, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club, the Apothecary and, of course, the Shaw Festival.

These unique elements of our community not only do so much to support our local economy and good jobs — they also form the basis of the unique character of this town and our people.

As your MPP, it is my role to work together with all stakeholders, from all levels of government, business owners, workers and residents alike, to ensure Niagara-on-the-Lake and all its features are supported in a culturally sensitive manner.

One example of how we have accomplished good things for our community

was the important win we got late last year on common-sense reforms for our wine industry.

The elimination of the basic 6.1 per cent tax on Ontario winery retail sales was a major win for winemakers, workers, and residents alike.

Niagara is the biggest wine-producing region in the country, and it contributes over \$1 billion to Canada's GDP.

The elimination of this basic tax will help Niagara's economy and create more jobs for residents.

I was proud to introduce legislation to eliminate this tax three times since 2018 — and by working together with winemakers, workers and industry experts, we got a major win that will support the tourism industry and job creation right here in Niagara.

Now, we have another opportunity to make smart

investments to support local industry and our cultural heritage.

We need to work together to ensure we protect the Shaw Festival's Royal George Theatre.

One of the Shaw's three main venues, the Royal George attracts more than 100,000 annual attendees, who bring over \$70 million annually in revenue to surrounding businesses.

However, it was built a century ago as a temporary building and its clay foundation has been dissolving for decades.

The Shaw has been mitigating this for years, but without a crucial investment from the provincial and federal governments, the Royal George will be forced to close at the end of 2024.

It's hard to overstate the importance of the Shaw and the Royal George to our community.

The Shaw Festival is the

second-largest theatre company in Canada and is one of the top 20 employers in the Niagara region, directly supporting over 2,500 jobs.

The Shaw is also the largest generator of economic impact of any arts and culture charity in Ontario, generating more than \$238 million in annual tourist spending.

The Shaw averages 800 to 900 performances a year, and 90 per cent of performance attendees cite the Shaw as their primary reason to visit.

They also attend many other activities during their multi-day stays, helping to support other crucial provincial industries, such as viticulture, restaurants and retail.

In fact, every \$1 spent at the Shaw generates about \$7 or more in additional spending in the local economy.

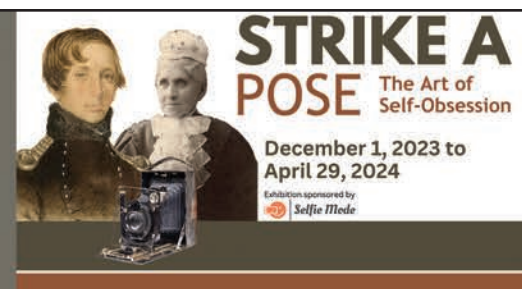
The Shaw has already made incredible fund-

raising efforts toward saving the Royal George — another example of the innovation and leadership shown by its executive director, Tim Jennings, and its senior leadership team, like how they kept 600 employees working full-time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But we need the provincial government to do its part to assist in revitalizing their Royal George.

And investing in the Royal George project will yield enormous benefits — including creating 850 new jobs in Niagara and an additional \$80 million in annual GDP.

Let's continue to work with all levels of government to make the right investment to protect the Royal George — supporting a key local industry in Niagara as well as an important element of our shared cultural heritage.



A concrete look at local governance



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall
Columnist

Looking at the letters to the editor published in the Lake Report during the last couple of months, it seems there is a rising tide of acrimony being voiced by Niagara-on-the-Lake's citizens and directed at the town council and staff.

Almost without exception, the letter writers state they are not against development that is appropriate and sympathetic to their neighbourhood, but then go on to challenge overtures that, clearly, did not embrace consideration of the neighbours or compatibility with the cultural heritage landscape (established buildings, streetscapes, green spaces, trees, etc.) of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Stated explicitly or by inference, many residents of this town ask why town staff and council do not appear to be respecting existing bylaws, the official plan and the position expressed by most voters.

And, this is a tide of opinion not limited just to Old Town but includes residents of Glendale, St. Davids, Queenston, Virgil and NOTL's rural environments.

To quote a recent letter to the editor ("Council steps up to vote down King St. condo," published Feb. 1, 2024), written by Bill French:

"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," the letter stated.



This infill development, largely spanning its lot and dwarfing the neighbouring homes in its height and massing, will dominate this section of the Victoria streetscape — something that could have been avoided had the neighbouring dwelling been designated, the urban design committee been consulted and a proper streetscape rendering been required. BRIAN MARSHALL

And, from another letter ("Kudos to council for rejecting King St. plan"), written by Erika Alexander in the same issue of this paper:

"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 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," the letter stated.

In considering this issue, let's deal with town council's and town staff's contexts separately.

Stuck between a rock and a hard place, here are some of the realities the town council is facing.

Sitting at the lowest rung of the Canadian government hierarchy, your local representative body is subject to the direction and legislative underwritten by the whims of the three upper tiers.

Niagara-on-the-Lake has two representatives out of a total of 32 seats (including the chair) on the regional council.

St. Catharines controls eight of the 32 seats, Niagara Falls occupies four seats, followed by Welland with three seats, while NOTL, Fort Erie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Pelham, Port

Colborne, Thorold and West Lincoln are apportioned two seats each, leaving the final seat to Wainfleet.

So, as two of 32 votes, NOTL's representatives have a very small voice.

Then, on a provincial level, our local MPP is a member of the New Democratic Party, sitting in opposition to the ruling Conservative government.

While MPP Wayne Gates appears to be a vocal and active voice in representing this riding, as a member of the opposition, he has little influence on the direction of the provincial government agenda.

Moving up to the federal level, our MP, Tony Baldinelli, is a member of the Conservative Party, the official opposition — no matter how strong his representation may be, has no direct voice in the government's policy.

Insofar as the upper tiers of government "power equation" are concerned, NOTL has little or no direct ability to affect government policy — leaving our local representatives to wallow in the murky depths of relationship influence.

Furthermore, the province has the power and authority to "deal with" lower-tier governments who do not align themselves with provincial policy — as the recent, not-too-subtle "exploration of amalgamation" message conveyed.

And, coming closer to home, let's understand the financial constrictions imposed by legislation on our town council.

Denied by law, the lowest tier of Ontario's governance cannot exceed spending more than their revenues — they have to live within their means.

It is my understanding that town council has budgeted \$500,000 for 2024 legal expenses.

While that may sound like a lot, using simple math at \$400 per hour, that's only 1,250 hours.

And, of course, this calculation does not consider the plethora of additional charges, which reduce that number of hours.

Moreover, this budget must cover all the town's legal expenses — not just those associated with planning issues.

On those issues, I'd posit that the budget may be sufficient to fund between four and six properly researched, prepared and presented cases before the Ontario Land Tribunal.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that town council should abandon the defence of heritage, the official plan, bylaws, the cultural landscape, et al.

In fact, my stance is they should do so rigorously.

However, given the foregoing, town council is obliged to pick its battles wisely.

Preferably, battles that can set precedents that may be used for future decision-making around development applications — without the need for expensive legal wrangling.

Moving on to the question of town staff.

I have written in this column about the challenges town staff face in dealing with the "shell game" played by the provincial government vis-à-vis changes to the Planning Act (see my columns, "The Greenbelt and the games governments play," Oct. 26, 2023, and "Democracy in development? Maybe for the few," Dec. 7, 2023) so I will not bore you by "chewing my cabbage" one more time.

Simply put, few or no lower-tier municipal governments have the staff or financial wherewithal to ensure that local bylaws continually conform to provincial legislation.

Unfortunately, this forces planning staff to rely principally on the Planning Act versus local bylaws — or even provisions in an official plan — wherein these criteria are not in accordance with overriding provincial legislation.

Nobody, including (I suspect) the members of the town planning department, likes it, but that is the real playing field.

That said, having read several hundred staff

reports to council and its advisory committees, I fail to understand why the planning staff generally do not include in their reports any analysis of non-conforming bylaws or official provisions versus Planning Act criteria on a risk/benefit basis.

Nor do I understand why the town does not require a standardized set of plans for a development (including measured streetscapes for infills) which are then, according to a standard operating procedure, forwarded to the various advisory committees and council for consideration.

Consider the 2022 case of the infill development at 323 Victoria St. in Old Town.

A municipal heritage committee review was bypassed because none of the neighbouring historic dwellings were designated.

The urban design committee was, apparently, not consulted due to the "minor" nature of the infill.

The committee of adjustment, while refusing two of the applied-for minor variances (a seven-metre-wide driveway and covered lanai) and expressing some concern over the massing of the proposed building, lacked any visual reference — which a proper streetscape would have provided — and granted the application to have 38 per cent lot coverage.

Finally, it seems that too much of the town's business affecting our cultural landscapes is conducted behind closed doors.

How difficult would it be to have a page on the town website that lists planning applications at the date of submission, including with each entry a live link to the application, its current status and notes regarding all discussions between the applicant and town planner?

I suspect most town folk would find this type of transparency infinitely preferable to the current, seemingly last-minute publication occurring after the planner has deemed the application "complete."

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





Ideology, religion and **horrible views**

Dear editor:
It is no coincidence that the negative views on Canada's rainbow coalition, and our very own version in Niagara, are uttered by a Catholic, ("NOTL Catholic trustee suspended for Nazi and Pride flag comparison," The Lake Report, Jan. 25).
Since the first public murder by the Catholic church in AD 385, the church has

sought to carry out "purification" of peoples all over the world.
The Nazis were an extension of this ideology and were supported by the Catholic church in the "extermination" of "undesirables."
The Catholic church actively participated in Second World War extermination camps in Croatia.

So good Catholics everywhere are presumably "obligated" to take a similar stance: let's get rid of all "undesirables."
That a school "trustee" goes public on such views is not only sad, it is utterly horrible: she should be prosecuted under Canada's hate laws.
Kaspar Pold
NOTL

McCarthyism and Catholic **trustee's connections**

Dear editor:
I was shocked upon reading the headline over a report of Natalia Benoit and her political troubles.
The headline, "Reports show Natalia Benoit had links to far right groups," appears to condone the questionable practice of determining "guilt by association," once a habit of U.S.

