



Pledge your support | Page 6

## Heavy rains, flooding raise infrastructure concerns in St. Davids

Richard Wright  
The Lake Report

Extreme summer weather and torrential downpours this week and over the past month in Niagara-on-the-Lake have created calls

from residents for upgraded municipal infrastructure to protect homes and properties against flash floods.

While much of the region was exposed to repeated heavy rains that began

almost in sequence with a scorching heat wave in mid-June, residents in St. Davids and Queenston are being vocal about their displeasure with old and new infrastructure.

Heavy rains in late June

dumped several inches of rain on town, flooding the golf course, area creeks and some homes.

And this week, as Hurricane Beryl rolled through the U.S. and its entrails hit southern

Ontario on Wednesday with up to "a month's worth of rain in a day," as one meteorologist suggested, it seems there will be no respite from the summer storms.

Concerns are particularly

acute in St. Davids and Queenston.

"St. Davids storm sewers can't support yet another subdivision," said Sharon Brinsmead-Taylor in a

*Continued on Page 3*

## Donors help museum buy Carnochan house for \$1.4 million

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

When Lauren and Vaughn Goettler moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2015, the museum was one of their first stops in town.

After they bought their waterfront house on Ricardo Street they found inspiration for their landscaping at the NOTL Museum.

"The landscaping plans from our house are in the museum," Lauren says.

She and her husband would go to the museum and view the original landscaping plan from 1904.

The plans included their property, along with most of Ricardo Street, which was all owned by John James Wright.

The museum's collection also included photographs and other information about its famous landscape architect, Lorrie Dunnington-Grubb, who designed and

*Continued on Page 5*

## Virgil woman fights intolerance

Sheri Durksen is taking action after vandals targeted her Pride flags. Twice



Sheri Durksen, right, at her home in Virgil. Her and neighbour Liz Pilzecker are speaking out after Pride flags were vandalized on Durksen's property. She calls the act of vandalism a clear statement of intolerance against the LGBTQ+ community. RICHARD WRIGHT

Richard Wright | The Lake Report

**S**heri Durksen says she won't be silenced. The Niagara-on-the-Lake resident is speaking out with a message of solidarity, love and acceptance after vandals repeatedly damaged and removed

Pride flags from the lawn of her Virgil home over the span of a few days.

"You can't just be quiet, watch or give lip service but not do anything," said the 60-year-old grandmother and retired social

worker, who lives at the corner of Homestead Drive and Line 1.

"It is up to us, who aren't directly involved (in the LGBTQ+ movement), to check the other people in our lives or in our communities who are perpetuat-

ing this and say, 'It's not OK.' "

The story begins with Durksen waking up on the morning of July 1 to a knock on her door from someone she didn't know.

*Continued on Page 15*

## Heritage Trail needs more money for next phase of expansion

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Before the Upper Canada Heritage Trail's committee can start work on its next phase, which will extend it by another four kilometres,

organizers are counting on the community to help raise more money to support the project.

Committee members spoke Tuesday morning during an informal unveiling of the newest section

of the trail, spanning from Line 1 to Line 2.

"We cannot continue onto Phase 3 until we start generating more money," committee chair Rick Meloen told The Lake Report.

Meloen said the commit-

tee is primarily focused on fundraising because it has received only a small amount from the town.

"They gave us \$5,000 right at the start for seed money," he said.

Finishing the second

phase, which will add two kilometres to the trail, will cost around \$100,000, Meloen said. The initial phase cost \$118,000 in total.

The third phase price tag is projected to be \$200,000.

"We've kind of run

out of money at Line 3," Meloen said.

Following the completion of the latest section, which is expected to be done later this year, the next two

*Continued on Page 2*



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Anyone interested in helping to fund upgrades to the heritage trail can do so at [heritagetrail.ca](http://heritagetrail.ca). DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## Heritage trail rejuvenation continues

*Continued from Front Page*

phases will follow. The third phase will extend the trail for another four kilometres. Following that, the fourth phase will be the most expensive. "That will be the most difficult part because we're going up the escarpment," Meloen said. It will involve a lot of work for drainage and restoration, especially in the last kilometre.

"We want to make this trail accessible for everyone," Meloen said. Coun. Wendy Cheropita said the town can help the heritage trail by finding more sponsors to keep the money flowing. "It's really important to us. If a couple of big donors step up and help us out," she said. "It could be some of the businesses that are along (the trail)," Cheropita said, adding that potential sponsors are being sought now. "We will soon have up to

Line 3, as already mentioned. But from Line 3 all the way up to York Road, then we can connect to the Bruce Trail," Cheropita said. With more expansion, the trail could host more formally organized activities for community members, she said. The trail, as it is now, remains a grey gravel surface that Meloen said is easy to repair and suffers minimal damage. The committee's biggest concern for pedestrians on

the trail now is them entering private land adjacent to the trail. Signs along the walkway warn that motorized vehicles aren't allowed but Meloen said more permanent signage is in the works. To support the heritage trail, visit [heritagetrail.ca](http://heritagetrail.ca). Fundraisers are in the works, including the second annual "Paws on the Trail" set for Sept. 7 at Veterans Memorial Park. Sign-up is available on the website. [juliasacco@niagaranow.com](mailto:juliasacco@niagaranow.com)

## Have an opinion you want heard?

Send a letter to the editor to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)

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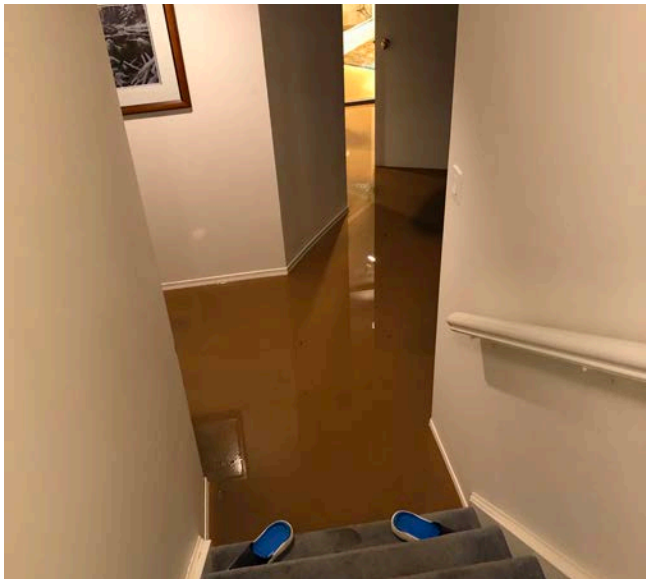
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The basement of Walter and Anne Blackwell flooded last summer, costing them thousands in insurance deductibles and personal repair costs. The Blackwells believe aging storm sewers are to blame and that the Town of NOTL should be responsible for the costs. Right: Flooding on a Kent Street property following a massive rainfall June 18. SUPPLIED

## Town updating sewer systems: Zalepa

*Continued from Front Page*

Facebook post, which featured videos of the corner of Warner and Tanbark roads ankle-deep in water.

"We cannot support more housing until our infrastructure is updated," she wrote.

That was June 18, the same day the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority issued a flood warning for NOTL.

"The recent thunderstorms that occurred this morning brought up to 45 mm (1.75 inches) of rain in the eastern regions of the Niagara Peninsula watershed," it stated.

"This accumulation of rain falling within a short period of time has caused creeks and tributaries to become inundated with runoff and water levels continue to rise in the Four Mile Creek watershed."

What that warning didn't state, said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, was the rainfall on that day in St. Davids was so great in volume and intensity there was nothing the town could have done to stop the overflow.

"In the St. Davids area on that day, they experienced three-and-a-half inches of rain in less than an hour and that's almost a 500-year rain event," Zalepa said.

The in-ground infrastructure, he said, is simply not built to manage

that volume of water in that short period of time.

"It was definitely problematic, but I would not say that's because of over-development," he added.

In Queenston, a much older community with aging infrastructure, Kent Street residents Walter and Anne Blackwell, and their neighbour Mary Ann Dunlop, have been in a losing battle with Mother Nature dating back to well before June's heavy rainfalls.

"In our case, although we do have a water table issue, this is a sewer connection issue," said Walter.

He believes it is a municipal issue and not something he nor his neighbours should be dealing with.

"Our house is connected to the (town) through a sewer pipe. The fluids came back up through the sewer pipe, the storm drains were blocked ... and the fluids came into the house."

His property has been flooded twice and his basement once since last summer, costing the couple about \$10,000 in insurance deductibles and personal repair costs.

The unwanted water table issue that he and Dunlop share is also a town problem, said Blackwell.

"It is definitely that the storm sewers can't handle the rain and, as a result, all that water comes down the street from (Dunlop's) place and down the side

of our property. It's only a matter of time before it takes out my firewood shed."

Dunlop has spent close to \$70,000 fixing water damage to her basement and upgrading other portions of her home and yard for better protection.

The damage she has experienced is caused by neglected drainage infrastructure on the outer edges of her property line, she said.

It has not been maintained, she said, because there is a nondescript and narrow roadway that runs beside her house, which the town has either forgotten about or of which it doesn't want to take ownership.

The asphalt roadway, called Clarence Street, is downward-sloping, crumbling and neglected.

Residents feel it could be a source of the neighbourhood's water seepage problems since it is poorly maintained.

Dunlop believes it is part of the old road infrastructure let over from prior to the building of the Niagara Parkway.

The Parkway runs parallel to Clarence Street and Dunlop's home, with just a few metres separating the two.

Dunlop said she would like someone in government to take ownership of the road and check for drainage issues.

"Whenever there are surveys or anything done around here, there are

people from the town who have never been in this community who assume my property bumps right up against the Parkway," she said.

The reality, however, is the road is not right up against her property.

She and Blackwell say the town has neglected essential and aging infrastructure in Queenston for many years.

The lord mayor disagrees with that assertion.

"I am not going into specifically to their addresses but infrastructure is not being neglected," he said. "It is old and that's not uncommon in the municipality and anywhere in the country."

Zalepa said he wants to assure residents that infrastructure is not only being addressed in all neighbourhoods and that staff is working hard on areas of concern.

And "an additional \$750,000 has been placed into culvert (repair/maintenance) and issues like this."

Dunlop and the Blackwells do feel Queenston is getting the attention it deserves.

"I can understand why a resident would feel that way," said Zalepa.

"There is definitely an impact to people when there is an issue. This council has increased its budget to capital contribution quite significantly from the past, but it is a long road ahead." [wright@niagaranow.com](mailto:wright@niagaranow.com)

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Top: Keeping a close eye on the goods almost guaranteed a great deal at one of the many merchant stands at the Cherry Festival on Saturday at St. Mark's Anglican Church. Bottom from left, Cheryl Carmichael and Linda Brooks could barely keep up as they bagged frozen cherry pies for eager customers. Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa had his grill full as he prepared for the opening rush. Tony, standing, and Josie Rubino, left, arrived one-and-a-half hours early to be first in line to be the first to get a cherry pie. RICHARD WRIGHT

## Cherry Festival draws big crowds again

Richard Wright  
The Lake Report

Billed as a summer celebration for the whole family, the 2024 edition of the St. Mark's Anglican Church Cherry Festival on July 6 didn't disappoint.

Organizer Andrea Douglas said the annual festival is all about reaching out to the community and giving

them a fun day to enjoy.

"For me, to look around and see people of all ages, lots of families, children having a good time in our children's area and good crowds throughout the day, we succeeded," she said.

As expected, the most visually — and sonically — exciting time of the day was when the church's grand old bell rang out at 9 a.m.

to indicate the festival had started.

The approximately 250 people waiting in line surged onto the parish's grounds to be among the first to purchase some of the many treasures of books, jewelry, clothing, art, preserves and of course, cherry pies.

Josie Rubino and her husband Tony arrived at 7:30

a.m. to get their spot at the head of the pack.

The couple have attended the festival 15 times and have been at the front of the line for the last three years.

"I like everything," said Josie. "The pies, the jewelry, the people, the drinks, everything. It is to come together with people and enjoy it, especially the pies."

A total of 647 pies, both

fresh and frozen, were prepared by church volunteers for sale to the festivalgoers.

