



## Wine industry could boost economy by **\$8B**, report says

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara's wine sector is the key to bringing billions of dollars of economic benefits to the region, a new report says.

The report, published last week and available online at uncorkontario.ca, says the wine industry could bring an additional \$8 billion in gross domestic product to the region over the next 25 years.

Excessive taxes, restrictions on distribution and

lack of government support for the industry are among the major concerns and roadblocks to that happening, the report says.

John Peller, CEO of Peller Estates Winery and a member of Wine Growers Ontario, believes there are

no ifs, ands or buts about it — Niagara's wine sector is the key, and if properly supported, could open the door to a world of economic growth.

"I didn't want this to be rhetorical or speculative — the reality is, it's very

factual," said Peller.

The report by Deloitte Canada was commissioned by Ontario Craft Wineries, Tourism Partnership of Niagara and Wine Growers Ontario. It looks at a



*Continued on Page 4* John Peller.

## Councillor 'not surprised' by town's loss at land tribunal

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake is on a losing streak at the Ontario Land Tribunal and some councillors are less than shocked.

Coun. Erwin Wiens says he was "not surprised" to see the town return from the tribunal empty-handed after trying to recover \$246,000 in legal fees from development companies Solmar Inc. and Two Sisters Resorts Corp on June 19.

The heritage advocacy group Save Our Rand Estate (SORE) joined the town in its case and was attempting to recover \$365,000 from Benny Marotta's companies.

Wiens said he can't remember the town "ever winning a single (case)" at the tribunal.

*Continued on Page 5*

## New gateway takes shape

Drystone wall promises to be sturdier than brick and mortar



Menno Braam, a dry stone mason, is building the town's new drystone wall gateway sign. **Story on Page 3.** EVAN LOREE

## Third Canadian case of **oak wilt** confirmed in NOTL

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Oak wilt, the invasive tree fungus that infects and kills oak trees has been found in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

It is the third known case of oak wilt in Canada, after one was found in Niagara Falls and another in Springwater, Ont., near Barrie.

The town reported the confirmed case in a news release on July 10.

NOTL's confirmed case was found on a private property near the border of Niagara Falls, town spokesperson Marah Minor said in an email to The Lake Report.

She wouldn't release the

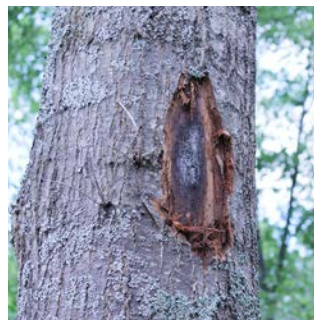
exact location, citing privacy concerns.

Oak wilt is a slow-moving disease that, if able to proliferate, can cause tree death within one season.

It can be spread through the movement of firewood,

root grafting beneath the ground and sap-feeding beetles.

While Coun. Sandra O'Connor said she is unsure of its exact location, she said



*Continued on Page 3* Oak wilt.

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# String of **break-ins** across NOTL has shop owners on edge



Brittney Marino, owner of Handmade Presence, stands in front of her shop. The window behind her was smashed and her till was stolen in a break-in. SOMER SLOBODIAN

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Business owners in Niagara-on-the-Lake are on high alert after a series of break-ins early last Wednesday morning.

Four small businesses were among those hit during the overnight early-morning thefts: York Barber Lounge in St. Davids, Handmade Presence and the Garrison House in the Garrison Village plaza, and Bliss Aveda Salon in Virgil.

Const. Barry Ravenek of the Niagara Regional Police confirmed officers were investigating the four overnight break-and-enters.

Businesses in the Garrison Village plaza were targeted around 4:49 a.m., according to security footage from the Garrison House.

Elizabeth Bruce from

York Barber Lounge said the three security cameras at her shop cut out at 5:47 a.m. and came back around 5:53 a.m.

The suspect's face in the video was fully covered and the person was wearing a light-coloured hoodie.

Ravenek said the male suspect was wearing a black hat, black bandana on his face, grey hoodie with the hood up, dark blue construction pants and gloves.

Brittney Marino from Handmade Presence said it looked like he was wearing construction pants, with reflective stripes.