Senator Joe McCarthy.
All politicians who wish to understand the beliefs and policies of opponents must be allowed the freedom to fearlessly "link to" others with different viewpoints.
We should expect all our elected officials to continually seek information and ideas from all sides of the

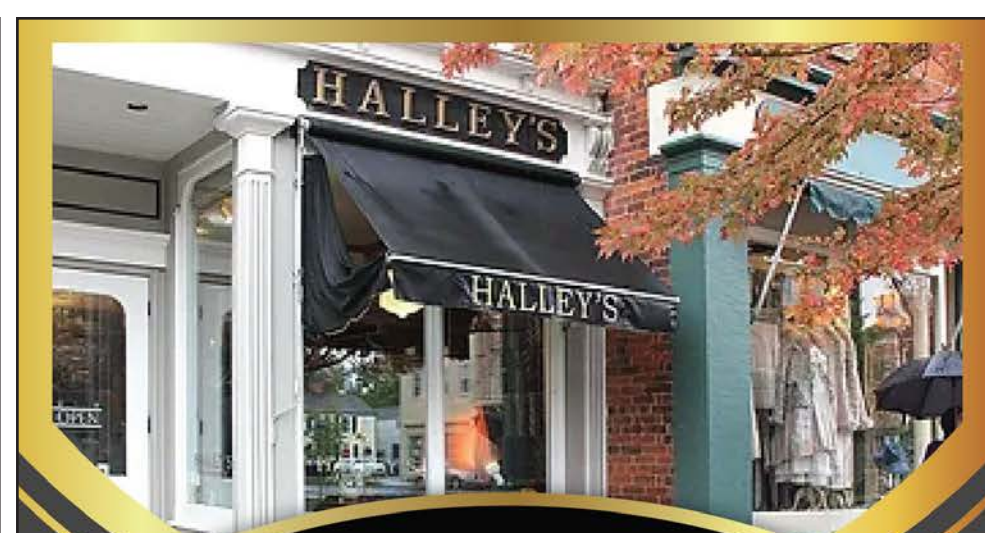
political spectrum, even the "far right."
I would expect we've learned, since the days of McCarthyism, that it's also OK for right-wing politicians to associate with socialists.
It's the only way to understand one another.
George Dunbar
Toronto

Story of house fire teaches us a valuable lesson

Dear editor:
I enjoyed reading about the community support provided to the Fish family after the loss of their home and the family dog, ("Community rallies to help after family's home destroyed by fire," The Lake Report, Feb. 8).
This story could have had a much worse ending, but there is a useful lesson to be taken from their ordeal

which may save others facing a similar disaster.
The article read in part, "Within seconds the house filled with smoke and toxic fumes. Startled by the cacophony of smoke alarms, the girls called 911 and immediately followed their well-rehearsed fire escape plan, smashing the screen of a second-storey bedroom, climbing out the window to safety."

Any escape plan should include the caveat to leave the premises immediately and call 911 after you have reached safety, often from a neighbour's house.
The few seconds it takes to call 911 and report the fire may make the difference between success and failure in escaping the fire.
Jim Dandy
Niagara Falls



To all of our friends,

Retirement is at hand, hastened by a health change. The time has come to wind down Halley's Fashion for Men.

We have had a wonderful run over the past ten years, serving customers across Canada and beyond from our Niagara-on-the-Lake and Kingston stores. I want to express my deep appreciation to all of those who have supported us.

A special thanks to staff who helped make everyone's shopping experience rewarding and made my job much easier.

Our clearance program gets underway February 1st and will run into the spring. We look forward to seeing many old and new friends as we offer significant sales opportunities across our product lineup.

Warm regards,

Peter Earle
Halley's Fashion for Men
57 Queen Street, NOTL
www.halleysfashion.com

RETIREMENT CLEARANCE SALE
HALLEY'S
Fashion for Men
905-468-5631

Have an opinion you want heard?
Send a letter to the editor to
editor@niagaranow.com

SUPPORT AWARD-WINNING JOURNALISM. DONATE TODAY.



Since 2020, The Lake Report has earned more national and provincial news awards than any other publication in Canada. Help support real, trusted journalism by making a donation of any size today. We recommend \$50/year, but welcome donations of all sizes. Every bit helps us keep bringing you meaningful news.



LIVE MUSIC FRIDAYS IN THE CLUBROOM
Don Sexsmith
Friday, February 16th
6 P.M.- 9 P.M.
ALL WELCOME- FOOD AND CASH BAR

Feb 23: Martin Murray
Mar 1: Julie & Mike
Mar 8: Derek Abell



FISH FRY EVERY THURSDAY

410 King St NOTL | 905 468 2353

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)

	CALS	
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)	890 940	\$11.99
4 WITH BACON (2) OR SAUSAGES (2) AND PANCAKES (2) no toast	800 850	\$12.99



©2023 Sunset Grill Restaurants. All rights reserved.



Terry-he and Terry-she MacTaggart. JULIA SACCO

NOTL couples' meet-cute moments

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Love is everywhere you go in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Valentine's Day is certainly no exception.

For the year's most romantic holiday, The Lake Report reached out to some of NOTL's most familiar couples to share their love stories with our readers.

Tammy and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa

They were 20 and 21, working through a university summer employment program when Gary and Tammy Zalepa first met. "That was the summer of 1990," Gary Zalepa told The Lake Report.

He added that they were friends first, hanging out with the people working at the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge.

"And then six months later, we started dating," Gary said.

The couple really bonded after a memorable first date.

"We're Star Trek geeks, so we went to see '(The) Undiscovered Country,' 'Star Trek IV' to be exact," Gary said.

Beforehand, they got dinner, too.

"I can't remember where though, because the movie was much more important," Gary laughed.

"And 33 years later, here we are," Tammy said.

The Zalepas are planning a quiet evening this Valentine's Day, but suggest plenty of places around town for a romantic dinner. "I really like the Charles Inn, I would recommend it there. Garrison House is great too," they said.

Dorothy Soo-Wiens and Councillor Erwin Wiens

Before getting married in 1991, Dorothy Soo-Wiens and Erwin Wiens made their relationship work long-distance before the convenience of cell phones and the internet.

"We met at Carleton University," Soo-Wiens said. "I was in my third year and Erwin was in first year. I was the don on the girls' floor and he was a first-year on the boys' floor. Our floors were sister-brother floors."

After knowing each other for around a year, Wiens took Soo-Wiens out to a fancy dinner at Hy's Steakhouse in Ottawa.

"I remember it felt kind of awkward at first," Soo-Wiens laughed. "We were university students at this fancy restaurant in a nice dress and heels but we were taking the bus."

After Dorothy graduated, she went home to Alberta, followed by a summer of missions work.

So, a string of long-distance communication started for the better part of four years before they got married.

"I did missions work in Hong Kong, Macau and China, doing missions work all summer and when I got back to my home base I had mail from him," Soo-Wiens recalled.

"It was all mail back then – and landline," Wiens added.

Their relationship remained strong over the distance, for a reason Dorothy learned only a few years into their marriage.

"I had said to (my roommate), that when I got to know her that one day I would marry her," Wiens recalled.

"I only learned that a year or so after we were married," said Soo-Wiens.

After being married now for nearly 33 years and welcoming four daughters, Wiens and Soo-Wiens are a power couple of NOTL.

And it was all thanks to Wiens's ability to make Soo-Wiens laugh from the start, she said.

Terry-he and Terry-she MacTaggart

Terry and Terry MacTaggart, or "the Terrys," or "Terry-he" and "Terry-she" as they are lovingly known around town, met in a rather unconventional way.

"I got a job at the Canadian National Exhibition at the midway, so I became a carnny for two weeks," Terry-he said.

While manning the nickel pitch stand, Terry-she was working at the Queen Elizabeth building nearby.

"It was a nice building, air-conditioned with nice uniforms and hostesses and all that," Terry-she said.

"I found a guy working on the CNE midway needed three kinds of women: you need somebody who could feed you food, you need somebody who could feed you drink and you need somebody who could get your air-conditioned," he joked.

The two got to know each other and eventually, Terry-he was going away for the weekend.

"I needed a date," he said.

And to Terry-she's surprise, her dad approved of Terry-he and allowed her to go away for the weekend with him and a few friends.

Now in their 58th year of marriage, the MacTaggarts spent their big 50th in an extraordinary way at the CNE.

A friend of theirs was retiring from working the exhibition and organized a special anniversary celebration.

"We had our own float in the parade with our family, kids and grandkids, nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles. We had a whole float and we were treated like royalty the whole day," Terry-she said.

Almost 60 years into their marriage, the Terrys are still celebrating Valentine's Day: this year, it'll be at the Performing Arts Centre along with a dinner with friends.



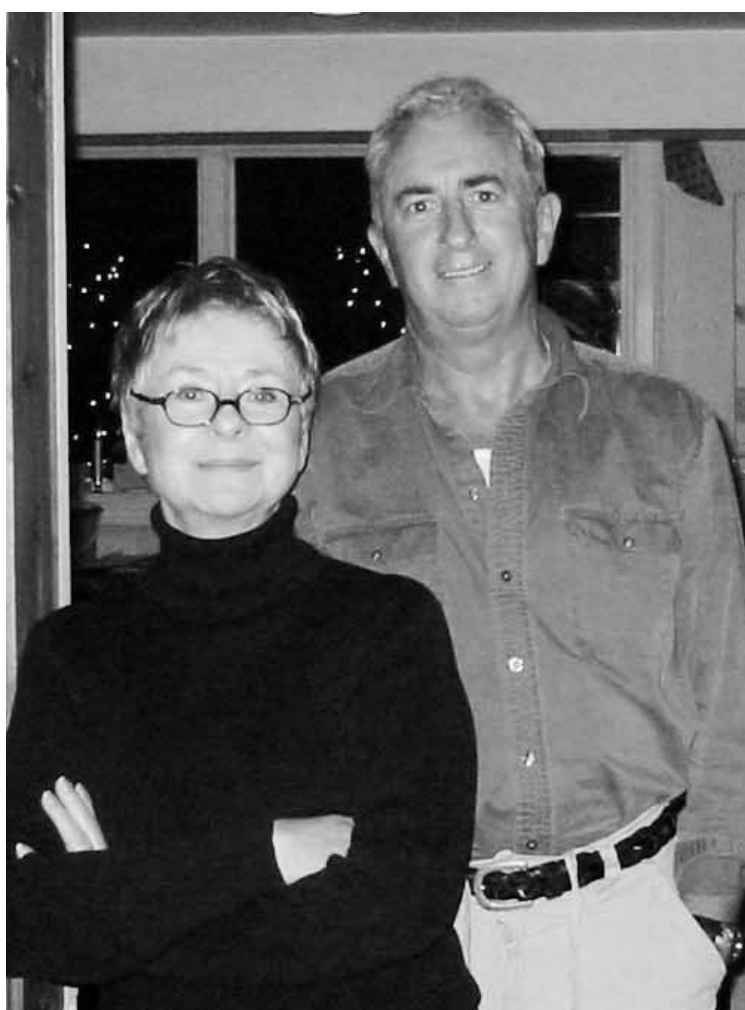
In partnership with The Lake Report, presents ...