Douglas reports that the pies were all gone by 11 a.m. and that the final tally from sales of all items at the festival was very positive.

"Financially it was a success for us, which is important too," she said. "For a volunteer operation, it really is amazing what

we accomplished. Everyone worked so hard," she added, making sure to give thanks not just to the people behind the tables, but to those who set up the tables, chairs and tents as well.

"It is a very feel-good event because of the support that we give each other," she said. "It was a wonderful day."

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

## Red Roof's Steffanie Bjorgan honoured with Meritous Service Award

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Initially, Red Roof Retreat founder Steffanie Bjorgan ignored the email advising her the Governor General was bestowing on her one of Canada's highest honours.

She couldn't believe it was real.

"I got the call when I was in the hardware store, after ignoring my email because I thought it was a scam," Bjorgan said in an email to friends.

"After the shock, I am really honoured," she said.

On July 4, Bjorgan was awarded the Meritorious Service Award (civil division).

She will receive a certificate and medal in the mail in August and then, about three months later, she will go to Rideau Hall to accept her award from Gov. Gen. Mary Simon, Bjorgan told The Lake Report.

Otherwise, she doesn't have much info yet and doesn't know who nominated her.

"I have my suspicions of who is behind it, but nobody is going to fess up," Bjorgan said.

Asked about why she may have been chosen for such a high honour, she said it has a lot to do with the community of Niagara-on-the-Lake itself.

"I feel like you couldn't have done this in any other community," she said.

Bjorgan will continue to do her work whether she receives awards or not, she said.

But she hopes to use the high honour as a platform

to thank the community and raise awareness around the families and clients that Red Roof Retreat serves.

Along with outlining the details about her award, a letter from director of honours Ian Burgess stated that Bjorgan is now welcome to use the initials M.S.M. after her name.

She may use the initials for formal occasions, she said, but when it comes to hanging out at the Legion, her first and last name will suffice.

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Steffanie Bjorgan with her son Garrett. SUPPLIED

# Donors help museum buy Carnochan house

Continued from Front Page

built the home.

Goettler said she was especially interested in a fountain that was in the original driveway of the home.

"It gave us the inspiration to put a fountain in our driveway," she said, adding that they placed it in almost the exact spot as the original.

"It's our little tribute to John James Wright and Lorie Dunington-Grubb."

The couple, who have done much to preserve their home's history, learned a lot from the museum.

"They had all kinds of documents on our house, who owned it, the history, how it was built. That right there ignited our passion for the museum," Lauren Goettler said.

And earlier this year when the museum told the couple about its desire to buy former home of museum founder Janet Carnochan, they just "had to get it back," she said.

Geoffrey and Lorraine Joyner felt the same way.

Geoffrey Joyner said that when they arrived

The NOTL Museum unveiled its plans for the newly purchased Carnochan house on Monday. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

in Niagara in 1990, the first institution they got involved with was the Niagara Historical Society and Museum.

"Which was a mouthful back then," he joked.

Over the years the Joyners helped put together exhibits, arranged art appraisals and supported the museum's lecture series.

"We've had a great affinity for the museum over the past three-and-a-half decades. We love it," he said.

But with more than 50,000 objects in its collection, the museum is running out of space, thus the

purchase of a new property made perfect sense.

Donations from the Goettlers and Joyners, and contributions from the museum and the town, led to the \$1.425 million purchase of Carnochan's old home at 25 Castlereagh St., right next door to the museum.

Museum officials and guests celebrated at the announcement of the acquisition on Monday morning outside the museum.

Built in 1911, the property was acquired in 1906 and Carnochan severed the piece that became the museum site, director

Sarah Kaufman told The Lake Report.

She lived in the home until she died in 1926.

Carnochan helped establish the NOTL Historical Society in 1895, which led to the opening of the NOTL Museum in 1907. It was the first purpose-built museum in Ontario.

Kaufman said the historically significant building will provide the museum with a needed extra few thousand square feet of space.

"This represents a very strategic move to advance our mission of preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the region," she said during the presentation.

"In addition to serving as a vital piece of history, this acquisition will also yield substantial benefits for the museum's ongoing renovation and expansion plan."

The museum launched a \$10-million fundraising campaign last fall to cover the costs of a major expansion.

Headed by pharmacist Sean Simpson, the campaign aims to bring in \$5 million from donors and match that amount with government grants.



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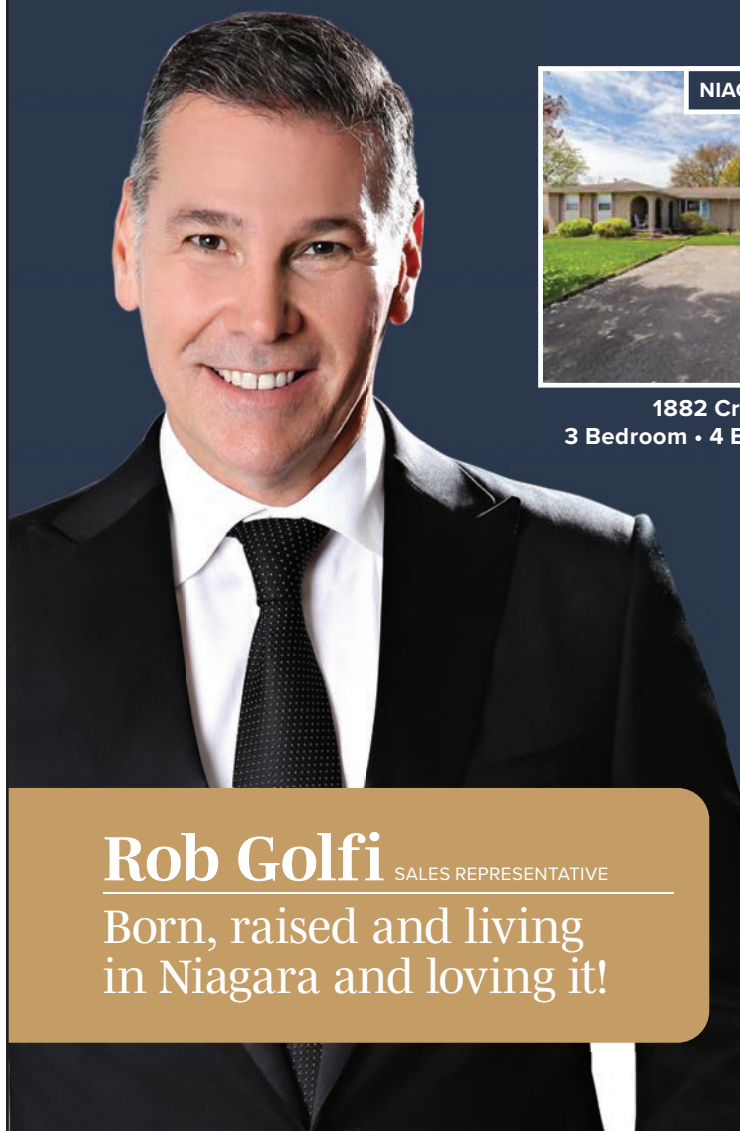
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Richard Harley  
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Our initial plan would be to use donations to hire more staff to cover more issues and produce more award-winning journalism.

Frankly, there is simply too much happening for our small team to do it all right now.

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Our secondary plan is to update our website (already honoured as one of the best in the province) and we hope to develop a Lake Report app.

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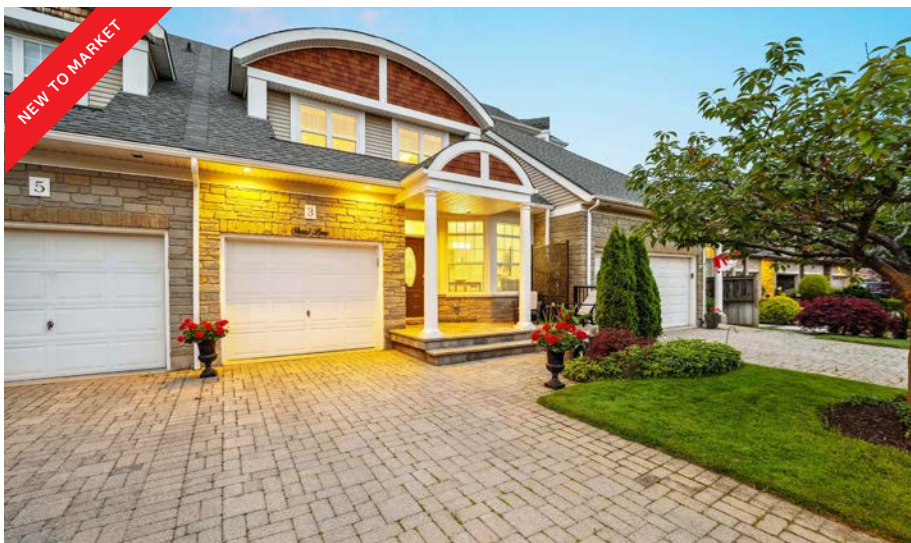
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# NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

## IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER 0.18 AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LANDS AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

**TAKE NOTICE** that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake intends to designate the property at **1413 LAKESHORE ROAD, ROSELAWN (PLAN M11 LOT 190)** as a property of cultural heritage value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter 0.18.

### **Description of Property**

The subject property is located on 1413 Lakeshore Road. Roselawn is located on Lakeshore Road that runs through the north end of the Town and connects the rural areas in that portion of the Town with Old Town. The two-storey structure is located with a large setback from Lakeshore Road. The access to the house is through a narrow gravel driveway from Lakeshore Road. The driveway is lined with mature trees.

### **Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest**

The property has cultural heritage value or interest for its design and physical values, its historical and associative values and its contextual values.

1413 Lakeshore Road is a representative example of Georgian style of architecture in the Town with some Italianate influences. It is similar in form and style to various other Georgian historic structures in the Town. The subject property is a two-storey brick structure with a square plan. The façade of the residence is symmetrical with three bays. The side elevations are also symmetrical with two bays. The red brick construction is laid in Flemish bond with rubble stone foundation. The hipped roof of the residence features overhanging eaves, moulded soffit and frieze with wooden brackets. The subject property comprises of rectangular openings with radiating voussoirs on side elevations with moulded trim details within the opening. The main entryway on the facade is slightly recessed into the elevation.

Roselawn has historical association with the early Loyalist settlers in the Niagara Region, namely the Ball family. The land, on which the subject property stands today, was granted to Jacob Ball senior in 1797. He was a lieutenant in the Butler's Rangers. The land stayed within the family and eventually in 1850 Roselawn was constructed by the grandson of Jacob Ball, Charles Adolphus Francis Ball. The Ball family have been an essential part of the history of the Niagara Region. The subject property has historical association with Thomas Baker Rivett. Thomas Rivett was an immigrant from Ireland. He started a fruit growing business in Niagara and was also involved in various other agricultural related businesses. He was the founder and secretary treasurer of a fruit basket factory based at the Dock area. The subject property also has historical association with the Mennonite immigrant, Peter Wall. Peter Wall was a successful fruit farmer in the Niagara Region. He founded the Niagara Canning Company limited. The enterprise allowed the farmers to be shareholders in a company that provided an outlet for their produce. Both Thomas Rivett and Peter Wall have been significant in the growth of agriculture and agriculture related business in the Niagara Region.

Roselawn has the potential to yield information that contributes to the understanding of the Ball family and the life of the early United Empire Loyalists who settled in the Niagara Region. The land around the house appears to be undisturbed and may also reveal archaeological artifacts that provide an insight to all the various personalities who have resided in the house.

1413 Lakeshore Road has contextual value because it is important in defining the historic character of the area. In the late 1700s and the early 1800s, when land was originally granted by the Crown, the property parcels usually comprised of large areas of agricultural lands with a built structure.

Although the subject property was subdivided with the passage of time, it still retains the essence of large lots with a historic structure, surrounding farmland and mature trees. Roselawn is also historically linked to its surrounding through the various mature black walnut trees located in the study area. These trees appear to have been planted as part of Thomas Rivett's business of growing and selling black walnut trees to the Town's Parks and Shade Trees Committee. These trees are still present on the subject lands and contribute to the rich history of the subject property.