In the break-in at York Barber Lounge, the person may have used a wifi blocker to turn off the main security cameras, said Bruce.

Since the three main security cameras were out, she said they don't have footage of the glass being shattered.

"The suspect is believed to have used a glass-breaking tool to gain entry," Ravenek said.

But because the alarm went off, another camera near the door captured video footage of the suspect running in.

Marino said she was a bit shaken up from the incident.

She said the thief smashed through her front door window and climbed in, tossed her \$1,000 cash register to the floor and when he couldn't get it open, he took the whole register.

He was in and out within two minutes, she said.

Bruce said her window also was smashed and the cash register also was stolen.

The thief was driving a black car, possibly a Mazda, she said.

Garrison House owner

Leigh Atherton said the thief drove a black vehicle, similar to an SUV.

She said the police told her it could have been a rental car.

She believes there were two people involved in the theft — one who broke in and one who drove the getaway car.

In 11 years of operating this has never happened, Atherton said.

Only \$190 was stolen from her till and nothing else, but they "probably caused about \$3,000 worth of damage," she said.

Police dusted for fingerprints, said Marino, but the suspect wore gloves and was careful.

"It's very upsetting for myself, my family, the 40-plus small businesses within our store, and also for the small business community as a whole," Marino said in a social media post.

# MISSING IN ACTION: The first Victoria Cross, Lance Corp. Fred Fisher

*In both world wars, there were men killed in action or who died in service who had a connection with Niagara-on-the-Lake but for various reasons were not commemorated on either the memorial clock tower cenotaph in Old Town or the Niagara Township war memorial in Queenston. In some cases, they lived for only a brief time in Niagara and had no family here when the monuments were built. In other cases, they had lived near McNab, not then part of NOTL or Niagara Township. While their names are not read out at the ceremonies at these monuments on Remembrance Day, they too should be remembered.*

Ron Dale  
Special to The Lake Report

The Victoria Cross is the most important award for outstanding valour in the Commonwealth.

The simple bronze medal was established by Queen Victoria in 1856 to recognize those who had shown incredible acts of courage "in the presence of the enemy."

Four VCs were given to men from Canada prior to Confederation, including William Hall of Nova Scotia, who was awarded the medal in 1857. He was the first Black recipient of the medal.

Prior to the First World War, six other Canadians received the VC, five during the Boer War and one in the Sudan. A total of 73 Canadians won the medal in

the First World War and 16 in the Second World War.

In 1972, the Canadian government withdrew the eligibility of Canadians to receive the VC, but this was overturned in 1993 when a Canadian VC was established. It has not yet been awarded.

One man associated with Niagara-on-the-Lake was awarded the VC for his actions during the Second Battle of Ypres in the First World War. It was the first VC given out during the Great War.

Fred Fisher was the son of bank accountant William Fisher and Alice McGibbon. He was born in St. Catharines on Aug. 3, 1894, the third of the four children of William and Alice.

The family moved several times and lived in Niagara-on-the-Lake for a few years



Fred Fisher received the Victoria Cross for his actions during the Second Battle of Ypres in the First World War. SUPPLIED

when William managed the Sovereign Bank of Canada in town. Fred attended school here before the family moved to Montreal before 1911.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, he was attending McGill Uni-

versity, studying engineering. Immediately, his oldest brother Donald volunteered, signing up on Aug. 28.

Fred followed Donald into service, attesting to the 5th Regiment, Royal Highlanders of Canada (the Black Watch) on Sept. 23. Finally, brother William joined up on Nov. 14.

Shortly after enlisting, Fred was assigned to the 13th (Royal Highlander) Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. He arrived in England on Oct. 15, 1914, and was sent to the Canadian training camp on Salisbury Plain.

He was shipped to France on Feb. 9, 1915, and sent to the front-line trenches in the Ypres Salient near St. Julien in Belgium in March.

The Royal Highlanders manned trenches facing German lines. To the left of the Canadians, along the line, were the troops of the French 45th (Algerian) Division.