THE LOVE REPORT

Vol. 1, Issue 1

Canada's most romantic newspaper insert

February 15, 2024



Left: Terry and Donna Belleville in their Niagara-on-the-Lake home. Right: The Bellevilles in 1972 as Hector and Andromache in a production of "Tiger at the Gates" by Jean Giraudoux. The couple, and their characters, were both pregnant at the time. SUPPLIED

Terry and Donna Belleville: Lovers on and off stage

Staff
The Lake Report

The year was 1972, at Playhouse 66, a small theatre in Scarborough.

The play was "Tiger at the Gates" by Jean Giraudoux.

In the story, a Trojan prince named Hector – played by Terry – has just returned from the wars only to discover that Andromache – played by Donna – was with child.

What the audience didn't know is that Donna, the actress, was at almost exactly the same stage in her pregnancy with Jason (Terry and Donna's first child).

The two had been in a relationship for about eight months: "Clearly, a little longer than the

rehearsal period," said Terry.

Then, they both lived in Toronto. Donna was from a town in the Finger Lakes region of New York and Terry was from Melbourne, Australia.

The couple moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1975, when Terry took a job with the Shaw Festival.

"I came to work in administration at Shaw," said Terry. "I joined to assist Judith Hendry, the director of publicity and public relations. I eventually took over the role when Judith left the festival. Donna joined the Acting Company."

Fast-forward to 1976, Terry and Donna would be married on June 11 at Grace United Church on Victoria Street.

Minus some years in Calgary

in the '80s, Terry and Donna have lived in NOTL ever since, with Donna being a regular on the Shaw Festival playbill from 1999 to 2017.

The two also shared the stage other times.

"We acted together a lot," said Terry. "Our plays include Georges Feydeau's 'A Flea in Her Ear,' 'The Lion in Winter,' 'Oh! What a Lovely War,' 'I Never Sang for my Father,' 'Private Lives,' 'The Hollow,' and 'Beyond Reasonable Doubt.'"

None of these were at Shaw, but at other theatres in Toronto and Calgary.

The couple has two sons, Jason and Ryan, and four grandchildren.

Jason was born in Toronto and Ryan here in town.

"Jason is the oldest and the tallest. He is a very successful writer in Hollywood. He currently lives in Los Angeles. He is married, and he and Carla have two sons, Leland and Campbell," Terry said.

"Ryan has made a mark in the comedy world in Canada," he continued. "He is perhaps best known as Lionel, one of the leads in the CBC series 'Workin' Moms.' He has been doing live stand-up at major venues across Canada."

The Canadian government also flies Ryan to locations around the world so that he can entertain the Canadian troops abroad.

Ryan lives in Santa Clarita, Calif., with his wife, Jenn. They have two children, a son, Wilder, and a daughter, Poppy.

LOVE LETTERS



Across the country for love

Leah DeFaria and Alessandro Barreca

“We met working at Target together (when it was in Canada).

One night we went out for our first/last hangout before he moved to Alberta.

From that night forward we spent a lot of time texting and FaceTiming each other.

A couple of months after he moved to Alberta, he asked me to be his girlfriend and move in together.

I packed up my things and moved to Alberta – and the rest is history.

We both originally lived in Hamilton. We lived in Alberta for about five years before moving back to Ontario in 2018.

In 2020, we bought our house in Niagara-on-the-Lake and we now have three dogs and are happily married.

This year will be our 10-year anniversary together and our one-year anniversary married!

Finding love after a tragic loss

Sonia and Paulo Polonio

In 2007, upon returning from a vacation in the Bahamas, I buried my husband of 10 years on my 32nd birthday.

I spent the next six years keeping myself busy with work and trying to rebuild my life.

I sold everything, including the matrimonial home in the suburbs and even the children’s books I was collecting for our little family that would never be.

Over time, I found the courage to date again. But after several years of failed attempts to find my prince in a sea of internet toads, I was ready to give up and accept that it wasn’t meant to be.

Until one night, I reluctantly opened a message and intuitively knew there was something special about Paulo, the man in the photo smiling back at me.

After four years of on-and-off-again dating, Paulo finally broke up with me when I half-jokingly suggested to him that we should sell everything and

move to Niagara-on-the-Lake or Thailand.

Instead of moving forward with Paulo, I sold my condo in the city and bought a small home where my aging father would live with me.

Over the next three years, my father quickly became my best friend.

I enjoyed watching him cut our lawn, having barbecue dinners together and even doing day trips to NOTL.

Paulo and I became just friends and I saw him on a regular basis. I even got dating advice from him.

But the solace I found in my new life quickly ended the day I learned my best friend, my father, was dying of terminal cancer.

It took only six months before the cancer finally took him on Feb. 10, the same day as my husband’s birthday.

During those six months, as I was struggling to be my father’s caregiver, Paulo became my guardian angel.

Among other things, he would show up in the middle of the night, and without my knowledge, shovel my driveway so that I

would have one less thing to worry about.

It was only after the third snowfall that it dawned on me how my car escaped the snow when all the other cars around me were buried in it.

It was at that same moment, I realized that Paulo was true-blue and that I would marry him – that is, if he still wanted me.

After my dad’s memorial, I casually asked Paulo why, after we broke up, he never dated other women?

He said it was because once he started to date other women, he knew we would never get back together.

Then, I asked if he thought we should get married, to which he responded yes.

So, on March 24, 2016, we eloped to NOTL and got married at the Living Water Wayside Chapel on the Parkway.

We spent that weekend at a B&B, followed by a honeymoon in Antigua.

In July 2022, six years later, we came back to that B&B and bought it, and have since made NOTL our forever home.

Four decades of the time of our lives

Sharon and Bob Woodley

“We began as coworkers, became friends, dated (long-distance), fell in love and 45 years of married life later, we think Bill Medley and Jennifer Warnes summed it up best (from the “Dirty Dancing” soundtrack) when they sang:

“Cause I’ve had the time of my life ... And I owe it all to you.”



A bit of platonic love and appreciation

Ross Robinson and his friend Mary Lou

Love can be described as a strong positive feeling toward someone or something.

To that end, I can happily say that I love Mary Lou Turner. She is a joy to behold — and a joy to be held by.

For several Friday evenings last summer, ML and I would challenge two other local players to a tennis match.

She only started to play tennis about five years ago, but is a natural athlete, with great hand-eye co-ordination. She grew up with several brothers. We would bring wine and snacks and she supplied good music and a small speaker.

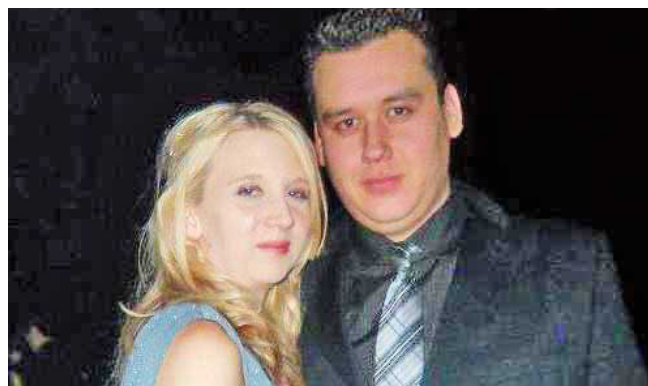
The evening would be pleasant, with the sun going down. Lots of good shots, lots of bad shots, dancing to the music and enjoying the food and beverages.

Always a joy, with only positive vibes and comments.

I love Mary Lou Turner. A NOTL jewel.



LOVE LETTERS



A botched proposal, but we're madly in love

Kate Polchak and Joe McQueen

My name is Kate Polchak. I first met my partner Joe McQueen back in 2005 through a mutual friend.

We both were dating other people, but we all became friends. We started running into each other randomly at the Pen Centre and stayed connected through MySpace.

When our other relationships didn't work out, Joe and I started hanging out casually until, one day, I had enough and told him to just make me his girlfriend already.

Immediately, he officially asked me out. We became high school "sweethearts." During our relationship, it became more and more apparent to us both that it was fate.

I grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake – him, in St. Catharines. However, his grandparents lived on Prideaux Street, so he spent every summer in NOTL.

He played hockey for Merritton, one of NOTL's biggest hockey rivals. He also went to every Easter Egg hunt in Simcoe Park. It was obvious that our paths had crossed more than once over the years. The biggest past connection we have stems from a farm dog. I used to babysit for the Grant family. One day, they adopted a dog named Nellie from a farmer friend. It turns out, Joe actually spent a lot of time on that farm and even met and knew Nellie!

The farmer, Allistar, was a long-time friend of his grandparents. In the summers, they'd send Joe to help Allistar on his farm. He even had an opportunity to adopt Nellie or one of the other puppies, but his dad said no.

Fast-forward to 2018: we'd been together for 12 years.

We knew we'd be together forever, but I never pressured for a ring or wedding. Those things were just not a priority to me. On June 12, we went down to Olde Time Candy Shoppe to pick up my mom from work.

It was beautiful and we were early, so Joe suggested we go walk down by the gazebo and the water since it's so nice.

We get to the rocks and sit down. He gives me one of those surprise candy bags – because I'm a kid at heart and still love them. I open it and pull out a ring pop, my favourite. And it's a mystery flavour.