### **Description of Key Heritage Attributes**

Key exterior attributes that embody the heritage value of the estate at 287 Warner Road include its:

- Two storey Georgian style residence with Italianate influences

- Original square plan
- Three bay symmetrical façade and two bay symmetrical side elevations
- Red brick construction in Flemish bond
- Rubble stone foundation
- Hip roof
- Overhanging eaves, moulded soffit and frieze with wooden brackets
- Rectangular openings with moulded trim details
- Radiating brick voussoirs on side elevations
- Recessed entryway
- Association with Ball family, Thomas Rivett and Peter Wall
- Large setback from Lakeshore Road
- Location on Lakeshore Road
- Mature Black Walnut trees

### **Objections**

Any objection to this designation must be filed no later than 30 days after the date of publication of the Notice of Intent to Designate. Objections should be directed to the Town Clerk, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, L0S 1T0. The last date to file a notice of objection is **August 9th 2024**.

### **Queries**

Any further queries should be directed to Sumra Zia, Heritage Planner at (905) 468-3266 ext. 327 or through email at [sumra.zia@notl.com](mailto:sumra.zia@notl.com).

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake this 6th day of June 2024

GRANT BIVOL, CLERK



# Striking LCBO workers hit the picket line

Richard Wright  
The Lake Report

Striking LCBO workers were out in force on Sunday, July 7 in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

A small but vocal group of employees from NOTL and Niagara Falls took to the picket line in front of the Queen Street location, waving signs and connecting with passersby after officially walking off the job two days earlier, on Friday.

Employees began the job action after talks between the Ontario Public Service Employees Union and the government broke down primarily over the issue of expansion of alcohol sales to private retailers such as grocery and corner stores.

OPSEU believes the increased competition for the LCBO will mean substantial revenue losses for the government-operated stores, resulting in even more precarious working conditions for casual LCBO workers who, ac-



From left, Carly Bezanson, Agatha Saviolidis, Diana McIlroy, Rhonda Jansen, Liz Steel and Karen Williams on the picket line in front of the LCBO on Queen Street. RICHARD WRIGHT

ording to the union, make up to 70 per cent of the outlet's workforce.

"I do not have any guaranteed hours, I have no benefits, no sick days, no vacation days," said casual worker and picketer Carly Bezanson, who works at the

Queen Street outlet.

"I have to be available pretty much all weekends but I won't necessarily be scheduled all weekends so I can't find a second job that needs me there on those weekends," she said in an interview.

"And it takes well over 10 years (of seniority) to get full-time," she added.

Bezanson warns that the government's decision to broaden privatized alcohol sales will not only affect LCBO workers, but all Ontarians.


"We are fighting for a better Ontario," she said.

"Right now all of our (LCBO) money goes to public services like health care, education, housing, public infrastructure and social programs."

"Doug Ford wants to make sure that the money goes into his billionaire friends' pockets instead."


The answer to the current disruption in LCBO services, she added, is for the government to come to its senses and start thinking about how an expanded LCBO and the money it contributes to public services, is good for everyone in the province.

"Instead of selling the LCBO, why don't we grow the LCBO?" she said.



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**Contributed by Patty Garriock**  
 "Passion is the log that keeps the fire of purpose blazing." - Oprah Winfrey

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## Delivering in the rain



Delivery guy Hurbert John is less than impressed with having to unload packages on Queen Street in the pouring rain on Wednesday as the remnants of Hurricane Beryl hit Niagara-on-the-Lake.  
 RICHARD WRIGHT

## Editorials

# Pride, tolerance, acceptance – and hate

Kevin MacLean  
 Managing Editor

We naively thought, hoped, wished that last summer's collective civic embarrassment when the new rainbow crosswalk was repeatedly vandalized might have inspired greater tolerance in some pockets of Canada's "prettiest little town."

Of course, we all really knew, deep down, that anti-Pride, anti-gay, anti-rainbow in-your-face celebrations of acceptance — a few small flags, in the latest case — would not be embraced by some segments of a community that likes to view itself as special.

Sadly, in matters pertaining to tolerance, acceptance and understanding, there are those among us really have some growing to do.

So, what happened this time?

A small Pride flag display that Sheri Durksen set up outside her Virgil home was vandalized, not once but twice, in a period of a few days.

Kudos to Durksen for having the temerity to put a Pride symbol on public view. Shocking.

And for now doubling down, expanding it and pushing back against the attitudes that led to the latest anti-Pride actions.

Kudos also Liz Pilzecker, a passerby who noticed the damage and quickly brought it to Durksen's attention.

As Durksen, a 60-year-old grandmother and retired social worker, told The Lake Report in a message, "I know we have bigots living in Virgil and the wider NOTL area, I was surprised that in a Virgil neighbourhood there would be such an outward display of hate."

Cowardly and hateful indeed.

It was probably kids.

Kids, eh. As if that makes it OK.

"Just kids being kids.

Doing stupid things without understanding the gravity of their actions."

Well, you can downplay and excuse it and rationalize it all you want — it's just a few flags after all.

Kids, eh.

Well, barring a change of heart, those kids likely will grow up to continue to hate, dislike, misunderstand, refuse to accept others. And teach those lessons to their own kids.

They are supposed to be our future but instead of progressing, they are fomenting hatred and prejudice.

Kids, eh.

"They don't understand."

Sigh, if they're old enough and presumably intelligent enough to recognize the symbols they are denigrat-

ing, they certainly do understand what those symbols represent.

In a community with so many church-going, God-fearing religious folks, it is sad to see this kind of activity rear its head. Yet again.

And it came on the last day of Pride Month, literally on the eve of Canada Day, when we collectively brag about what a great country we are.

What to do? Parents, teachers, clergy, neighbours, ordinary folks and leaders in the community need to condemn these kinds of immature and hateful actions.

And then by word and deed, they need to show our young people that everyone deserves respect, tolerance, understanding, acceptance.

It's a tall order but we hope the good citizens of NOTL are up to it. Because so far we've failed..

editor@niagaranow.com

## Play the beautiful game, without all the antics

Kevin MacLean  
 Managing Editor

Part of us hopes a lot of Canadian kids have been watching the Copa America and Euro Cup soccer tournaments to witness how the so-called beautiful game can be played.

But another part of hopes our children have not been watching, because so often they'll have been subjected

to the flopping and gesticulating of grown men trying to convince a referee that they have been badly fouled.

As numerous replays showed, these phantom fouls and Oscar-worthy acting performances are nothing more than a ruse to try to gain an advantage.

They are a shameful and sad reflection on what once really was a beautiful game.

That aside, the performance by the Canadian men's team in its first Copa appearance has been wonderful to watch.

While on Monday night they seemingly played with fewer men than Argentina — as the team of referees repeatedly botched calls that cost Canada at least one goal and numerous missed opportunities — the Ca-

nucks refused to give up and nearly scored twice late in the game.

This type of effort is a fine example for our children and grandchildren. So, Canada will play for a bronze medal on Saturday.

Well done. Now, please, let's find a way to stop all the phony writhing and faking of injuries.

Just play the game.  
 editor@niagaranow.com

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## LETTER OF THE WEEK

NIMBY attitude in NOTL is **nothing new**

Dear editor:

This is an excerpt from a Forbes article I came across, dated November, 1997.

"The town has never seen anything like Si Wai Lai. In just four years she has virtually bought the town, spending \$56 million to buy the four smallish hotels that dominate the upscale lodging market," it says.

"Despite Si Wai Lais tact and charm, there is plenty

of local grumbling. We are becoming a Disney-on-the-Lake, sniffs Margherita Howe, leader of the 600-person Niagara Conservancy Group, which since 1987 has protested virtually every change in the town."

Does this sound familiar? Today the players may have changed but the narrative remains the same.

"The end of NOTL" motto from the vocal minority

has become redundant and passé.

Let's remember people also protested against: Queen's Landing hotel, King's Point condominiums, Shaw's Lane housing, the St. Vincent De Paul school housing, high school closure, hospital closure, Phillips Estate carveout — and even McDonalds.

NOTL is resilient and has gone through many trans-

formations since 1812 and will continue to thrive and prosper regardless of the current and future changes.

Kudos to the present and past mayor's, councillors, administrations, developers, farmers, residents and business owners for creating and maintaining a dynamic place to reside and a world-renowned tourist destination.

**Tony Giordano**  
**NOTL**

Parliament Oak plan is a battle **worth fighting**

Dear editor:

Ron Fritz's July 4 letter said the "town must pick and choose its legal battles."

Precisely, and the Parliament Oak application was simply one that the town has botched from the outset.

Had the town simply acquiesced when the school board demanded written assurances that the property would not be used for education purposes (as happened with the high school with verbal assurances) the town would now own this valuable community property.

That ship has sailed, but not all was lost until now.

We have all heard how the Ontario Land Tribunal sides irrevocably with the developers when the town's official plan is challenged and how the regional plan and provincial law and policy statements trump everything the town's plan tries to accomplish.

Where that may be true with simple or even complex modifications to increase density in a residentially zoned area, it is simply not true regarding the core principles of a town's plan.

I think it is highly unlikely the same lens would be applied by the tribunal when considering changing an institutional zoned property in the middle of a residential neighbourhood to commercial.

I'm afraid there is a disconnect between our elected officials, town staff and what our plan states unequivocally: 10.2 Goals and Objectives (8) "To prevent the intrusion of commercial uses into residential areas."

The plan also states in section 10.3 (3) referenc-

ing the Pillar and Post, et al.: "However, it is not intended that these uses form nodes for expanded general commercial activity".

This application is a request to change the very function of the property and heart of Old Town. I wonder if the lord mayor or deputy lord mayor would go along with the proposal if it was changed from agricultural to commercial on Line 1 or the Mori property?

The last appeal to the OMB by this applicant in Old Town was the Ann Street condo apartment which was, I think, negotiated out/settled in 2014-15. and, then finally built as townhouses in 2018 as he was unable to sell what he had approved.

What happens if the five-star hotel won't fly at Parliament Oak? Might we end up with a Comfort Inn??

Frankly, I may be naive but I'm much more inclined to vote for and respect a councillor who is prepared to defend the town on principles rather than acquiesce to the demands of developers.

It seems those principles need to be better communicated to our staff by our elected officials. The commercial areas of Old Town are specified in our plan and this property does not fall within it.

Furthermore if it were an application to modify to residential it might have some success at the tribunal, but given the ask of commercial, this might have been one of those cases worth battling for a better resolution.

And if it meant another couple hundred dollars in taxes, I would be happy to pay.

**Bob Bader**  
**NOTL**

NOTL **housing costs** are in the stratosphere

## THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner  
Columnist

Sure, it's a nice place. Most folks would be happy living in the coach house. But is it \$4.5 million nice?

The latest listing on my Old Town street (one block from the flip now on sale at \$3.9 million) is part of a larger local story.

Niagara-on-the-Lake has always been a gentrified place, but now it's in danger of going palatial.

And what happens then if rates rise, recession comes, credit dries or crazy U.S. election willies spread across the river? Will we run out of rich folk? The higher prices go, after all, the more they may correct.

Here's an update on what I reported last month. Listings have swollen. Like a

dead hippo. There are now 476 actives in all of NOTL.

Of those, 294 are houses. And of those, 224 (or 76 per cent) are listed for more than \$1 million. Of those, 34 per cent (or 76) are on the market at \$2 million and above.

Meanwhile the median household income is stuck around \$98,000. To buy a "typical" nice house for \$1.5 million would require \$300,000 down (to avoid paying the CMHC levy) and a monthly of just under \$11,000 (mortgage and taxes only).

If you factor lost investment of the downpayment (at 6 per cent), the true cost of owning is about \$12,500. Yes, a month. Plus Cogeco, dog food, insurance, groceries, the car, retirement savings and, oh yeah, the kids.

An income of \$98,000 doesn't cut it. You need just shy of four hundred. Even then, you shop at Costco.

Price and mortgage costs are why real estate's in trouble right now. Sales have been declining as listings rise. Days-on-market is growing. The sales-to-new-listings ratio is tanking. Prices are starting to

wilt. No crash, but not what realtors expected after the Bank of Canada started to loosen rates.