In the late afternoon of April 22, 1915, the Germans released a cloud of chlorine gas. This gas overcame the French soldiers, suffocating many. The men of the 45th Division panicked and abandoned their trenches,

leaving a long stretch of front lines on the left of the Canadians unprotected.

The gas attack was followed by an assault by waves of German infantrymen, who threatened to completely overrun Allied trenches. They did not reckon on the bravery of the Canadians.

Canadian soldiers redeployed to fill the gap left by the French. Holding wet handkerchiefs over their mouths and noses, most were able to avoid asphyxiation from the poisonous gas.

The infantrymen rapidly fired their rifles and machine-guns at the advancing Germans while Canadian gunners continued to fire artillery at the enemy.

The Canadian artillery guns were in danger of being overrun. Lance Corp. Fred Fisher, now in charge of a machine-gun squad, took an exposed position and covered the artillerymen as they continued to fire at the Germans.

He continued to cover them as they pulled their guns back to safety. Fisher's position came under heavy fire and four men in his squad were killed, but the guns were saved.

The following morning the Germans resumed their relentless attack on the outnumbered Canadians, who continued to stand firm.

Again, Fisher was front and centre, positioning his machine-gun and continuing to fire against overwhelming odds. Finally, Fisher was cut down by German fire.

For his actions in the Battle of St. Julien, Fisher was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, the first for a Canadian in that war.

His final resting spot remains unknown. His name is engraved on the Menin Gate along with more than 56,000 Commonwealth soldiers who have no known grave.

Fred Fisher, V.C., is commemorated in Memorial Park in St. Catharines and at the Black Watch Armoury in Montreal.

*On the heels of our 53-part "Monuments Men" series, which exhaustively documented the story of every soldier commemorated on the town's two cenotaphs, Ron Dale's "Missing in Action" stories profile Niagara-on-the-Lake soldiers who died in wartime but are not listed on the town's monuments.*



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# Progress made on town's new gateway

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

At five feet tall, it's no Great Wall of China, but Niagara-on-the-Lake's new gateway to the heritage district hopes to impress visitors all the same.

Dry stone mason Menno Braam, who is building the wall, says he guarantees his work, when complete, should outlast any wall stuck together with mortar.

Braam is a certified member of the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain, a UK-based charity which advances education on the ancient trade of dry stone walling.

Construction on the gateway started this spring at the corner of Mississauga and Queen streets.

The project, which has been in the planning stages for more than three years, is budgeted at nearly \$265,000.

This gateway will welcome people into the Old Town with large letters reading "Heritage District."

The wall is going to be about two feet thick at the base, tapering upwards to a width of 14 inches. The wider base prevents it from leaning over and falling down over time.

"That's just always how they should be built," Braam said.



Menno Braam's drystone wall will be about five feet high when completed. EVAN LOREE

He cuts each stone by hand with a hammer and chisel.

It takes a level of precision that Braam, a tradesman of 20 years, said comes with lots of practice.

After that, he said it's about choosing stones that will offer the least resistance.

Braam said the reason dry stone walls last so long is because of the interlocking technique used to build them.

Walls built with brick and mortar form a solid piece after the mortar dries, which put them at a disadvantage as the earth underneath them shifts over time.

Dry stone walls, on the other hand, are able to flex with the movement of the ground below because they are made up of freely moving pieces.

"Picture a stack of books on something that's

breathing," Braam explained.

"If it's locked together with mortar, then that can crack over time," he said.

The risk of cracking is diminished, however, if the stack can move with the earth.

Gerald Kowalchuk, whose donation is funding the wall's construction, told The Lake Report in April that he's hopeful the project will be completed this year.

# People encouraged to look for signs of oak wilt

Continued from Front Page

it was found near to the site of the first confirmed case in Niagara Falls.

She said the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is leading the investigation.

"The CFIA is currently working with property owners in the affected area to conduct surveys of neighbouring oak trees for oak wilt disease," agency spokesperson Jason Griffin said in an email.

He wouldn't be more specific about where the fungus was found.

O'Connor said she's glad it's not close to the Chautauqua area, which is home to numerous oak trees.