Normally, anything ring-shaped, I immediately put it on my finger. But since we were outside, I didn't want to open it yet. Joe kept on me though, open it. "What's the mystery flavour?? You should open it." But I refused!

We started walking back to the store and Joe said, "Let's walk up Prideaux and see the work they've done at my grandparents' old house." They had passed away a couple of years prior and the house was sold and turned into a B&B.

So, we walked up. He distracted me enough so when I turned around, he had a ring in his hand and was on one knee proposing. Of course, I said yes, we had our moment and headed back to my mom's store – where she and her employees were waiting with champagne for us.

While telling them the story, Joe proceeded to tell me how I ruined the proposal as he planned to swap out the ring pop with my diamond ring when I opened it.

I would guess the flavour and he would say, well, if you don't like it, I guess you can have this ring instead ... which would have been adorable. But no, I just have to do things my way and, ultimately, ruined my own marriage proposal.

I honestly love this story and I wouldn't change a single thing that happened. It perfectly explains us as a couple. Awkward, yet completely unbothered and blindly in love with each other.

Warmest regards and Happy Valentine's Day!



Young Lois, who worked as a stewardess for Wardair. Right: A young Bob "Butch" Denyer, who was an officer in the Canadian Armed Forces. Denyer kept a diary before his untimely death in 1974, filled with entries about his love for Lois — something he never professed. The journal entries about Lois were recently discovered by his sister. SUPPLIED

Love is well worth the risk

Ruth Denyer
Special to The Lake Report

My oldest brother Bob (a.k.a. Butch) died in a gliding accident when he was 25 in 1974.

Recently, a childhood friend of his contacted my sister. Lois used to live next door to us in Toronto and even though her family moved to B.C. when she was a teenager, our families remained close.

While my tall and handsome brother became an officer in the Canadian Armed Forces, Lois worked as a stewardess for Ward Air — I remember her as impossibly beautiful, glamorous and so much fun to be with.

In later years, Lois heard from my mother that Butch

had written some entries about her in the journals he kept from 1968 to 1974.

By the time she contacted my sister, she was a woman in her late sixties and was curious as to what had been written.

Since I was in possession of his effects, I pulled out his journals one February evening and started reading. So heartbreaking.

Butch was absolutely in love with Lois and never got the chance to tell her.

In one of his final entries, he writes about getting a flight to Europe, where Lois was stationed at the time, not to see the cathedrals or monuments, but to find her and ask her to marry him.

However, something else took precedent — he loved

to fly his glider, lived to fly as a matter of fact, and he was scheduled to participate in a gliding event in Alberta.

Unfortunately, he died during an emergency landing of the craft he was piloting during the competition and was killed instantly.

With tears in my eyes, I photocopied the journal entries and mailed them to Lois.

She received them in time for Valentine's Day, a long overdue Valentine from Butch to Lois.

She sent my sister and me an email saying that once she stopped crying, she couldn't stop smiling.

The moral of the story? If there is someone in your life whom you love, take them in your arms and tell

them how much they mean to you.

If you're in a new relationship, wear your heart on your sleeve and risk telling the person how they make you feel and how happy you are to be with them.

If you're by yourself, please know that love may happen to you anytime, anywhere — keep the faith and let your heart be open to receiving.

And if you've suffered from a broken heart, I can assure you that the nice thing about hearts is that they mend and seem to get stronger at those broken places.

I truly believe that to put yourself out there and love (or love again) is well worth the risk.

Do you believe in life after love?

Danielle Gault and Harold (Hal) Watson

Love: as King Charles said, what is love?

If you have great love, you feel happy, and uplifted, enjoy life more because you have a love.

I have had three main loves in my life. My first husband, David, died in a car accident in 1973, when I was 27. My second husband, Bill, died from cancer in 2018.

At that time I went on a pilgrimage on the Camino, which I wrote about (and was published in The Lake Report: "Buen Camino: Memories from a deeply personal pilgrimage," Nov. 17, 2022).

My third love, Hal, has been a great blessing to me.

He is optimistic, fun to be with, interested in many things, and he makes me happy. We go on cruises, play euchre weekly, have some great friends, enjoy our families, and make an effort to stay healthy with diet, exercise and involvement with others. We found each other through Match, an online dating website. We both hit "Like" even though I said I'd not go out with a divorced person, and he said he wouldn't date any more than 10 kilometres away — I was 50 kilometres away.

We both just liked each other and started to date. I knew I didn't want to be alone. I was a two-time widow and Hal was a two-time divorcee, so we met up and just clicked. He picked me up at my car service dealer and took me to his place against my daughter's wishes as she said, "Mom, you don't know this guy."

But it all worked out: he fixed me chicken wings, which I didn't like, and when COVID hit, he came to my place and said, "Can I move in?" Thanks to COVID, we joined forces and eventually bought a townhouse together in St. Davids and well, that was five years ago. We are in love and love our life together.



LOVE LETTERS

Love blossomed for two kindred spirits in long-term care

Blake LeBlanc & Lorraine Brown-Shaw

She was a Ridgeway girl and he was a Port Dalhousie boy, who found themselves in rooms 1113 and 1109 during the pandemic.

Lorraine was a spirited, spunky senior whose cheery room decor mirrored her festival sense of fashion.

Blake was a charmingly funny old hippie whose room quickly filled with Lorraine's thrift store gifts of bric-a-brac.

They ate breakfast, lunch and dinner at a little table for two, his stroke on his right and hers on her left,

sharing tales from their earlier lives that made them curious how they'd ever met.

He drove a motorized chair around the elder village while she held on from a belt that dangled behind while he pulled her in tow.

"Where's the Blake-Lorraine train?" their visitors often wanted to know.

She held on while he zoomed across the property, taking a romantic getaway among the parking lot pines to sneak a private smooch.

They were busted countless times breaking out of lockdown to meet in this spot like clockwork for their "secret" rendezvous.

When restrictions were lifted, they adventured around the Niagara peninsula on many trips from long-term care: to the casino to try their luck, to Betty's for pie or to the Butterfly Conservatory for their favourite kind of escape getaway.

As she slowed down this winter and critical illness set in, he made trips to the hospital to cheer her. "Yay!" she'd say as he pulled back the curtain.

Lorraine celebrated her 76th birthday this past Feb. 1 with a pink-frosted cherry cake and a little gold, heart-shaped tchotchke pendant from Blake.

When she returned to the home to receive palliative care in her room full of decorative butterflies, he visited often to offer companionship and kiss her hand softly.

Lorraine made her crossing in the night on the Lunar New Year and he quietly held her hand until her last hour.

The sun came up beaming soon after and Blake was soothed in his mourning to see the birds and little forest creatures joyfully about their secret spot, while Lorraine's spirit soared like a butterfly.



START YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH A SOLID FOUNDATION



SCOTT
CONSTRUCTION NIAGARA INC

5233 STANLEY AVE., UNIT 5, NIAGARA FALLS
MAIL@SCOTTCONSTRUCTION.CA | WWW.SCOTTCONSTRUCTION.CA



King St. Gallery

Say I love you with flowers that last a lifetime

CHARITY EVENT FEB 2024

the IRISH HARP pub



Heart & Stroke Month

Just Ask Your Server To "ADD A TOONIE TO MY TAB" If You Wish To Donate
FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: THEIRISHHARPPUB.COM



Don't forget to spoil your true loves — YOUR PETS!!!

(Message cordially approved by DaBoss and Catsby)

pet valu your pet • your store

1630 Niagara Stone Rd., Virgil
905-468-9555

WE ARE PHARMILY!

Happy Valentine's Day, and have a healthy Family Day weekend!



STONE ROAD Pharmacy
Caring beyond the prescription



\$1 DRINKS

Get yourself a coffee, tea or espresso for just \$1 with the purchase of one of our pastries. Available at all locations every day until noon!

GELATODICARLOTTA.COM | 59 QUEEN ST. OPEN DAILY





Bonnie Kilroe brings "Country Queens" to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Legion Branch 124 in March. Her one-woman show highlights songs from country music legends, featuring live vocals and elaborate costumes. SUPPLIED

One woman brings **country divas** to Legion

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

If you're at the Royal Canadian Legion branch 124 on March 9, you'll have the chance to see Patsy Cline, Reba McEntire and Dolly Parton all in one room.

Vancouver's Bonnie Kilroe has performed her one-woman comedy shows across the world for the last 24 years but has yet to perform in Ontario – until now.

She'll be bringing her show "Country Queens" to the Legion, a musical tribute to the brightest stars in country music, featuring impersonation performances of classic

artists like Loretta Lynn, to today's icons like Shania Twain.

As luck would have it, Kilroe decided to plan her trip to the province because of a good deal she saw online.

"I got an email from Air Canada saying there was 30 per cent off flights and I thought, 'I'd like to go to Ontario,'" Kilroe told The Lake Report.

She booked her flights before any shows were even planned, she said, so she sought out venues and branch 124 agreed to host the "Country Queens" show.

Kilroe herself never expected to become a

travelling one-woman act, but her love of music and theatrics, along with a flare for comedy led her down a unique path.

"I grew up in a heavy country music family," she said. "All my relatives played an instrument and everybody loved country music."

Kilroe played the guitar and the fiddle growing up and in her late teens discovered her ability to sing.

"I remember using a cassette tape back in the mid-80s and wearing out a tape," she said.

Kilroe not only sings all the songs in her show, she dons full costumes and wigs

– and changes her look for each country diva.

There has been some confusion around the nature of her show – some have thought she was a drag queen, she joked.

"Every show I ask the audience, 'Who thought this was a drag show?' and the crowd yells, 'I did!'" Kilroe said.

"I joke and say, 'I'm sorry to disappoint!'"

Those interested in experiencing "Country Queens" can purchase tickets on Bonnie's website at celebrity-imposters.com or buy one at the door on March 9 for \$35.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



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

It won Best Rock Album and Album of the Year Grammys in 1996 and featured the Best Rock Song "You Oughta Know."

Last issue:

Category: 10, 11 & 12-LETTER WORDS

Clue: Knock knock--who's there? It's this noisy type of ghost.

Answer: What is a poltergeist?