Some people think things are getting out of control. A symbol of that could be the greenlighting of NOTL's first five-star hotel.

It's a massive real estate play on the former public school site with 129 rooms, restaurants, conference centre, buried parking and a hulking four-storey presence. At least a hundred people will work there.

Will it raise land values? Or devalue surrounding homes? Is yet another high-end hotel needed here? Or does this, along with current real estate prices, herald the forever-end of the small-town residential vibe?

David Jones is a hotel guy. His Q124 has expanded wildly along Queen Street in recent years, trying to make the most of the heritage theme people flock here to experience.

He and his partners have spent and borrowed millions, now owning a clutch of storefronts, about 80 guest suites, a lounge, bar, restaurant and even a high-tech garden sitting atop underground parking.

The thing is a success. But Jones is not happy.

The Parliament Oak hotel is too much, he says. "I feel bad for the neighbours. This is not the feel or look that should be brought to Niagara-on-the-Lake," he told me.

"When we built, we had to match the average height of buildings in town. If we'd gone to 60-feet (like Parliament Oak) it would look stupid. It would look awful. And yet they approved that in a residential area. It's also insulting that council would think we need more high-quality hotels. We're not full. If we were full every night all summer, I'd say, sure, build. But we're not."

Local politicians, he adds, "are selling this town short." By the way, his hotel hosted wedding vows recently in the fancy high-tech roof garden. A neighbour purposefully ruined it, Jones says. "He cranked his stereo way up. I guess some people are never happy."

A lot of them, actually. *Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister. Email: garth@garth.ca.*

## Setting the record straight: Many town staff are new or inexperienced

Dear editor:

The concluding paragraph of Ron Fritz's letter, ("Town must pick and choose its legal battles," The Lake Report, July 4) states that "town staff are knowledgeable ... and their advice should not

be ignored lightly."

Unfortunately, when it comes to development issues, our town staff are either temporary or have occupied their positions for a short period of time.

We have had an interim

chief administrative officer since the highly competent Marnie Cluckie resigned last December to become Hamilton's city manager.

The community and development services director has served in that position since

March 2022 while the manager of planning services started in October 2023.

The senior heritage planner was appointed in May. She replaces Denise Horne, who grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake, graduated from

the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts, and held the position for eight years.

The new appointee recently received a Ph.D. from York University in medieval and renaissance studies. Her thesis was on a Norwegian

cathedral.

It's unfortunate that the current town staff has little experience with the critical issues facing Niagara-on-the-Lake today.

**Elizabeth Masson**  
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# All those letters to the editor mean something



**ARCHITEXT**

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

Just as I still adhere to visceral creative process of designing by hand on paper, I may be somewhat of a Neanderthal when it comes to reading.

For me, there is something about holding and reading a printed book, periodical, magazine or newspaper that creates a connection in my mind with the author of each piece of writing that is impossible to achieve in an electronic version.

So it is that, every Thursday morning — generally, as I finish brewing my second carafe of coffee — when the flag is raised on our post box to indicate The Lake Report has been delivered, I hike out to the end of the driveway and fetch the paper.

Then, I settle down in my old wing chair, mug of coffee readily at-hand, and read the weekly edition cover-to-cover.

Now, by way of full disclosure, I rarely read the current “news” stories first, but rather open the paper to the opinion section to search out the letters to the editor and begin with those.

And, only after reading these letters, do I proceed to the rest of the newspaper’s contents.

I do this simply because the content of these letters inform me about what truly matters to the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The writers’ comments about issues that have motivated them to devote their personal time and effort to express their opinions in this publication provide me with a deeper understanding of our community in all its facets.

To be clear, I may not agree with the individual opinions expressed and,

in some instances might fundamentally disagree, but each letter written provides an invaluable window into the various positions of this town’s constituents.

That said, this week I’d like to visit a few of these recent letters and, with all due respect to the writers, provide some colour commentary.

Let’s begin with the “Letter of the Week” penned by Lydia Madonia in the June 27 edition of this paper (“Let’s focus on realistic solutions, not just opposition”) wherein she pleaded for “residents to come together and agree on a realistic, mutually beneficial and livable plan” for development.

I wholeheartedly agree with her.

This column has, each and every year since 2018, pointed out that Niagara-on-the-Lake lacks urban design guidelines to inform and define development initiatives.

These guidelines are, in every instance where instituted in towns and cit-



Brian Marshall hopes town councillors are reading letters from residents, who don’t oppose development, they just oppose poorly thought out development.

this undertaking.

As Madonia so aptly points out, “... development of vacant land will happen whether we like it or not. We need to be part of a planning committee with ideas and acceptable compromises.”

However, not only do some members of council and staff routinely ignore this committee’s recommendations, they have gone so far as to sideline and/or dismiss two of the most knowledgeable design professionals on the committee when those individuals had the temerity to question staff recommendations that conflicted with official plan provisions and best practices from urban planning and architectural perspectives.

Furthermore, no one in this community — who I have communicated with — is against development.

The citizens of NOTL are uniformly educated, intelligent, informed and realistic. They recognize and accept development will occur in every area of our town.

However, nearly without exception, residents want that development to be compatible with the existing character and cultural heritage landscapes of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s neighbourhoods.

Derek Collins, in his letter published in The Lake Report’s July 4 edition (“Development, sure. But it must fit in”), wrote: “This is not being anti-development, as some would like to claim, but it does call for development that is sensitive to the heritage and historical values of NOTL.”

In other words, they want the community to manage future development and not allow developers to manage

the future of our community.

In another letter published in the July 4 edition (“Town must pick and choose its legal battles”), on the topic of the potential costs of litigation should the council refuse a development application, Ron Fritz writes: “I am not advocating a capitulation in every case.”

“Litigation is a costly exercise and responsible councillors should make decisions supporting litigation only in cases where there is a reasonable probability of success,” he adds.

Here again, I find myself agreeing with the position.

In fact, in the Feb. 15 Arch-i-text column (“Arch-i-text: A concrete look at local governance”) speaking to the wise use of budgeted funds for legal expenses vis-à-vis contesting development applications, I stated, “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 which may be used for future decision-making around development applications — without the need for expensive legal wrangling.”

Unfortunately, capitulation by this council appears to be the “order of the day” in the face of a planning staff that uniformly recommends that development applications be approved.

Apparently, the lesson presented by Fort Erie’s successful defence of its official plan and community character before the Ontario Land Tribunal earlier this year, based on its planning staff report, has been completely ignored by NOTL’s lord mayor who, as the town’s “CEO” — albeit “part-time” — is responsible for setting strategic direction and priorities for staff.

Moreover, the recent application for the Parliament Oak property, given that it is one of a very few properties zoned institutional in town,

is located in a single-family residential area and is an application for rezoning to commercial rather than residential, would be one of those cases wherein, as Fritz put it, has “a reasonable probability of success.”

Further, successful litigation in this case would establish a clear precedent for future development applications.

Money well spent. Which brings me to a letter received in the last few days.

This letter, penned by Richard Connelly — who has five decades of experience as an engineer specializing in planning and engineering land development projects across North America — raises a highly concerning issue: has council considered the downline costs of the developments they are willy-nilly supporting?

Speaking to the issue of servicing infrastructure for the significant land-use changes, he points out that “the local infrastructure at Parliament Oak is old and close to the end of its design life” and that, in his experience, “land use change required studies to ensure that the sites were capable of supporting the development prior to the municipality approving the change in land use.”

These studies to include “sewage flows, demand on water supply, demand on fire protection, the need for on-site storm water management, utility capacities, roadway access capacities and structure (extending to Niagara Stone Road).”

In the absence of these studies — which should have been required by staff prior to deeming the application complete — he warns that the lord mayor and council are “exposing taxpayers to potential and significant cost for upgrading old and inadequate infrastructure that currently exists.”

Sounds like a case of “penny-wise and pound-foolish” to me.

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

**“Apparently, the lesson presented by Fort Erie’s successful defence of its official plan and community character before the Ontario Land Tribunal earlier this year, based on its planning staff report, has been completely ignored by NOTL’s lord mayor who, as the town’s “CEO” — albeit “part-time” — is responsible for setting strategic direction and priorities for staff.”**

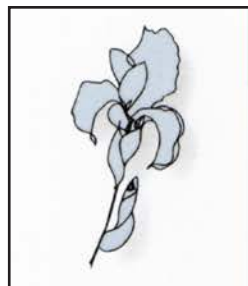
ies across North America, based on a commonly held vision — developed by the community — of what acceptable and contextually appropriate development looks like in each town.

In no way does this limit development within a town or city; rather, the guidelines define what is acceptable where and the criteria that must be used to ensure each development “fits” within the context of the existing neighbourhoods, streetscapes and architecture.

In fact, many of our current town councillors endorsed contextual development in their 2022 platforms but, to my knowledge, no overture has been made by council to initiate

Interestingly, that is, in part, the function of the urban design committee as specified in its purpose and mandate: “...provides urban design advice and recommendations to council and town staff ... with respect to planning applications and any other urban-design-related matters that council and staff may request the committee’s advice on.”

“The committee also provides design advice on the potential physical and aesthetic impact of proposed buildings, structures, landscapes, parks and infrastructure projects to the community’s public realm, including an evaluation of its relationship to the site and its surrounding character.”



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Cora Long D.D.



# Serious questions about AI and our future | Board acted **appropriately** in firing chief librarian

Dear editor:  
As artificial intelligence starts to do a lot of our thinking, will we be in danger of losing our capacity to think?

Imagine having every answer at our fingertips. A calm voice to guide us through a myriad of decisions far, far beyond the basics that we see today.

Doctors, lawyers and other professions — every conceivable scenario programmed into an AI interface.

Why study when the data and answers are all immediately available? To what extent will we need to learn history, math or science when AI has it all, just ask?

So, what is the downside to this technological marvel?

Well, for starters, studying and learning form the foundation for critical thinking.

We call on our memory to compare and rationalize scenarios that give us

perspective and guide our decisions.

We have a pretty good idea of where memory starts and ends. Short-term memories form in the hippocampus and, if the situation calls for it, they stabilize into long-term memories in the cortex.

If we move evermore in the direction of AI satisfying our immediate, short-term needs, will we be abandoning the studying and learning process that fills that cortex?

In short, will the ever-expanding AI universe create a society not unlike drones, unable to draw on our own accumulated experience and intelligence to think critically?

Finally, what data will AI use to fill the minds of society, and who and how will it be provided?

Think about it.

Is Big Brother lurking around the corner?

*Don Mustill  
NOTL*

Dear editor:  
Re: your June 27 story, "Group of residents wants library board to commit to neutrality," I support the broad principles of neutrality in library collection selection.

This ensures our library materials represent a diversity of ideological viewpoints. But I also support the decision of the library board to fire the former NOTL chief librarian over the commentary she published under her occupational title.

According to the library board's explanation for Cathy Simpson's termination, her employment was not ended for her belief in library neutrality, per se.

Rather, she was fired because she unilaterally issued a public statement without submitting it for approval, contravening her terms of employment. Moreover, following subsequent discussions with the board, she refused to co-operate in a plan to try to remediate the

injury caused by her error.

Her error was that her public statement was rooted in talking points developed by a not-for-profit organization called FAIR (the Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism).

Library neutrality is not the only cause for which FAIR lobbies. Its advocacy campaigns have included attacking school-based anti-bullying and inclusion initiatives supporting gender identity.

They have specifically advocated in favour of misgendering youth by rejecting their preferred pronouns. This advocacy undermines schools being safe spaces and heightens LGBTQ youth suicide risks.

Our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees freedom of conscience and expression, but it also protects citizens from discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression.

On that count, FAIR's advocacy is offensive to

many NOTL resident who identify as LGBTQ. For its part, FAIR asserts it is not transphobic, because it has active members who identify as LGBTQ.

Rather than accept their representations of denial, I would urge others to simply read the materials used in these other FAIR advocacy campaigns.

Simpson's newspaper column contained messages cribbed from FAIR. So effectively her editorial associated our library with FAIR and all its campaigns, including those targeting the interests of the LGBTQ community.

She was offered an opportunity to retain her position by committing to work collaboratively with the board on a plan to redress the association with FAIR.

In the interim, her staff decided to publicly stand up against her. Without the support of her staff, it was untenable for her to continue in a position of supervision over colleagues

whose confidence she had lost. The board was left with no other alternative but to terminate her.

Our former chief librarian chose to accept a generous severance package and is now enjoying an early retirement. Property owners have borne and paid the cost of her choices.

The residents of NOTL owe her no further consideration. Our library board acted in good faith and appropriately in resolving this matter.

I have no ongoing concerns about the library collection reflecting a diversity of views, consistent with the expression of free speech, but also (and very importantly) excluding hate speech targeting LGBTQ and other vulnerable protected minorities.

Prejudice flows from ignorance and not knowledge. A key objective of a library is to redress ignorance and impart knowledge.

*Steve McGuinness  
Virgil*



## IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER 0.18

AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LAND AND PREMISES AT THE FOLLOWING MUNICIPAL ADDRESSES IN THE TOWN OF NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

### NOTICE OF WITHDRAWAL OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

TAKE NOTICE that the notice of intention to designate the property is deemed to be withdrawn by the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for the real property at

**1 PAXTON LANE**

**Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake this 10th day of July, 2024 Grant Bivol, Town Clerk**



## IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER 0.18

AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LAND AND PREMISES AT THE FOLLOWING MUNICIPAL ADDRESSES IN THE TOWN OF NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

### NOTICE OF PASSING OF BY-LAW

TAKE NOTICE that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has passed

**By-law No. 2024-045**

**By-law No. 2024-046**

**By-law No. 2024-047**

Designating the following properties as being of cultural heritage value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act R.S.O. 1990, Chapter 0.18

**Peake Inn, 23 Vincent Avenue**

**Warner House, 287 Warner Road**

**Best House, 463 King Street**

**Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake this 10th day of July, 2024**

**Grant Bivol, Town Clerk**



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## Sorry, but NOTL is **not a five-star town**

Dear editor:  
Further to Brian Marshall's July 4 Arch-i-text column, "Luxury Parliament Oak hotel is pie-in-the-sky," far beyond absolutely real parking issues, a hotel of this status competes with all five-star

hotels in the world.  
Why would the ultra-wealthy visit NOTL, quaint as it is, when they're also choosing from Paris, New York, Tokyo, Tuscany, Dubai ...?  
The world is their oyster: why come to the land

of gelato and chapeaux?  
Not to ignore our lovely green spaces and charming wineries, but compared to the Loire Valley, Australia or New Zealand, we come up a wee bit short.  
Niagara-on-the-Lake is

a lovely place, but it's not a five-star town.  
And hey, can we please talk about why we're building two massive hotels during a housing crisis?  
*Lauren O'Malley  
NOTL*

## Now we know what a **'five-star hotel'** entails

Dear editor:  
The Lake Report's Arch-i-text column by Brian Marshall parsing of the meaning of a "five -star hotel" was fascinating reading, ("Luxury Parliament Oak hotel is pie-in-the-sky," July 4).  
I had no idea what a five-star hotel entailed and I suspect none of those who support the Parliament Oak plan and threw that phrase out did either.  
Now I know. It is rather like the overworked phrase when people do try to plump their home city as "world class."  
It is meaningless unless



A rendering of the proposed Parliament Oak hotel.

you actually do a deep dive into the phrase, as Mr. Marshall has done.  
As a longtime heritage volunteer activist, my first reaction to hearing that the Parliament Oak school would be repurposed as a

five-star hotel was, what does that mean?  
It appears to demean all the other very fine hotel accommodations available in Niagara-on-the-Lake.  
It becomes apparent that few, if any, know what the

phrase means, other than the intrepid Mr. Marshall.  
I have never met Mr. Marshall but I do read and respect his knowledgeable columns.  
*Gail Benjafield  
St. Catharines*



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# Virgil woman on a mission of love

Continued from Front Page

Liz Pilzecker, a professional pet sitter from Old Town, told Durksen that she had been driving past her home the night before after feeding a client's cat in Virgil and noticed someone had damaged the small Pride flag on her front lawn and thrown it into the middle of the street.

Pilzecker picked up the flag and attempted to return it, but with Durksen and her husband out that evening, no one answered the door.

While explaining this Durksen the following day, Pilzecker pulled out a new Pride flag that she had personally ordered on Amazon and offered it as a replacement for the one that was vandalized.

That was so kind and nice, said Durksen, because she hadn't yet noticed it was missing.

Upon inspecting the damaged flag, it appeared to her that someone put it on the pavement and spun the tires of a bicycle over it repeatedly.

"Which is kind of consistent with what a neighbour had told me, that a bunch of teenagers had been hanging around near the corner (of her street and Line 1)," she said.

Pilzecker, who moved to NOTL eight years ago from the GTA, said she was motivated to inform Durksen of the vandalized flag and replace it because she didn't want the residents of the home to think Niagara-on-the-Lake is a hateful place.

"I wanted to show them that there is love in this town," she said.

"I don't get it. I just don't," she added.



Sheri Durksen says she won't let vandals win — she'll keep a Pride flag visible at all hours now. RICHARD WRIGHT

"For me, it has never been an issue that someone's orientation would cause that much hate. I don't fathom it. I wasn't raised that way."

Durksen put the new flag on the original flag's stand and returned it to the small flower bed at the end of her driveway, hoping that was the end of the story.

It lasted a couple of days. On the evening of July 5, vandals returned and removed the new flag, stand and all.

A neighbour then pointed out the stand near the sidewalk across the street, but the flag that had been replaced by Pilzecker was gone.

Furious and determined not to have her beliefs and support of the LGBTQ+ community censored, Durksen doubled down.

"So when the flag was destroyed originally a few days earlier, I thought, 'Well, if people have an issue with a small Pride flag, I guess I just have to give them more exposure.'"

The second incident put her into full-on Pride exposure mode.

Durksen fired up her

computer and began ordering several small pride flags and one large flag for her porch and adorned the front of her house in the bright colours of the rainbow.

But her efforts will not stop there, she said.

"I have a couple more flags with stands coming from Amazon and I have some solar spotlights," she said.

She is going to group several small flags together and shine lights on them, "so people can see them at all times, day or night."

"I am hoping that this will make it harder for people to come and vandalize or steal them. And it will also make them more visible 24 hours a day because apparently that is what we need."

Durksen said she has seen first-hand how hate and intolerance can hurt those it is directed at. She knows people who suffered in silence and feared speaking out, enduring incredible sorrow and feelings of isolation as a result.

"I have some older family members who, well after they were into their 40s

and after they had children and had been married, their whole lives had been destroyed because they were never allowed to be who they were when they were younger," Durksen said.

"We have put the onus on the gay community to be the ones to advocate for themselves and to fight all of these prejudices and for the creation of laws so they can have equality in our society."

"I don't think that is fair." Yes, she added, people do need to fight for themselves.

"But people around them who aren't directly affected by these inequalities, we need to step up and fight on their behalf — to fight with them."

She didn't report the incident to police but hopes that speaking out will make a difference.

This was the first year Durksen decided to become so vocal and visible in her support of the gay community, co-ordinating her efforts with Pride Month, which is held in June every year.

But it won't be her last and it's likely she won't only limit her efforts to Pride Month.

She's not one to put signs of any kind on her lawn, including political ones, "but this year I thought it was time."

"I just hear people talking, even just anecdotally, and I feel there is a backlash," she added, recalling the rash of vandalism incidents perpetrated against the Pride crosswalk in Old Town last summer.

"I just feel we are moving in the wrong direction. I feel people need to stand up and step up."



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

**Tasman Lake in this country is one of the few lakes in the world where you can see icebergs.**

Last issue:

Category: -OLOGIES

Clue: Physical and cultural are branches of this "study of humans."

Answer: What is anthropology?

Answered first by: Claudia Grimwood

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Jane Morris, Francis Murray, Lynda Collet, Susan Hamilton, Sue Rautenberg, Brian Narhi, Jesse Agnew, Marjory Walker-Barone, Jim Dandy, Wade Durling, Pam Dowling, Gordon Yanow, Sheila Meloche, Marla Percy, Bob Wheatley, Catherine Clarke, Nancy Rocca, Greeba-Ann Birch, Elaine Landray, Sylvia Wiens, Daniel Smith, Margie Enns, Katie Reimer,

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

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Andrew Lawrie as Leonard Vole, Marla McLean as Romaine Vole, Patrick Galligan as Sir Wilfrid Robarts, QC, with the cast of Agatha Christie's *Witness for the Prosecution*. EMILY COOPER

## Niagara Symphony Orchestra to perform at Jackson-Triggs gala

Staff  
The Lake Report

The Niagara Symphony Orchestra is celebrating 75 years of musical talent this summer, with a performance at the Jackson-Triggs Estate Winery this Sunday, July 14.

A limited number of dinner/concert tickets have been released for the gala, inspired by William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Those who purchase a dinner/concert will be able to enjoy both the five-course

meal at 5 p.m. and the concert at 7:30 p.m. for \$225 plus tax, while those only interested in the concert can purchase a ticket for \$75 plus tax.

The symphony orchestra's music director, Bradley Thachuk, leads the orchestra in selections from Felix Mendelssohn's enchanting score from 1826 and 1842, which has long been associated with the play.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [niagarasymphony.com/midsummer-nights-gala](http://niagarasymphony.com/midsummer-nights-gala).

## Highs and lows in Shaw Festival's 'Witness for the Prosecution'

**WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION**  
\*\* (out of five)

Royal George Theatre, 2 hours 50 minutes, with two intermissions. Ends Oct. 13. Writer: Agatha Christie. Director: Alistair Newton.

Penny-Lynn Cookson  
Special to The Lake Report

"When truth is clearly evident, it speaks for itself."

Agatha Christie the world's bestselling novelist and the "Queen of Crime," leads us to seek the truth in a noir genre courtroom drama of justice, dislocation, love and betrayal.

Christie adapted her 1925 short story "Traitor's Hands" for the London stage in 1953 as the acclaimed "Witness for the Prosecution."

As a keen observer of her time and of human relationships, Christie was meticulous, digging deep to bring insight to her characters and her writing on crime. Her truth resonates.

Alistair Newton's "Witness for the Prosecution" is a flawed noir version, one that entertains but also disappoints.

The setting is 1950s post-war grey London. The Empire is gone. Foreigners are viewed with suspicion, as spies or Communists.

The curtain of the Cold War has descended.

Leonard Vole, an affable, unemployed, broke young man has befriended an older, wealthy woman. He is accused of her murder. He is the beneficiary of her new will and claims he is innocent.

The dead woman's faithful housekeeper dislikes Vole's opportunistic influences on her romantically susceptible employer. She believes he is guilty. Others believe not.

Vole's only witness and alibi is his German wife, Romaine. Will she be the devoted, loving, supportive spouse he expects her to be? Is she even who she claims to be?

Sir Wilfrid Robarts, Q.C., the famed criminal barrister, finds Vole naive, yet shrewd and decides to defend him. As an outspoken misogynist ("Never trust a woman"), he is nonplussed to meet Mrs. Vole.

He expects a weepy, irrational woman requiring his patronizing advice. Instead, a femme fatale slowly sashays into his office, her tight skirt restricting movement, a Marilyn Monroe wiggle calculated for an audience laugh.

There is immediate dislike and distrust between them. Her demeanour is cold, controlled, inscrutable. In a voice devoid of emo-

tion, she provides the alibi her husband needs.

Marla McLean plays the role externally with no suggestion of a woman of depth who has survived the wartime Russian occupation of Germany and is now a foreigner in a strange land.

In the Old Bailey courtroom, Sir Wilfrid (Patrick Galligan) and the Crown prosecutor, Mr. Myers, Q.C. (Graeme Somerville), effectively joust and parry in the gamesmanship of the trial. The staging of the bench, dock and pews restricts and engages the players.

Lawyers for the defence and prosecution are combatants. They do not sit shoulder to shoulder. They are seated physically apart with their assisting lawyers.

The accused, Leonard Vole (Andrew Lawrie), has his back to us in the dock. His outbursts of voice, facial expressions and body language are reduced or lost to view.