Answered first by: Daniel Smith

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Bill Hamilton, Susan Hamilton, Bob Wheatley, Lynda Collet, Claudia Grimwood, Jane Morris, Sylvia Wiens, Jim Dandy, Susan Dear, Wade Durling, Nancy Rocca, Sheila Meloche, Mike Gander, Howard Jones, Catherine Clarke, Marla Percy, David Spencer, Trish Gander

*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.theirishharpclub.com

CAUGHILL UTO MOTIVE

NAPA

BRAKE SERVICE
\$49.95
(PARTS EXTRA)

QUALITY SERVICE
FAST EFFICIENT RELIABLE
905-687-9456



256 EAST & WEST LINE, NOTL

Warren

RENOVATIONS
905.468.2127
PLUMBING, HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING

J&S Performance

SALES & SERVICE

HUSTLER



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

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**

Create Experience Connect
at the art hub of the community
In-studio & Online Classes & Workshops



Learn more: niagarapumphouse.ca/programs
office@niagarapumphouse.ca | 905.468.5455
247 Ricardo Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

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

Willow Cakes' patissier to be judge in **Chocolate Masters** contest

Staff
The Lake Report

Catherine O'Donnell counts herself among the millions of people in the world who love chocolate. This May, however, she'll have the opportunity to sample and judge some of the best sweet treats in the continent at the World Chocolate Masters competition in Montreal.

For O'Donnell, owner of Willow Cakes and Pastries on Niagara Stone Road and co-ordinator of Niagara College's baking and pastry arts program, her selection as a jury member for this annual competition was a genuine surprise.

"It's a dream come true," said O'Donnell, who enjoys both eating and working with chocolate.

"I watch the World Chocolate Masters every year but, when I decided to become a judge, I didn't think that was even in the equation for someone like me."

O'Donnell will be headed to the Chocolate Academy in La Metropole to participate as a juror in the North American preselection



NOTL pastry chef Catherine O'Donnell will be headed to Montreal in May to judge the North American section of the Chocolate Masters competition. SUPPLIED

for the World Chocolate Masters.

The jury for North America's selection consists of leaders in the industry. These experts will review, taste and assess all creations.

She was chosen as one of five jurors – and the only woman – on the panel.

"Catherine O'Donnell's selection as a judge signifies

our commitment to diversity and excellence in the culinary world. As the only female chef on the panel, Catherine brings a unique perspective and expertise that enriches the evaluation process," said Laurence Torcherie, Chocolate Academy project co-ordinator for the Montreal competition.

"(O'Donnell) embodies unparalleled dedication,

with a career coaching and judging top pastry chefs worldwide," Torcherie added.

National selections for the World Chocolate Masters for Canada and the United States will take place from May 29 to 30 in Montreal ahead of the world final in 2025.

O'Donnell has been teaching at Niagara College since 2015 – along with being a program co-ordinator in the baking and pastry arts program, she is currently a professor.

She's also a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident most widely known as the face of Willow Cakes and Pastries, where she creates wedding cakes, as well as desserts for some of the area's finest restaurants and offers a selection of unique breads, cakes and pastries.

O'Donnell also oversees the creation of the cake for NOTL's Canada Day celebrations, where long lines of sweet teeth can be seen along Queen Street as the cake makes its way to Simcoe Park accompanied by the Fort George Fife and Drum Corps.

She has worked as a

pastry chef in Toronto for Oliver & Bonacini, the King Edward Hotel and in Niagara for Vintage Hotels, Hillebrand's Vineyard Café and Peller Estates Winery Restaurant.

Two years ago, she was one of five chefs inducted into the Canadian Culinary Federation Honour Society during the organization's national conference in Saskatoon.

In 2016, O'Donnell was part of the coaching crew behind Junior Culinary Team Canada, which captured gold and silver medals at the Culinary Olympics in Erfurt, Germany. She also coached the senior team.

Later, she earned the title of certified international judge from the World Association of Chefs' Societies, recognizing her as a senior-level culinary professional with advanced judging experience.

Despite her accomplishments, O'Donnell doesn't consider herself to be among the world's elite pastry chefs.

Even with a successful career spanning more than 40 years, she has seen how both women and pastry

chefs can be overlooked in the culinary industry.

"Nobody ever knows the pastry chef at a restaurant, male or female," she said. "But behind every great chef is a great pastry chef."

O'Donnell is writing a book that sheds light on the life of a pastry chef.

"People don't realize how hard we work. Every holiday," she said. "They don't see what we sacrifice and what our kids sacrifice."

Today, O'Donnell is as passionate about teaching as she is about baking and the pastry arts.

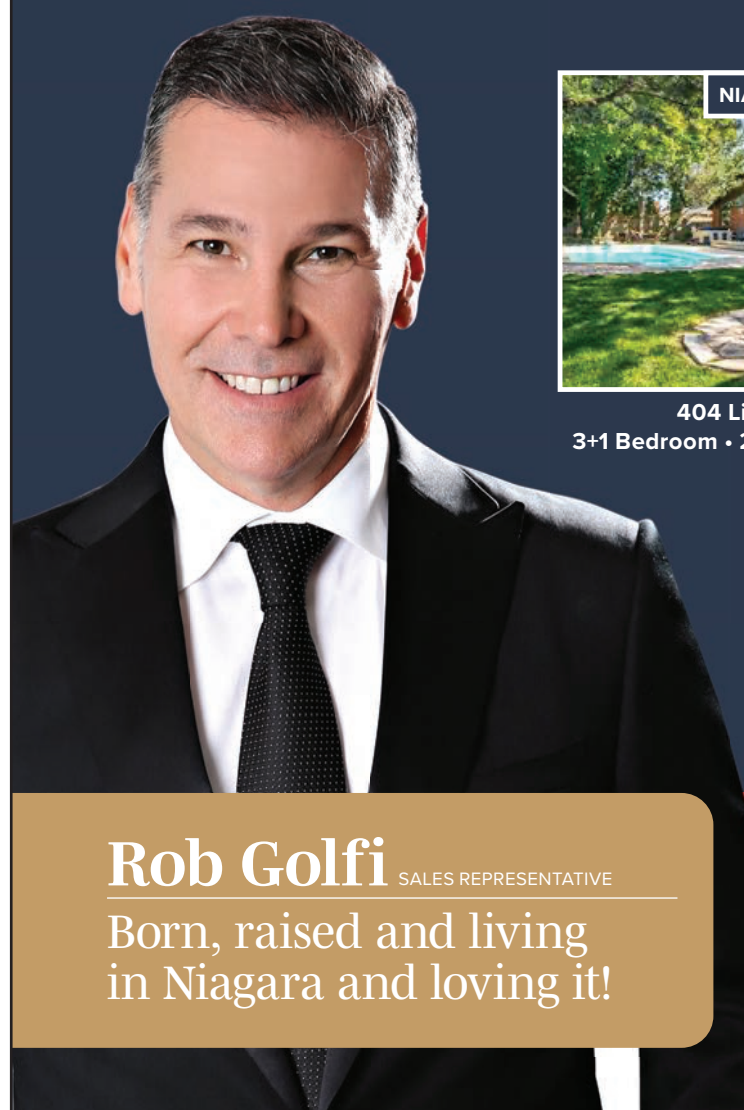
"You get to teach somebody what you love to and make a difference in their lives," she said. "It doesn't get better than that."

Craig Youdale, Niagara College's dean of culinary, tourism and beverage studies division, said O'Donnell's appointment as an international competition judge speaks to the quality of faculty at the school.

"Chef Catherine has dedicated a lot of time and effort to become a top-level international judge and it's exciting she can share her expertise with future chocolate champions," he said.

Call the brand that gets your home

NOTICED!



Rob Golfi SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Born, raised and living in Niagara and loving it!



404 Line 2 Road
3+1 Bedroom • 2 Bath • \$1,295,900



6A Circle Street
3+1 Bedroom • 4 Bath • \$1,398,900



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!

FREE HOME EVALUATION!



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

GOLFI®

TEAM

*Rob Golfi, Sales Representative. **Based on unit sales and \$ volume of closed transactions in RAHB Jan 1, 2020 - Dec 31, 2021. ***Source: Google Trends and Google Reviews †Source: RE/MAX LLC rankings for Large Team Residential, 2022. ††Source: REDATUM Agents by units – listing and selling combined performance in TRREB Jan 1 - June 30, 2022. RE/MAX Escarpment Golf Realty Inc., Brokerage, Independently owned and operated.

NOTL artist leads expedition of a lifetime to Norway

Continued from Front Page

wedding planner and said that if this was something I wanted to pursue, she would support me.”

He has been painting and pursuing wildlife photography professionally ever since.

The owner of Edward Spera Gallery on Queen Street, Spera has captured thousands of wildlife images from his own reference photos onto a canvas.

“Everything that I create is 100 per cent from the wild, something I’ve seen, with no exception,” he said.

He has interacted with wildlife around the globe, including Africa, India, South America and North America.

When it comes to his favourite animal encounters, one creature takes the win from the artist’s perspective.

“If I could only see one animal over and over again for the rest of my life it would probably be a tiger,” Spera said.

“I’ve seen one more than 20 times now and still, every time I see one in the wild it’s pretty amazing.”

His favourite animal in general, though, is the polar bear.

“They are only in extreme locations and that’s why a trip like this is so special,” Spera said.

After having been all over the world to capture the beauty of wildlife, Spera has partnered with Quark Expeditions to offer a unique travel experience for those wanting to get in touch with nature.

Quark approached Spera to host the expedition in September and by November confirmed the location in Svalbard, Norway.

This may be Spera’s first time partnering with Quark, but he is no stranger to leading an expedition, gathering years of expertise.

“We’ve led clients on journeys to Africa, Kenya specifically, so this is definitely not the first time and won’t be our last,” he said.

This also isn’t Spera’s first time in Arctic conditions, having spent two weeks in Nunavut with 10 to 12-hour days out on the ice.

On snowmobiles, Spera followed many of the animals he hopes to come



Edward Spera discovered his love of wildlife art and photography after painting an image of a wolf from memory. He’s leading an expedition to the Norwegian Arctic. JULIA SACCO

into contact with while in Norway.

He said that while he stayed in an abandoned RCMP cabin from the 1920s, Quark will provide a far more luxurious cruise.

During the expedition to Svalbard, guests will come up close and personal with polar bears, whales, seals,

Arctic foxes and more.

“We’ll be focusing on all the big iconic Arctic species, polar bears, walrus, 12 different types of whales, including narwhals and caribou,” he said.

They’ll use zodiac boats to go searching for those “iconic species.”

While on board the cruise

to Svalbard, Spera will create field studies for attendees, something hosts usually don’t provide.

“During the 14 days I’ll be creating on board and giving a few presentations,” he said.

Spera has been to Norway before to capture images of killer whales: “They are

always exciting trips.”

He has not been on many cruises for excursions before, but Quark Expeditions are much different, he said.

“This is not your typical cruise, this is an adventure expedition,” he said. “It’s very active and the weather will dictate where we go and how long we stay in certain areas.

“This is a top-notch, qualified ship to be up in that area as well.”

He is familiar with all of the main types of cameras including Canon, Nikon and even iPhones and will help guests with framing and composition and guide with creative creations afterward.

“I’m not going to be locked away in my cabin. I’ll be out in open areas so people can be looking over my shoulder while I work,” he said.

Those who book the Norway expedition before Feb. 28 will be eligible for a discount. After that, prices will increase 25 per cent.

More information is available at 289-895-7638 or sweatherill@expediacruzises.com

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



FARM-A-LICIOUS | THREE COURSE MENU

February & March • Sunday – Thursday | \$40 for Lunch • \$70 for Dinner per Guest

*Plus taxes and gratuities
*Excluding Valentines Day

Two losses make for **tough weekend** for Niagara Predators

Kevan Dowd
The Lake Report

Finishing last weekend with just three out of a possible six points may not have been their goal, but the Jr. A Niagara Predators say they are feeling a lot of confidence going into their final game of the regular season and first round of the playoffs.

After starting the weekend with a tough 1-0 loss to the St. George Ravens on Friday, the Predators rebounded Saturday to best the Tottenham Railers 3-2, only to lose to the Ravens again 2-1 in a shootout Sunday.

Though a full six points would have helped elevate his team in the final standings of the Greater Metro Hockey League's south division, Predators head coach Kevin Taylor is not wholly disappointed in how things played out.

"It was a very successful weekend. Sunday we only had 11 forwards and four



Niagara Predators players try in vain to get the puck past St. George Ravens goaltender Justin Sheets. The Preds lost 1-0. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

defence and they played with so much tenacity, so much grit, so I was really satisfied with how they did," he said.

"Even when we got the two points on Saturday,

the team didn't play like they did on Friday and then being short on Sunday, I wasn't expecting what happened and we played great."

Despite putting 34 shots on net, the Predators could

not manage any goals Friday, compared to one on 31 shots by St. George.

Predator Isaac Locker started things off Saturday with a goal 17 minutes in. Nolan Wyers followed

up at the second period's 14:33 mark, with Tottenham answering back not long after.

The Railers tied things up with five minutes left in regulation, forcing overtime and then a shootout. Declan Fogarty netted the essential final point for the Predators.

Closing out the weekend Sunday, Nicholas Nicoletti put the Predators out front after 13 minutes and they held the lead until midway through the game when the Ravens tied things up. With no scoring in the last two periods or extra time, the Ravens finished things off in a shootout.

Niagara has one regular season game left this Friday against the first-place North York Renegades but regardless of the outcome, they will can't move any higher in the standings. They are already slated to play the third-place Durham Roadrunners in the first round of the playoffs.

"It looks like we're going

to finish sixth, which is somewhat disappointing," said Taylor. "I think the matchup with Durham is going to be good and the boys are excited to play Durham. We played Sunday like we're going to play in the playoffs."

He thinks Friday's match with North York is good preparation for the playoffs.

"If we get past Durham, we will probably be playing North York, since we'll be the lowest seed, unless there's a big upset somewhere," said Taylor.

"Friday is going to be a good test for us to see how we're going to play in the playoffs," he said. "If we can implement what we want to do Friday against Durham, then it will be that much better for us."

Game time is 7:30 p.m. Friday against the Renegades at the Meridian Credit Union Arena.

The best-of-three, first-round of the playoffs starts Monday in Oshawa with Niagara facing Durham.

NIAGARA ON THE LAKE **FUNDRAISER**

PUBLIC LIBRARY

TRIVIA Night

Thursday, February 29th

7:00pm

PRIZES • SILENT AUCTION • SNACKS & CASH BAR

\$225
\$30

per table of 8 individual

For tickets visit notlpubliclibrary.org

SPONSORED BY SILVERSMITH BREWING CO.

ENGEL & VÖLKERS®

NANCY BAILEY

12 Centre Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON
\$2,595,000

Follow your dream, home.

Discover the epitome of comfort and convenience in this exquisite 6-bedroom, 2-storey home. Designed for downsizers seeking space for cherished family moments with grandchildren, this meticulously crafted residence features a main floor bedroom suite for easy accessibility. Outside, a sprawling backyard oasis with mature trees offers an idyllic setting for family gatherings. With tasteful finishes and a prime location near all town amenities, this home promises a lifestyle of luxury and fulfillment.

Learn more at nancybailey.evrealstate.com.

NANCY BAILEY, CIPS • ENGEL & VÖLKERS OAKVILLE

Broker | Private Office Advisor

226 Lakeshore Road East | Oakville | Ontario | L6J 1H8

905-371-4234 | nancy.bailey@evrealstate.com

©2024 Engel & Völkers. All rights reserved. Each brokerage independently owned and operated. Engel & Völkers and its independent License Partners are Equal Opportunity Employers and fully support the principles of the Fair Housing Act.

TEAM OF THE WEEK

U13 Local League 1



The members of the NOTL Minor Hockey Association's U13 Local League 1 team are The Lake Report's featured Team of the Week. Pictured in the front row, from left are: Michael Collins, Landen Dick, Brayden Sacco, Matteo Rapone, Ellie Grealy, Cian Doyle, Ryder Kallies, Henry Buffington, Max Plomish and Lucas Pillitteri. Behind them are: Hudson Mclay, Eva Grealy, Ella Cwierniewski, Bohden Cherevaty and Henry Dill. They're joined by coaches Mike Cwierniewski, Dan Plomish and Mike Pillitteri. Absent are Max Lindqvist and Jon Velsink. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



Cèilidh noun (pronounced KAY-lee)

Originally the word Ceilidh descended from the Gaelic word for 'gathering' or 'party'. However, these days when people think of a Ceilidh, they think of a social event - a fun filled night of dancing, good music and great company.

Learn How To Ceilidh Dance Before St. Patrick's Day

Monday, March 11 @ 8:00 pm



\$15 Ticket: 1-Hour Lesson, Open Food & Drink Menu

\$40 Ticket: 1-Hour Lesson, Any Entrée, and Select Drink of Choice

Reservations Required • Limited Space Available • Restrictions May Apply

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

THEIRISHHARPPUB.COM

(905) 468-4443 • TAXES & GRATUITIES EXTRA

Credit Card Required To Reserve Your Spot • 72 Hour Cancellation Policy In Effect • 19+ Event



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



Keeping it local.
Open daily from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m.

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

Have some fun

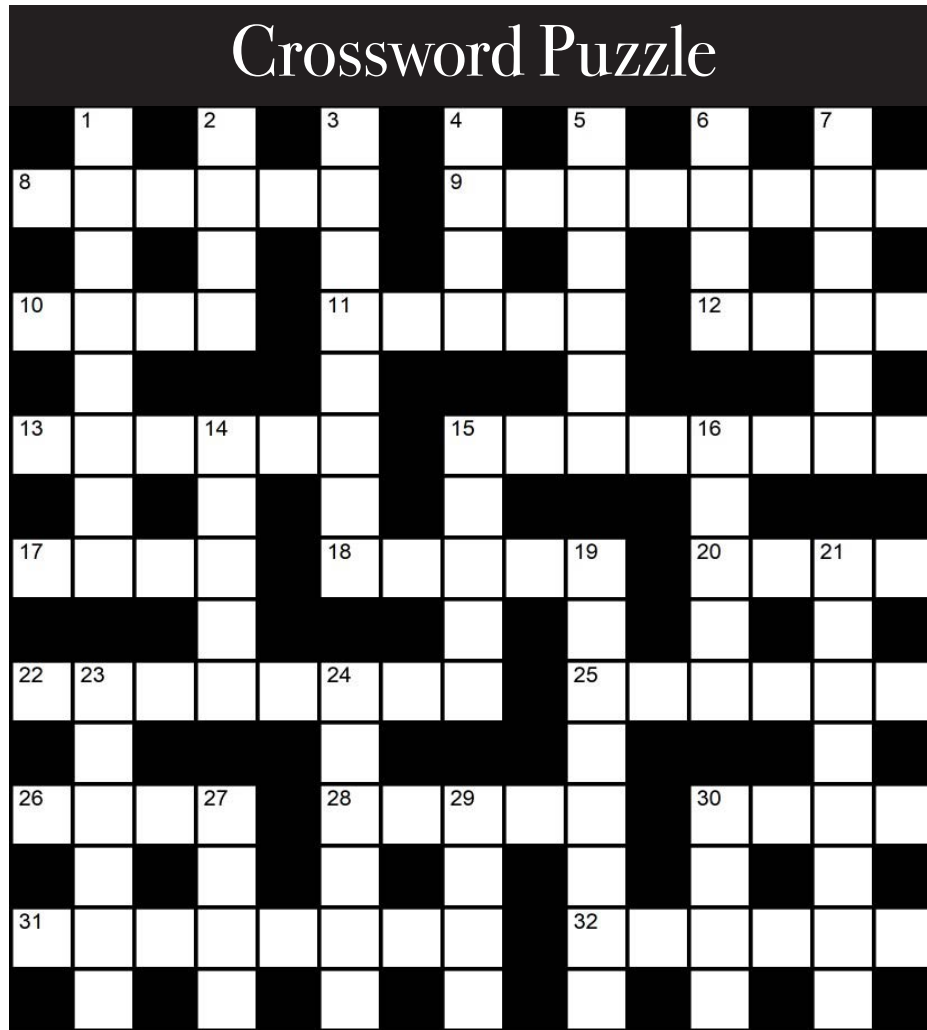


Across

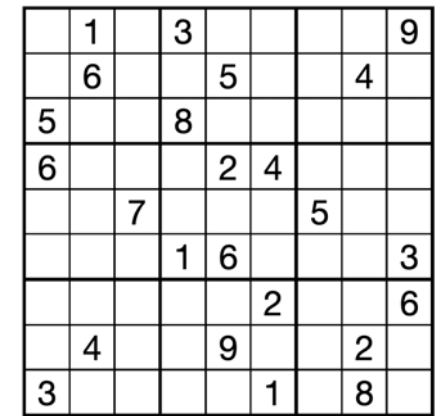
- 8. Enough for a jury (6)
- 9. You can belong to one, or swing one there (4,4)
- 10. Social climber (4)
- 11. River rising in Tibet and flowing to the Arabian Sea (5)
- 12. Bump off (2,2)
- 13. "The ---", 1990s sci-fi thriller series (1-5)
- 15. Upholds (8)
- 17. Chinese dynasty, 960-1279 (4)
- 18. Deep black (5)
- 20. Norse god of thunder (4)
- 22. Chest-related (8)
- 25. Gambler's strategy (6)
- 26. Found between the rind and meat of an orange (4)
- 28. Louisiana cuisine (5)
- 30. One kind of news? (4)
- 31. Asked for a hand? (8)
- 32. Compass pointer (6)