Once in the witness box, the Vole-hating housekeeper (Monica Parks) races through her lines with a Scottish accent of such variation and rapidity that coherence is lost.

The costume designer, Judith Bowden, has adhered to 1950s fashion, also giving nods to the German Expressionist painter Ernst Kirchner and Hollywood film

noir, but her designs don't accord with the characters as scripted.

Romaine Vole's vibrant satin fitted suits, accompanied by matching accessories and a very long cigarette holder, are not indicative of a woman living frugally in a tiny flat above a shop at Euston Station with an unemployed husband.

When the detective bounds on stage, he is not English, low key, conservative. Instead, he is a swaggering American gumshoe in a broad-brimmed fedora pulled down over one eye.

He is a bizarre combination of a zoot suiter, a hard boiled Weegee detective and a flapping attempt at Colombo. Whatever he is, he got a big laugh from the audience.

Diversity in casting is all to the good but where the script calls for a strawberry blond, provide a wig or drop the reference line.

In "Witness for the Prosecution," Lady Justice may be blindfolded but she wields a big sword. Agatha Christie has written about love and truth as double-edged swords.

Truth enlightens and empowers, but it also deceives and destroys.

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

## Tickets on sale for Yellow Door Theatre's 'Seussical' production

Staff  
The Lake Report

The Yellow Door Theatre Project is back with another summer production led by its talented cast of young performers from the Niagara region.

Its production of "Seussical Jr." will be staged on July 20 at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines.

The Cat in the Hat, Horton the Elephant and everyone's favourite Dr. Seuss characters will spring to life in this musical extravaganza, directed by Yellow Door Theatre's artistic producer, Andorlie Hillstrom.

This ensemble cast features 50 Niagara-area school children ages eight to 17 who are part of the NOTL-based theatre project.

"Yellow Door Theatre Project and FirstOntario Performing Arts centre are pleased to be presenting a second year of summer musical theatre fun for kids in the Niagara Region," said Hillstrom in a media release.

Tickets are now available at the performing arts centre's box office: visit [firstontariopac.ca](http://firstontariopac.ca) or [yellowdoortheatre.com](http://yellowdoortheatre.com) for more information, or call the box office at 905-688-0722.



A few of the stars of this year's "Seussical Jr." production. From left, Avery Kasper (Horton), Elina Moussi (Sour Kangaroo), Claire Falle (Gertrude) and Grace Nicolau-Wood (Young Kangaroo). SUPPLIED

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Left: May Bacchus, from St. Catharines, and her American lurch tree. She acquired this tree in the 1970s and says it could be up to 100 years old. Top right: Visitors on the garden tour stop to admire a pond with floating lily pads. Bottom right: Artist Peter Sobol working on a sculpture of a woman's face. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

# Huge turnout for horticultural society's annual garden tour

Richard Wright  
The Lake Report

A new name and a new approach for this year's Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society's garden tour has paid off, say organizers. Pre-event ticket sales for the July 6 event were among the highest in recent years, with about 700 bookings thanks to an aggressive promotional campaign in the weeks prior and a focus on do-it-yourself gardens. "The homes we chose were specific because the homeowners designed and looked after the gardens

themselves," said tour co-chair Susan Jurbala, who shared the organizing duties with Sandra Stokes. "There were no garden landscaping companies that came in ... so we call it the Gardeners Garden Tour. And this year, we asked the homeowners to stay for the day, so people who have questions can speak directly with them." By all accounts, she added, visitors were very happy with the new approach. There were a total of nine gardens for viewing, each unique. Among them were able a country garden, a seren-

ity sanctuary, one called Sensory Delight, a tropical garden that featured real palm trees and "at our Anne Street location, she grows everything from seed," said Jurbala. "She is out there every week tilling her compost: it's totally organic." Also, the addition of Southbrook Vineyards became a big selling point. The winery was chosen for its "light-on-the-land" approach to production. "Bill Redelmeier, who owns Southbrook, was very keen to talk about his pollinator garden and how it fits in with ... the bio-dynamic

vineyard," said Jurbala. The firsts didn't stop there. The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre on Ricardo Street was also a new addition to the show, serving as a headquarters and featuring live music, garden-themed exhibits, plein air artists and refreshments. It also became ground zero for the emergence of the Niagara Bonsai Society as a featured presenter. Nancy Barry, president of the bonsai society, spent the day showing off her members' creations and was grateful for the opportunity to do so.

"One of our older members knows Cindy Grant, the president of the horticultural society, and he chatted about it with her, and I happen to live down the street from another person who is involved here and she said, 'We are looking for something unique,' and I said, 'Funny, we thought we would like to do a show with you guys.'" "The planets aligned and it all worked out," she said. The partnership helps those without the ability to grow a garden themselves the chance to develop a green thumb, said Barry. "It's something people

can do even if they live in an apartment and have just a balcony," Barry said. "They can practise their artistry with plants, growing them and nurturing them but also designing them." This year's tour was one for the books, said Stokes, who is already anxious to do it again next year. "The committee has been outstanding and we had a great time," she said. "When you volunteer you want to enjoy it. If we didn't enjoy it we wouldn't be doing it again next year and I think the committee is staying pretty much as it is." wright@niagaranow.com

# Travis Seetoo takes you behind 'Roll of Shaw' at next Learn & Live

Staff  
The Lake Report

The newest installment of Learn & Live at the NOTL Public Library will give attendees a look at a different side of the Shaw Festival. On Monday, July 22, Shaw actor and director Travis Seetoo will speak about his new play "The Roll of Shaw." More than a play, it's an educational tool and a game all in one, Seetoo told The Lake Report. He recently completed a master's thesis at Brock University on comparative literature and art, which

he is passionate about and looks at the intersections between the arts and education. He explained in an interview that the idea for "Roll of Shaw" came to him after doing a play with a lacklustre turnout. "I thought it was so sad that people weren't coming to see Shaw, because I'd worked here so long and I think he's so great and has so much to say," Seetoo said. He started to brainstorm ways to get more people to appreciate Shaw's work—and landed on combining his love of Dungeons &

Dragons, fantasy games, and art and literature. "I thought, what if I reverse-engineer that and make a role-playing game that uses Shaw characters and Shaw stories and Shaw's politics," Seetoo said. He workshopped the idea on high school and middle school classes, along with a presentation at the University of Toronto before bringing it to the Shaw Festival itself. Artistic director Tim Carroll gave it the green light and with some tweaking to make it work as a show, "Roll of Shaw" is now play-



Director and actor Travis Seetoo's goal with Roll of Shaw is to make the work of George Bernard Shaw more approachable to wider audiences. Guests can learn how he does it during July 22's Learn & Live at the NOTL Library. DAVID COOPER

role-playing to play this game or see it," he said. During his Learn & Live presentation, Seetoo plans to elaborate more on his inspiration behind the project, along with the "nitty gritty technical stuff" that one doesn't typically learn about when they just come to see the show. "There will be a lot of jokes, too, it won't just be a lecture," Seetoo said. To register for the remaining spots for "The Roll of Shaw: The Creation of a Dramatically Shavian Game" and Play on July 22 at 7 p.m., visit the NOTL library's website.

ing at the festival's Spiegeltent this summer. Seetoo said the new way of looking at Shaw's

work makes it more approachable. "You don't need to know anything about Shaw or

**TEAM OF THE WEEK**

# All Green Irrigation U6 team



Meet the members of the NOTL Soccer Club's U6 team, sponsored by All Green Irrigation. Front row, from left: Meghan Dyck, Rory Muste, Dallas Gorham, Luca Mirabella, Shyloh Konopka, Wesley Kruitbosch, Sophia Pillitteri, Weston Janny, Kai Zorko, Maxwell Wang, Joanne Guo, Lennon Pepe, Nora Plyley, Julianne Hernder, Jack Sykes and Kareem Hameed. Back row: Coach Mirko Zorko, Rowan Souter, Leo Pryzbek, Joey Schudlo, Mason Nauta, Angus Happer, Leland Bastedo, Ezra Reeve, Conor McCarthy, Henry Adams, Ryan Redekop, Jackson Taylor, Ralph Rana, Vincent Mazza, Bennett Skubel, Liam Charette and coach Jordana Hernder. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

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# Barbie and her Kens hit the links

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club was pretty in pink Tuesday as dozens of women descended on the course for the bi-annual NOTL Women's Invitational Tournament.

This year's theme was Barbie and the "Barbie" movie, so pink proliferated everywhere from the attire to cart decorations, golf balls and a Barbie photo booth.

In all, 68 golfers from 18 different clubs — two-thirds of the golfers were from around Niagara and elsewhere — registered for the tourney, which was sold out within four days, said organizer Martha Cruikshank.

Longtime club member and multi-time women's senior and super senior champion Barbara Ahluwalia was the honorary "Barbie" for the day and was on hand to greet competitors when they checked in.



Kevin Foster was among those who were "Ken Enough" to help out. He and photographer Janice White were in charge at the Barbie photo booth. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

She was chauffeured around the course throughout the day as part of her official duties.

"Barbie" star Ryan Gosling was not available but a team of "Ken Enough" men — husbands, grounds crew and golf course staff — were recruited to load bags on carts and direct the golfers.

Low gross winners were Louise Robitaille (NOTL) and Betty Divok (Bridgewa-

ter) who shot 3-over 75.

Flight winners were Yolanda Henry of NOTL and Lynne Nyewening of Bridgewater, net 66 (flight A), Brenda Bell (NOTL) and Kathleen Davie (St. Catharines) with 68 (flight B) and Robin Foster (NOTL) and Bev Morden (Toronto) with 65 (flight C).

Meanwhile, in men's league play last Thursday, club champion James Grigjanis-Meusel again was

tops, shooting a 1-under 35. Ted Baker had the best Stableford points total, with 23.

Grigjanis-Meusel also won gross skins for birdies on #8 and #9.

But the day's big winner was Drew Porter, who scored \$900 for winning the weekly putting contest. After weeks of no one managing the feat, Porter slid one home one from about 30 feet for the big payday.

Other winners: Patrick Craig (closest to 150 on #1), Jim Cosgrove (longest putt #2), Ricky Watson (longest drive #3), and closest to the pin shooters, Devon Neudorf (#4) and Joe Mulholland (#9).

Gross skins went to Joe Doria (#4), Nick Elia (#5) and Craig (eagle on #6). Net skins: Don Stewart (#2), Craig (#6), Jack Hanna (#7) and Josh D'Agostino (#8).

In Tuesday's WOOFs scramble, the team of Brock Sansom, Adam Cutler, Hugh Hutton and Norm Kerr were tops, shooting -7.



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Jessi Harewicz, 41, conquered Lake Ontario this week, leaving from Queen's Royal Park on Sunday night. SUPPLIED

## B.C. swimmer, 41, completes **first lake crossing** of 2024

Tony Chisholm  
Special to The Lake Report

Jessi Harewicz of Vancouver jumped into Lake Ontario in-Niagara-on-the-Lake just after 10 p.m. Sunday and 22 hours later became the first person to swim the lake this year.

Harewicz, 41, a life-guard, trains year-round in the waters around B.C.

accompanied by her kayaking father.

The weather at the start from Queen's Royal Park was beautiful but the night was difficult with one to two-foot waves and 18 km/h southwest winds.

The water temperature was 22 C but near the end Harewicz had to battle a strong Humber River current, which slowed her to a

speed less than two kilometres an hour.

Her swim time was 22:07 when she arrived at Marilyn Bell Park in Toronto.

Her mission is to raise money for the "Swim to Survive" program, which teaches children the essential skills to survive an unexpected fall into deep water.

Harewicz is the third

Canadian to complete marathon swimming's Triple Crown (swimming the English Channel, Catalina Channel in California and circumnavigation of Manhattan Island).

She also was the first Canadian to swim the North Channel in Ireland, as well as numerous other tough swims around Vancouver Island.