Down

- 1. Viral disease with farm origins (5,3)
- 2. Shapeless mass (4)
- 3. Crux of the matter (3,5)
- 4. Old (4)
- 5. Explosions (6)
- 6. Chilled (4)
- 7. John Lennon's son (6)
- 14. Run away (3,2)
- 15. Bar furniture (5)
- 16. Choir members (5)
- 19. Equivocator's answer (3,3,2)
- 21. Excessive effort (8)
- 23. He leaves the country after regime change (6)
- 24. Break (6)
- 27. Expectant desire (4)
- 29. Force followers (4)
- 30. They take steps (4)



Last issue's answers



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



CLAIRE MCNEVAN*

MARIO SOLDO*

DEBI CHEWERDA*

GREG SYKES*

SHANNON LEIGH BEATTIE*

EVAN MCCAUGHEY*

STEPHANIE FARR

Accepting the future of AI – and its **role in medicine**



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Once hominin species developed the requisite cognitive underpinnings for imagination, creativity and symbolic language for sharing what was going on in their brains with those of others, a major threshold was passed.

This was especially true for modern humans and their cousin species, the Neanderthals and the denisovans, and perhaps earlier prehuman species as far back as one million years ago.

Cognitively so endowed, those species variants became better equipped to navigate the complexities of larger social groups and read the intentions of others.

With enhanced social intelligence came a rich

imagination and a strong impulse to seek meaning in nature's creative and destructive forces, night skies peppered with countless twinkling lights and a growing awareness that there exists another parallel world populated by spirits and gods (see Geoffrey Tristram's article for SSJE, "Lord, Increase Our Faith").

Those spirits and gods were probably the stuff of tales and legends, recounted by band storytellers or shamans whenever humans gathered together.

The power of the spirit world evoked by shamans was movingly captured by the famous paleoanthropologist Richard Leakey's imaginative interpretation of what might have happened when ceremonies were led by a shaman in a trance within the caves at Lascaux, home to some of the most beautiful and moving cave art in western Europe.

If modern-day shamanistic stories are any guide to ancient practices, many of the latter's creation stories probably spoke to the clan's past, present and future.

Animating those stories



would have been heroic figures from the tribe's past whose powers and continuing presence, in some form, helped guide and shape group life.

Gods in charge of the sun, moon, waters and sacred places were probably among the earliest features of creation stories and would have been endowed with superhuman powers.

These were powers not unlike the anxiety, fear and power felt by many modern-day humans faced with the prospect of AI omnipresent surveillance.

What most of us think about when it comes to artificial intelligence are

silicon-based computers embedded in our smart-watches, phones, tablets, and other computer devices, which have become ubiquitous in our lives.

Increasingly, smart-watches and other wearable devices are capable of monitoring bodily functions from pulse rate to blood pressure, the intensity and duration of physical activity, tracking the duration and quality of our sleep, and as aids for monitoring depression and the effectiveness of medications.

In the case of diabetics, other wearables track blood glucose levels and deliver tailored amounts of insulin

to keep blood sugar levels within the normal range and do so far more effectively than a decade ago.

What worries the public about these increasingly powerful systems is whether these AI systems will threaten their jobs?

Not so long ago, professions such as physicians considered themselves immune to AI – getting the diagnosis right and developing plans for managing patients was thought to be too complex for AI.

Now, those assumptions are threatened.

AI learns and has the potential to offer better service than many clinicians because the database for each patient contains the patient's entire medical records, including imaging studies.

This offers broader, deeper analysis for patients, meaning AI will likely be an effective partner for health care.

Other professional fields such as accounting and law will be in a similar boat and partners with AI will be, frankly, much better.

The path to partnership

won't be smooth, because of vested interests in the status quo of professional bodies like medicine and nursing – but it will be worthwhile once secure, high-quality databases are available on which to learn.

Wringing hands and fretting won't solve the challenges posed by AI.

Recently I tested ChatGPT using several clinical cases that I made up, including an acute thalamic hemorrhage, cervical spondylosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, basilar migraine and myasthenia gravis.

ChatGPT was spot on and helpful with its differential diagnosis, suggested laboratory tests, management, current treatments and ongoing clinical trials.

It's at least as good as a resident in neurology and better than most neurologists outside their subspecialty.

Not bad for ChatGPT 3.5.

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



**DEV'S INDIAN
DINNER EXPERIENCE**

Offered every Thursday | Starting February 15th
Dine-In at NOTL Bar and Restaurant | 5pm to 9pm

NOTL!
BAR + RESTAURANT

289.362.1282 | notlrestaurant.com



EXPLORING HISTORY
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



Valentine from 1845

Happy Valentines Day.
Enjoy the beautiful handmade lace valentine above from 1845. And for your reading pleasure, a Valentine's Day poem from the collection that was written circa 1832 from John Blake to Mary Ann Blake.

*"If plough and cart can please your heart
with milking cows and swine
Come hear to me and you shall see
I've plenty Valentine*

*Good corn my fields in plenty yields
My barns are filled with stone
Fine sheep in pens and cocks and hens
And chickens rounds the door*

*Pudding and Beef Provisions chief
And up the Chimney Bacon
Sweet Valentine if you'll be mine
You'll never be mistaken"*

Same great service is **half the price** in Mexico – trip included

Continued from Front Page

A technician spent about 30 minutes taking X-rays and photos of my teeth and then the dentist spent about 30 minutes surveying the situation.

As promised, I received an email quote the next morning.

Wowzer! The price!

Now, I have always thought that dentists earn every penny that we pay them: looking into mouths every day and instilling confidence in nervous, frightened patients.

Such exacting and expert work – certainly not just "drill, fill and bill."

I would rather be a proctologist than a dentist. The dentists of our world earn their money, eh?

The quotation I received was way out of my financial comfort zone, so I crafted a gentle and somewhat humorous email requesting another plan and price estimate.

I mentioned that at my age, I had no hope of becoming a male model. I didn't need a Rolls-Royce or Ferrari smile. A Chevrolet or Kia would do just fine.

I wanted to be able to eat corn on the cob comfortably and talk without my teeth chattering.

I asked them to have another look at my situation. This was a reasonable request. Similar to looking at home renovations, a car purchase or other large expenses.

After no response for five days, I called their office and was curtly told they would try to respond to my email within a day or two.

No response after five days, so I dropped into their office and spoke to the receptionist.

"Yes Ross, your email arrived, and frankly, I found it a bit ridiculous."

Taken aback, I responded, "That's the way I try to communicate, with the facts and a bit of humour."

"Well, I found your email to be a bit ridiculous and we're probably not going to respond."

Biting my tongue, I responded, "I find your attitude a lot arrogant. I paid for the X-rays and photos, so please email them to me. I'm going to forward them to a friend of mine in Mexico. She is a highly trained and well-experienced dentist and tells me she can do the work for less than half the price."

I forwarded the scans to my friend, Dr. Cotty Salas MacDonald in Mexico, and within two days had a detailed and firm quotation.

I would need to be in Chapala for 19 days. Why not fly down on Boxing Day? Make it a bit of a holiday, including New Year's Eve.

So, because we allow dentists to be paid a huge lot of money for doing their work, I was chased to central Mexico to spend some \$11,000 on dental work.

Combining airfare, and accommodation insurance,



Ross Robinson almost needed an eye doctor when he got the quote for his dental work in Canada. So he hopped on a plane to Mexico, had his work done for half the price, and got a vacation out of it. FIREFLY

this totalled about \$14,000 – less than half what it would cost in Canada.

Sixteen zirconia crowns, two lower plates, six root canals and some other stuff. Hardly a pleasant vacation, but what a cultural and worthwhile adventure.

Fast-forward to Boxing Day and I flew from Toronto to Mexico City to Guadalajara with Aeromexico, and a 45-minute drive to Chapala.

Cotty's office had arranged a modest apartment for my 19 nights.

I paid \$40 per night and was located near the lake and the beautiful Malecon and convenient to the public buses and countless eateries.

El Burrito and El Patio and Pancho's were great, and the nearby American Legion served cold cerveza at reasonable prices. Karaoke every Thursday afternoon and happy hours most days.

Plus, I read six books from their lending library.

Cotty's team of Marlene and Gloria had my schedule organized, and I spent a total of 21.5 hours in the chair over those 19 days.

Six hours the first day, then a day of rest. Then four hours, then two days of rest. Then one hour, then 30 minutes.

And so it continued.

The dental work was superb, almost totally pain-

free. Granted, I requested double or triple freezing, because, like most men, I have a very low pain threshold.

The office of specialist dental care in the Ribera del Rio section of Chapala was relaxed, punctual and pain-free.

Modern equipment, a nice little apartment with two Mexican chihuahuas to keep me company and friendly smiles in all the neighbourhood shops and eateries.

One day, I took the public transit buses up to Guadalajara for a professional baseball game.

The Mexico Pacific League has about 5,000 enthusiastic and knowledgeable fans.

On the buses, polite people offered me their seats and assisted me with my bag.