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**Across**

- 9. Radical (9)
- 10. Accommodate (5)
- 11. Find the answer (5)
- 12. Holy Land (9)
- 13. Increase in speed (10)
- 14. Finishes (4)
- 16. "The great grey-green, greasy --- River" (Kipling) (7)
- 19. Scholar (7)
- 21. Possesses (4)
- 22. Quantifiable (10)
- 26. Heaven or hell, maybe (9)
- 27. Sort of line dance (5)
- 28. Marijuana (5)
- 29. Dear (9)

**Down**

- 1. Army dining room (4,4)
- 2. Leaning letter (6)
- 3. Armed resistance (9)
- 4. Smoked herring (6)
- 5. Sporting competitors (8)
- 6. Silence! (5)
- 7. Group of spectators (8)
- 8. Makes over (6)
- 15. Grease (9)
- 17. Lack of variety (8)
- 18. Unequal (3-5)
- 20. Adolescent (8)
- 21. E.g. Seville (6)
- 23. Drowsy (6)
- 24. Outlaw (6)
- 25. Experiment (5)

**Crossword Puzzle**

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
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11						12								
13												14		
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26												27		
28								29						

**Last issue's answers**

1	S	C	H	N	A	P	P	S	R	P	H			
	U	O	I											
10	A	R	O	G	A	N	T	C	R	A	S			
	A	N	N											
12	A	B	S	T	A	I	N							
	L	I	S											
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	E													
16	B													
21	H	A	I	R	L	E	S	S	O	N	A			
	H	A	D											
24	Y	A	R	M	O	U	T	H	F	R	T			
	M	M	C	O	L	I	V	E	O	I	L			
27	F	A	R	E	W	E	L	L	N	T	N			
	S	D	D											

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



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Top: Lee Cratt and his 1966 Chevrolet pickup truck. Bottom left: Terry Nord and his 1953 GMC 9300 pickup truck. Bottom right: A 1941 Willys Custom Coupe. Find more photos from the car show at [niagaranow.com](http://niagaranow.com)

## Classic cars a hit at Niagara Motors

Richard Wright  
The Lake Report

Pete Zeppetella rolled into the Niagara Motors third-annual car show in Virgil on Saturday, July 6 in a 71-year-old, half-finished, custom-made pickup — and he stole the show.

The faded orange convertible, adorned with sanding scars, murky remnants of flame trails and salivating demonic pumpkin heads, looked more ready for the scrapyards than it did for a stall at the show.

Still, it had something. And judging by the crowd it attracted as he put the old beast into park and stepped out under the hot Saturday sun, that something was stopping power.

Few could pull their eyes away.

Zeppetella, a St. Catharines native, was more than happy to let everyone know just what he had: a 1953 Chevrolet pickup.

“It’s got a 305 rebuilt (engine). It’s got voodoo cam-flat top pistons, high-compression. It’s got sleeves on the back so my back end flips up and it’s got a flip front end on it,” he said, going over just a portion of the truck’s specs and features.

It was the paint job, though, that was really the show-stopper. If Scooby-Doo’s Mystery Machine wasn’t a van, it would have been this.

“When I bought it, whoever had it before me did it all Halloween,” said Zeppetella, who has owned the truck since 2009.

“And when I started sanding it down, more Halloween stuff came out. I was going to paint it completely orange, right, but everyone likes it this way.”

His wasn’t the only vehicle to attract admirers.

Mel Deroches didn’t have a car in the show, but was caught leaning over a jet-black and pristine 1966 Chevy Nova.

There is something about a classic car, he said.

A product of the era he grew up in as a teenager, it wasn’t so much the Nova that turned his head, although he was duly impressed.

His tastes go back a little further.

“I grew up in the ‘40s and ‘50s. I like the cars from the ‘50s especially,” he said. “The ‘56 Chev, the ‘57 Chev. They are all solid cars, lots of good steel.”

There was plenty of steel at this show.

Organizers estimated there were close to 100 vehicles on the lot, ranging from 1920s-era hot rod Model Ts, 1960s-era Thunderbirds, Firebirds, Corvettes, 1950s family cruisers that seemed as long as a city block, new model Mustangs — both of the Shelby and non-Shelby variety — custom, factory, other worldly.

You name it, they were there and most of them came from Niagara.

Deroches was impressed. “I am surprised,” he said. “I thought there would be less cars here than there are, and nice ones too!”

“The guys that bring them here are so proud. These are their toys.”

Toys, yes. Cheap, no.

Just ask Lee Cratt, who went on vacation with his family to North Carolina in 1992 with no thoughts of buying a vehicle but still came home with a 1966 Chevy Pickup.

Still needing cash to use on vacation, he had to borrow the money to buy the truck.

Once he got the truck back to Canada, he took it apart right down to its bare frame and then put it back together over the next 25 years.

Despite that, the truck still has its original paint job. It looks as if it was sprayed yesterday.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake retiree also owns two Pontiac Firebirds, one a ‘67 and a ‘91 Trans Am convertible.

He is obviously a motorcycle and says he does it for his love of vehicles. But there’s also another reason:

“Because people like you come out and ask me about it,” he proudly stated as if talking about his first born.

“I get a real thrill because I did most of this. I didn’t paint it, but I put it all back together. It gives you a little bit of pride to know that you did this yourself.”

While Cratt did all the work himself, by being at the show he was helping others.

Organizers donated proceeds to Red Roof Retreat, a charitable organization that provides children, youth and young adults with special needs — and their families — with recreational and respite services.

“Red Roof is really close to our hearts,” said Matt Habinski, the car show’s lead organizer and a Niagara Motors employee.

“We are really proud to support them and their cause.”

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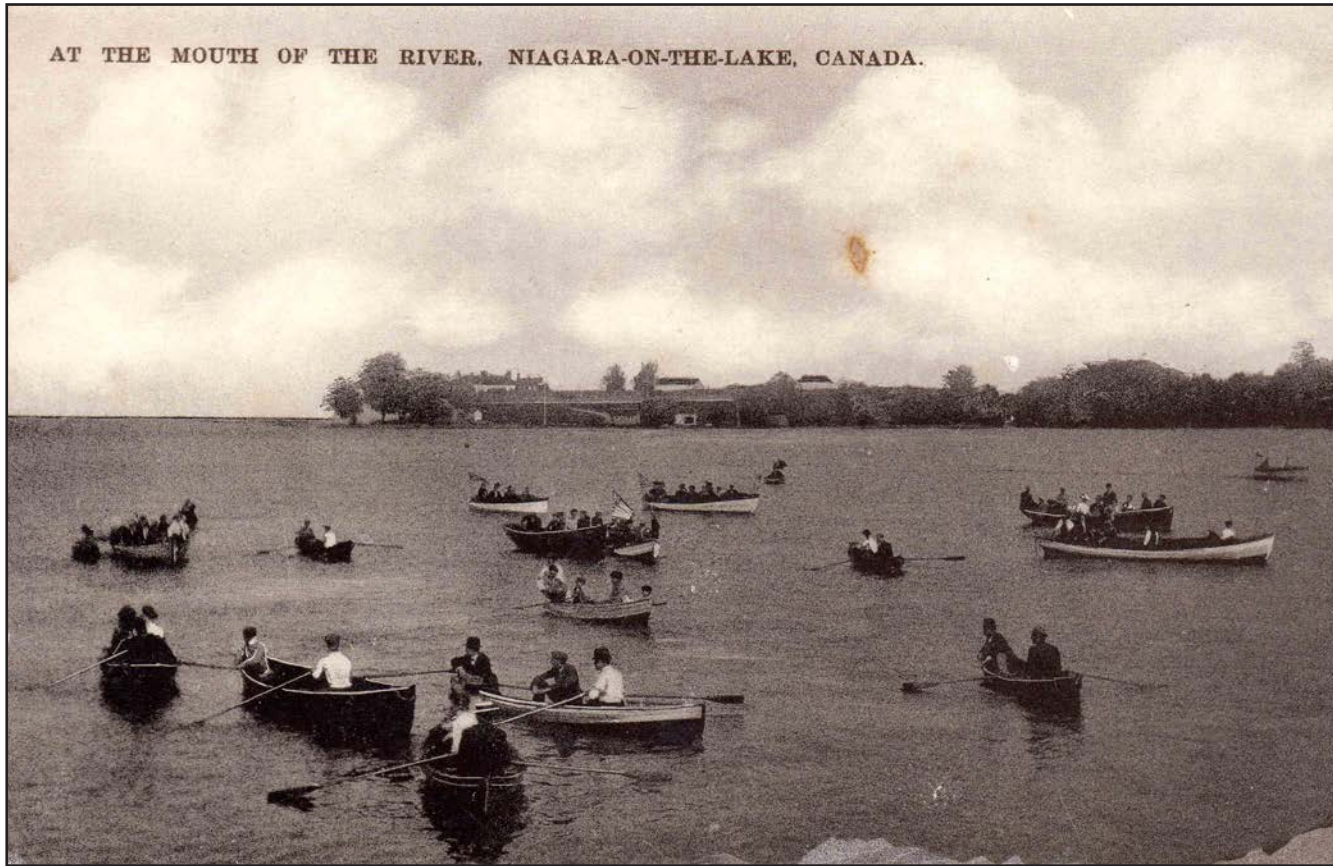
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# Row, row, row your boat

In our long history as a tourist destination, many visitors were able to rent a rowboat along the shoreline whether it be at the end of King Street as shown here (now Queen's Royal Park), near the marina or along the beach in the Chautauqua area. These rowboats were handcrafted by boatbuilders in town, such as Jack Redhead. The museum is fortunate to have an original rowboat on display in our upper galleries if you wanted to check one out. As you can see, they came in a variety of sizes and as many as 45 could be rented out at one time. Fortunately, this tradition has been kept alive through the popular Paddle Niagara company. Hopefully we can continue to offer more waterfront activities for visitors and "put the lake back in Niagara-on-the-Lake," as they say.

# On a NOTL Saturday, it was just like **ridin' a bike**



## Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

It was a perfect weather day, the Sunday of the July 4 weekend here in NOTL. Such perfect weather that nobody showed up for my afternoon Free Walking Tour.

I telephoned two friends of mine, inviting them to ride bikes along the Niagara Parkway to Queenston and back.

No hurry, just a pleasant ride, including a stop for an ice cream cone at the very authentic Walker's Market along the way.

Their responses were, "I haven't ridden a bike for over 30 years," and "I haven't ridden a bike in over 20 years," respectively.

I told them to come along:

"You'll be fine, It will be just like riding a bike."

This was too daring for them, so I left alone for a wonderful ride on a perfect day, in a perfect part of our world.

My first stop was Walker's Market. A picture perfect country market, third generation now, with lots of fresh produce, bright young employees, and crisply manicured lawns. The Walker family has it figured out.

Owner Jim Walker was proudly and smilingly out front greeting guests, and informed me that his son Jimmy had hurt his back the previous weekend, hefting big bags of corn.

Therefore, no freshly boiled corn on the cob for sale. Or is it cob on the corn? There is no right or wrong answer to this question.

Some say the corn is on the cob, and others say the cob is on the corn. This debate will rage on for years to come.

As ever their washrooms were spotlessly clean, and ice cream cones and sandwiches are generous, and still very fairly priced. Hurrah!



Ross Robinson doesn't think this sign is welcoming.

Walker's Market is so wonderfully dependable! Such a fabulous value.

Along the Parkway trail I pedalled, exchanging nods and waves and greetings with riders who were visiting the area, from the Greater Toronto Area and many other parts of the world. Everyone smiling. We are so fortunate to live in Niagara.

Before Queenston, I stopped at a farm that had a big, sloppily painted sign in front: "Pick your own peaches."

Sounded good, so up the driveway I went on my bike.

At the entrance, a hand lettered sign confronted me. The "Farm Rules" were listed: "No bags and food. Stay picking in signed area only. No loiter-

ing. Pick only if purchasing. Wash fruits before eating. No chasing or climbing. We reserve rights to refuse or revoke access."

The warmth of the welcome was underwhelming.

Not one to be easily daunted, I read the next sign. "Price: \$5 admission fee. Age four and over. \$4 per lb." (I asked the lad how many peaches were in a pound, and was told "three or four." Yikes! That's expensive.) Maximum 45 minutes picking time. Check out at weigh station. Cash/debit only."

The sign was so cold, and so hard to decipher, because several lines had been crossed out with gray duct tape.

The cashier cashed out four guests while I watched, and never once smiled.