Eventually, and a bit depressingly, I realized that not only are Mexicans polite, but I have become a silver-haired senior citizen.

Que sera, sera, eh?

So, we Canadians have allowed our dentists to earn amazing amounts of money. Again I will say, they earn it.

But should we let them charge what they do? In Niagara, a crown costs about \$1,400. In Mexico, about \$350.

It's hard and detailed and stressful work, but it's not magic. Surely the fees could be reduced.

Now, our NDP and Liberal political leaders are sing-

ing the populist tune of free dental care for hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

What a brilliant vote-getting promise.

Shockingly, by talking to three dental industry friends, I have learned there has been a total lack of communication between the federal government and the various dental associations.

The new national dental program is due to be rolled out within a few months. Hello? How about giving dentists and their leaders some information? The confusion and frustration is going to be bad.

I happily went to Mexico to have my teeth modified. I saved about \$12,000, so let me make a bold suggestion to our federal government.

To save Canadian taxpayers billions of dollars, why not send many of us to Mexico if we require substantial dental work? Half a million times even \$3,000 would be a whole lot more than a billion dollars.

Given the free trade agreement and all that, what an opportunity to save big money and to foster international goodwill.

My, but haven't I rambled on about a subject I don't know much about? We have allowed Canadian dental professionals to charge shockingly high prices for their services.

Let's study our Spanish, learn about the Mexican people and save our wonderful country big money.

Viva Mexico dentistry.

Partially covered by physiotherapy benefits.

Festivities. Family. Fun.

Has your bladder come undone?

Say goodbye to bladder leaks & urgency simply by sitting on a chair, fully clothed.

- 11,000 Kegels | 28 Minutes -

The chair does the work for you.



**Canada's #1 pelvic health clinic
for women and men.**

111 Fourth Ave, Unit 14, St. Catharines, ON
stcatharines@urospot.com |
905-641-7140

URO SPOT™

How one nuisance weed makes a great **lawn substitute**



Joanne Young
Columnist

Have you ever wondered if there is a better substitute for our lawns?

When you think about it, our lawns are one of the highest maintenance parts of our gardens.

From fertilizing, watering, mowing, raking, seeding, dethatching and aerating, lawns require constant care.

There are a lot of possible plants that can replace the lawn. In this article, I will be looking at one of those possibilities: white clover.

I know what you are thinking: “Clover – are you kidding me? I spend hours just trying to get rid of the clover in my lawn. Why would I ever want to do that?”

It does take a bit of rethinking to embrace this idea.

We have been programmed to believe that one must have a perfect lawn, with every blade just growing perfectly, whereas clover, in our minds, is just a weed.

Let’s look at some pros and cons of replacing your lawn areas with white



Joanne Young says white clover is a great substitute for grass lawns. It’s durable and requires little maintenance. FIREFLY

clover.

White clover (*Trifolium repens*), considered a legume, is a type of clover that is both hardy and low-growing (two to six inches tall).

Generally speaking, white clover grows quickly and spreads fast. It’s also classified as a perennial, meaning you won’t have to replant it every year.

It’s important to note, however, that this type is best suited for cooler climates such as ours.

It can be used purely on its own or used along with fescues, ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass.

Mixed grass-clover lawns, which are best for playing fields and other

high-traffic areas.

Pure clover lawns are best for areas with low or moderate traffic.

Clover lawns can be established by encouraging existing patches in your landscape or by seeding.

Sometimes, a combination of both methods works best. If you choose the latter option, clover is best seeded in early spring, from mid-March to mid-April.

It can also be seeded in fall. The seed will usually start germinating in as little as two to three days.

Just keep in mind that clover seeds are difficult to sow evenly due to their small size.

One way to improve your

distribution is to mix them with some soil, sawdust, or sand.

You should also add a bacterial inoculant to encourage growth: if you already have clover in your lawn, though, the inoculant is likely present in the soil.

After planting, ensure that your clover receives adequate water.

For best results, use a misting attachment on your water hose, as this will gently soak the ground without disturbing the seed.

Continue to water daily until the seedlings emerge from the soil.

In contrast to grass, clover requires only minimal effort to maintain.

To keep it looking great year after year, though, you must ensure that it receives adequate water (especially in dry spells).

Also, be sure to avoid overwatering, as this can lead to root rot and a yellowing of its leaves.

Once established, white clovers are low-growing and require little or no mowing.

Some will mow clover periodically throughout the season to keep it a bit tidier.

Some homeowners may prefer to mow in mid-summer to deadhead old blooms. In general, you should mow with the blades set at 1.5 to two inches.

Just make sure that

you stop cutting around mid-summer, as this will encourage your clover to flower and seed.

Clover does best in sandy, loamy, or infertile soil with a pH between six and seven.

Keep in mind that clover prefers full sun. Although it will grow in light shade, its growth will be much slower.

It’s also worth noting that clover doesn’t grow well in full shade. Homeowners should perform hand-weeding every few months to prevent unwanted growth.

Once your lawn is established, never apply herbicides, as this can kill your clover.

Here are some additional advantages of white clover:

- Stays green all summer, with little or no watering.
- Requires very little maintenance.

- Can take light to medium foot traffic.

- Attracts beneficial insects (like bees) to your yard.

- Never needs fertilizer.
- Never needs herbicides.
- Out-competes other weeds.

- Grows well in poor soil.
- Feels great on bare feet.
- Is immune to “dog patches.”

Is inexpensive.

Clover offers a wide range of benefits to homeowners seeking an alternative to grass.

Definitely something to consider.

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

Shrove Tuesday means **pancakes** at St. Mark’s

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

If you stopped by St. Mark’s Anglican Church for Shrove Tuesday, chances are you ran into resident harlequin, John MacBeth. Dressed in a patterned costume and mask reminiscent of the commedia dell’arte in Italy, MacBeth’s job for the evening was waltzing around with a tambourine and keeping guests coming through the church hall for pancakes and sausages.

“They’re trying to turn tables over, so I’m here to annoy people that have eaten already,” MacBeth joked.

Shrove Tuesday, also known as Pancake Day, Fat Tuesday or Mardi Gras, was celebrated on Feb. 13 this year.

“The tradition was that you would use up all the fat and stuff in the house,” said Rev. Leighton Lee.

Shrove Tuesday was a great success, with tables turning over consistently from 5 through 7 p.m.



Tim Taylor cooks up pancakes for Shrove Tuesday at St. Mark’s Anglican Church. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

TIME FOR A SECOND OPINION? WE GET YOU MORE FOR YOUR HOUSE, GUARANTEED.



#1 FOR A REASON

Nobody sells for more! Call us today for a free home evaluation and see what we can do for you

Evan MacDonald
Sales Representative

Jessie MacDonald
Broker



MAC INC.

CALL DIRECT
289.969.7568
MACINC.CA

REVEL.
REALTY INC., BROKERAGE

#1 Angelika & ASSOCIATES LUXURY REAL ESTATE

★ **FREE HOME EVALUATION** ★
CALL ANGELIKA TODAY!
905-468-8777

PRICED TO SELL | MULTIPLE USES WITH MAIN FLOOR PRIMARY BEDROOM - FAMILY HOME - B+B | CUSTOM BUILT HOME



507 MISSISSAUGA ST, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE | **CALL ANGELIKA TODAY FOR MORE INFO! 289-214-4394**

✦ **BOLDT BUILD CUSTOM LARGE BUNGALOW WITH STUNNING NEW VERSACE INSPIRED LOWER LEVEL** ✦

COMING SOON!



1193 QUEENSTON RD, ST DAVIDS | **CALL ANGELIKA TODAY FOR MORE INFO! 289-214-4394**

\$1,699,450 - BACKYARD PARADISE


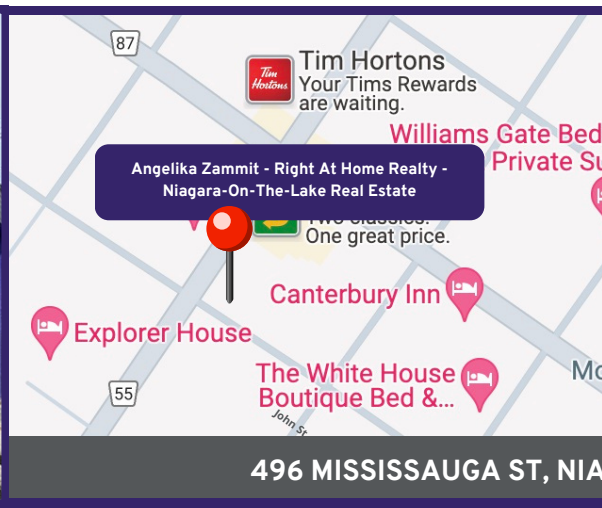


123 WILLIAM ST, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

4,500 SQFT | FOREST BACKYARD | 270 FT- PRIME WATERFRONT | 5.5 ACRES



8525 SWEET CHESTNUT DR, NIAGARA FALLS | **515 SANDY BAY RD, HALDIMAND COUNTY**

**Great Location!
On the Corner of Mississauga & John**

**Drop By Anytime
and Visit Our Team!**

496 MISSISSAUGA ST, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE



**#1 Angelika & ASSOCIATES
LUXURY REAL ESTATE**
289-214-4394

TOP 1% AGENT 2023

PROFIT W 100

listglobally

**#1 BROKERAGE IN THE GTA
THE LARGEST INDEPENDENT
BROKERAGE IN CANADA**

**MY MARKETING PLAN
WILL SELL YOUR HOME!**

- Exceptional sales record. #1 Top Producer & multiple award winner
- Long term presence in Niagara-On-The-Lake. Local *Right at Home Realty* Branch in NOTL (Over 6,000 Realtors®. Largest Independent Brokerage in Ontario & Canada)
- Long list of Toronto Buyers buying in Niagara-On-The-Lake
- World class videography, photos and drone footage, highest quality hard cover print brochures & advertising in print media
- Your property will be globally listed, gaining exposure to 220 countries and 48 Ontario real estate boards & MLS®
- Estate clean up/decluttering and packing services (no extra charge)
- Help elderly relocate (no extra charge)
- Up to date in Mortgage trends and state of economy, strategy to sell
- Passionate to be of service