Isn't our world a curious place? So much depends on attitudes.

Back in to downtown NOTL I rode, and stopping in front of the Court House to do some serious people watching. Fascinating!

I have become a serious and observant printed T-shirt aficionado.

A middle-aged man walked by, unshaven, with a bad haircut. His T-shirt read, "If you met my family, you'd understand."

A couple of minutes later, an older gent walked slowly by, using a cane. His T-shirt read, "I promised myself I would never be a grumpy old man. But here I am, NAILING IT."

I am certain the summer of 2024 is going to be a classic, one for the memory books.

So many problems in the world, political, financial, and just plain not good.

But here we are, on a parking-lot-like crowded main street.

Can't we ask the motorcycle riders not to rev up their bikes as they pass the cenotaph, and as they cross the Queen/King intersection? So obnoxious, and such an unwanted component of our town.

Let's enjoy our special wee corner, our Niagara, and count our blessings.

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# How AI is **catching up** to human doctors in medicine



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

Last year, we tackled the transformative role of artificial intelligence, or AI, and especially ChatGPT.

The latter provides user-friendly and quick access to large sources of information in the public space that could be applied to almost any subject from art to proteins, to health care, with ease between the user and computer akin to human conversation, especially using ChatGPT-4.

OpenAI's ChatGPT was introduced to the public in November 2022. It wasn't long before scientists and graduate students began using ChatGPT to write essays, grant proposals and do literature searches.

Soon medical students, residents and staff began to harness ChatGPT's ability

to write papers and assess clinical cases.

Harvard University's health-care system was among the first to study the implications of AI and, more recently, ChatGPT for health-care education, patient care and hospital systems.

The results were soon explored in a series of review articles in the New England Journal of Medicine beginning in 2022-20, and a new journal, the New England Journal of Medicine AI, from which an article published in April, titled "GPT versus Resident Physicians – A Benchmark Based on Official Board Scores" was used by me for this column.

It's no surprise that studies soon followed comparing ChatGPT's knowledge and analytical skills compared to those of medical students, residents, family practitioners and specialists.

It's important to point out that ChatGPT uses information available in the public space but does not, so far at least, have access to fee-for-access journals and textbooks.

ChatGPT depends on



others for information about the clinical examination and because it cannot read imaging X-rays, CT and MRI scans and other imaging studies, these were therefore excluded from this study.

Care was also taken, between studies, to scrub the program of any previous similar studies.

The Israeli study compared resident scores in the 2022 Israeli board residency examinations in five core disciplines: internal medicine, general surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology and psychiatry.

It then compared those scores with the results on the identical examination using ChatGPT-3.5 and 4.

How did ChatGPT fare in at recent comparison with physicians in Israel? Surprisingly well.

GPT-4 outscored residents in the 2022 examination in

internal medicine, surgery and psychiatry but residents scored higher in obstetrics and gynecology and pediatrics.

However, in every category, GPT-4 exceeded the passing grade of 65 per cent.

In short: GPT-4 would have been board-certified based on its performance.

The fact that ChatGPT-4 passed the examination in all core disciplines, exceeded in some core disciplines and exceeded physicians in practice by a larger margin is impressive and illustrates just how powerful ChatGPT has become in a short time.

Later versions, perhaps with access to the same information base as medical students and residents, suggest to me that updated, more powerful versions of ChatGPT will regularly outperform the analytical skills of most physicians and nurse practitioners.

Study results were similar in Japan and South Korea. That's impressive given that ChatGPT-4 has been available for less than a year to the public.

Which raises important questions about how and

when later versions of ChatGPT or their equivalents produced by other companies will be introduced into the medical system — hitherto very conservative and protective of their turf?

That's the question every medical school is asking these days, with no clear answer yet.

ChatGPT is here to stay — thank goodness.

As it is, the health-care system is overloaded. Physicians and patients alike are frustrated with long waiting periods to see physicians and nurse practitioners.

For now, health-care organizations such as the Harvard system, see ChatGPT as a partner for physicians — but how long will that partnership be complementary and equal?

Medicine has become intimidatingly complex. It's no longer possible for physicians to keep up with all the advances.

I know because, despite being retired, I try to keep up with advances by following trends in the best journals in science and medicine.

ChatGPT-4 and beyond offer a way to provide up-to-

date information for practitioners and patients alike.

These days, medical schools scramble to keep up. The same is true for specialties.

Looming beyond medical schools is the real possibility that ChatGPT and equivalent systems will become much more capable, especially if their databases are supercharged with information from the very best journals and textbooks.

And, if they're more capable of acting as independent, trusted health-care providers, working in concert with human health-care providers or, perhaps in remote areas, an inner cities might work independent of on-site physicians and nurse practitioners.

The genie is out of the bottle in health care and should be welcomed by all.

On a final note, many patients prefer ChatGPT — why?

Because it listens, is patient and doesn't have off days.

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



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# Japanese beetle season is upon us



**GROWING TOGETHER** 

Joanne Young  
Columnist

It is that wonderful time of the summer — that’s right: Japanese beetle season. Everyone’s favourite insect ... actually, I don’t think it would be on anyone’s top ten list.

No one ever said that gardening is without its challenges. It is the challenges that keeps us invested in our gardens, keeps us learning and keeps us persevering while trying to conquer all that nature has to throw at us.

If you have been gardening for any length of time, you have probably come across these colourful insects at some point or another.

The Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica*) is a species of scarab beetle. If you haven’t seen them yet in your garden this summer, you will see them in the next couple of weeks.

The beetle has an iridescent, copper-coloured body and a green thorax and head. The adults measure about 15 millimeters (half an inch) in length and 10 millimeters (0.4 inches) in width.

The Japanese beetle adults start emerging from the soil late June and July. At this stage, they come out to mate and to store up with food.

The adult beetles are known as “skeletonizers” meaning they eat away all the leaf tissue with just the veins remaining (leaving a skeleton of the leaf).

They feed on more than 300 species of plants with some favourites being roses, grapes, lindens, birch, cannas, hibiscus, rhubarb, and Virginia creeper.

This insect will never kill the plants, but it does



Joanne Young says to use nematodes to keep Japanese beetle populations down, instead of insecticide, which will also kill insects that are beneficial to your lawn.

make them unsightly.

Once the adults have mated, they go back into the soil and the next stage of their life cycle begins. The grubs (larvae form) can play havoc with your lawns.

If you have ever had a lawn to look after before, you will be familiar with white grubs, which is the larvae of the Japanese beetles. They feed on the roots of grass, killing patches of your lawn.

The larvae overwinter deeper into the soil and will then pupate four to six weeks after breaking hibernation. The adult beetles typically appear mid-to-late June and will be visible for 30 to 45 days.

The key to winning the battle over any insect problem is to be constantly monitoring your plants at least on a weekly basis.

If you can catch the problem early on (nipping it in the bud, so to speak), it is much easier to get ahead of the insect before they become too much of a nuisance.

By catching it early, it also means that you can possibly treat the problem without the need of resorting to the use of strong chemicals, which should never be your first method of control.

The best and most environmentally friendly

method of controlling the adult beetles is to hand pick them or shake them off the plant and put into a soapy pail of water.

At least, by putting them into the soapy water, they die with a clean conscience.

Never squish the beetles with your fingers. When you do, they emit pheromones that will attract more beetles to that area.

Another way of controlling the adult beetle form is by hanging Japanese beetle traps in your yard. These hanging bags use a food and pheromone attractant to lure the beetles into the bag where they cannot escape and disrupts their mating cycle.

Make sure that you hang the bags at least ten feet away from the plants that are on feeding on or it may attract beetles to the foliage if placed closer.

There is much debate as to whether the traps are an effective control of beetles.

While studies show that they do attract nearby beetles, they also show that it results in heavier feeding in that area due to the increase in beetle numbers. Some studies show that the traps are 75 per cent effective.

Using an insecticide on the beetles is a hit-and-miss deal. In order for the

insecticide to work it has to hit the insect directly.

Using an insecticide also means that you are killing beneficial insects at the same time. So, hand-picking is the safest and most effective control of the beetles.

Because the Japanese beetle is an introduced species here in Canada, there are no (or very few) natural predators that keep the beetle population in control.

The best control of the grubs is applying nematodes to the lawn. Nematodes are microscopic organisms already present in the soil that feed on and reproduce inside the white grubs.

The best time to treat your lawn with nematodes would be late August to early September (about a month after the Japanese beetles have disappeared).

This is the time that the white grubs begin to feed on the roots of your lawn.

Remember, not every bug in your garden is a bad bug. Take some time to learn about them before resorting to sprays that will kill beneficial insects as well as harmful insects.

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



## Ceremony recalls tragedy of the Foam

Staff  
The Lake Report

Seven young sailors from Toronto, aboard a yacht called the Foam, died tragically on July 11, 1874, while sailing to the Saturday Night Hop at the Queen’s Royal Hotel in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Local folks with a sense of history will want to take part in an event this weekend to celebrate 150 years since the tragedy — and the rejuvenation of the sailors’ cemetery plot, which was largely neglected since 1874.

On Saturday at 4:30 p.m.,

a bagpiper will lead people from the NOTL Sailing Club gate on Melville Street to the gazebo in Queen’s Royal Park.

The ceremony will be held within sight where the Foam sank offshore.

Currents and winds combined to create treacherous waters, which sank the yacht and took all aboard to their deaths.

After the ceremony, at the St. Mark’s Anglican Church cemetery, Rev. Leighton Lee will rededicate the souls of the deceased.

Attendees are encouraged to wear nautical blazers and attire.

## Breakenridge story is focus of museum lecture

Staff  
The Lake Report

In his 1828 obituary, John Breakenridge, a Niagara barrister and son of a United Empire Loyalist, was noted for having built “several of the most elegant and tasty houses in town.”

Those homes, and the story behind the couple who built them, is the subject of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum’s next lecture, “Pride and Residence,” on Thursday, July 18 at 7:30 p.m.

Author, consultant and realtor, Brian Marshall, who writes The Lake Report’s popular “Arch-i-text” weekly column, will tell the story of Breakenridge and his wife, Mary Warren Baldwin.

Together, they built a trio of houses: the Creen House on Simcoe Street, completed in 1817; the Breakenridge-Hawley House on Mississauga Street, completed in 1819; and the Breakenridge-Ure House, 240 Centre St., completed in 1823.

This was a couple whose rising fortunes in the first

quarter of the 1800s were reflected in these three landmark residences.

But who were they and what happened to them? Especially Baldwin, who, in 1828, was left an early widow with five children to raise?

The presentation promises to offer a glimpse into the world of 19th-century Niagara and Upper Canada, and a dramatic tale of success, struggle and a legacy, which still graces the streets of Niagara-on-the-Lake today.

Marshall is also the author of “The Heirloom Guide,” about understanding architectural history.

His Neighbourhood Walks series for the NOTL Museum explored the stories behind the bricks, evident in more than 200 years of architectural change in the town’s heritage district.

Admission to NOTL Museum lectures is free for museum members or \$10 for non-members.

Registration is required as space is limited. Call 905-468-3912 to save your seat.



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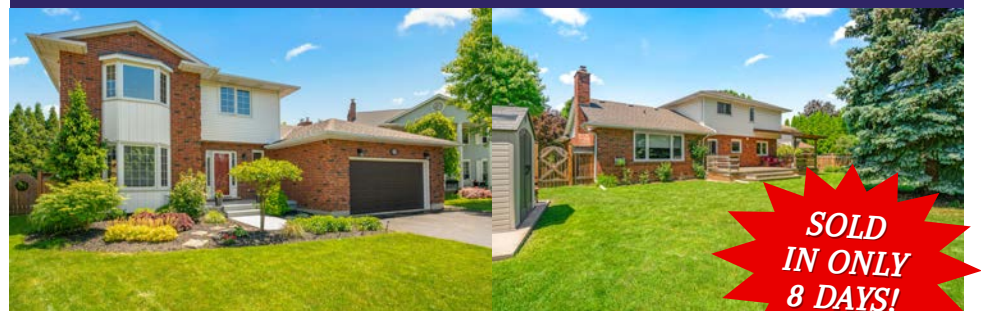
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