"All of our oak trees are important, but there's just so many concentrated in that particular area, it would be absolutely devastating," she said.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is encouraging residents to inspect their trees and look for signs of oak wilt, including dull green, brown or yellow leaves, cracks in the trunk, white, grey or black fungus, and early and sudden leaf drop.

Residents are also being told not to prune oak trees between April and November and are being asked not to move firewood.


Suspected cases of oak wilt can be reported to the agency online.



Oak wilt on leaves. INVASIVE SPECIES CENTRE

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# Better support and **fewer taxes** are among changes urged

Continued from Front Page

collection of key industries in Niagara and the role the wine sector plays in benefiting surrounding industries.

It also examines how the wine industry has fuelled economic growth in other parts of the world.

To do that, Deloitte researched leading wine regions around the world, like Kelowna, B.C., Italy and France, to better grasp best practices used and the role wine plays in each area's economy and the economic benefits the sector provides.

"The essential premise of that report is to understand the role a truly quality premium wine region can play as a catalyst in growing the related economies that it supports," said Peller.

Not only does Niagara supply 80 per cent of Canada's wine and grape production, Niagara is one of the only regions in the world where premium wine grapes grow, thanks to its microclimate conditions.

The report argues that a supported wine sector would, in turn, benefit a group of industries the report calls the "Niagara Cluster," nestled within the region — such as hospitality, tourism, arts and culture, and the entertainment industry.

Given that Niagara-on-the-Lake has more than 50 wineries and draws millions of tourists each year, supporting the wine industry would have a positive impact on the little town, those in the industry argue.

"We have this incredible opportunity to build a preeminent destination for wine, food and culture," said Peller. "Let's go, let's do it."

Aaron Dobbin, president of Wine Growers Ontario, said while people come here to visit the wineries, they often head into Old Town for a show at the Shaw Festival or to visit some shops, maybe eat dinner at a restaurant and then end up at one of NOTL's hotels or bed and breakfasts.

"That's the beauty of the Niagara Cluster: it is really economy-wide," he said.

Niagara's wine industry is the spark, but "the effects



John Peller says Niagara's wine sector is the key to unlocking economic growth in the region. SOMER SLOBODIAN

will be felt across the entire economy," he added.

Among others, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre and the Niagara Jazz Festival could see the benefits of a well-supported wine industry, said NOTL Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

"It's time we leverage the assets that we have in Niagara," he said in an interview.

Zalepa noted that the construction industry also could indirectly benefit.

"There would be infrastructure required for this, there would be investments in capital building property, and that kind of stuff would drive jobs in construction," he said.

He added that it could bring more homes and people to the area as well as jobs.

There's also a business opportunity in Niagara that isn't found in many other jurisdictions, said Anthony Annunziata, president of Tourism Partnership Niagara — they can hold meetings in vineyards, cellars and estates rather than

at hotels and conference centres.

Kelowna, B.C., and Napa Valley in California are examples cited in the report of cluster regions that used the wine sector to successfully boost economic growth.

**“We have this incredible opportunity to build a preeminent destination for wine, food and culture. Let's go, let's do it.”**

JOHN PELLER  
CEO, PELLER ESTATES WINERY

If Niagara had the same growth as Kelowna, "it is estimated that investment in the Niagara regional economy would have been \$4 billion more between 2009 and 2019," the report says.

Countries such as France, Italy and Spain that have among the most success-

ful tourism and hospitality economies in the world, according to the World Tourism Organization, are premium wine regions, said Peller.

Those nations have used their wine industry to grow world-class tourism destinations, he said.

"They know why they have the number one, two and three tourism regions in the world because of wine, food and culture," said Peller.

Niagara has it all here and Peller wants people to recognize that.

"We want to be as good as the best in the world because our wines are as good as the best in the world," he said.

However, Ontario falls short in a few areas where other places shine, Peller and Dobbin argued.

Other regions are "aggressively supporting their agricultural and wine industries as a catalyst to drawing world destination travellers," Peller said.

In Ontario, there are challenges preventing Niagara's unique wine region from

flourishing — taxation and distribution being top of the list, Dobbin said.

"(In) our industry, we pay about \$970 million in taxes and markups to various levels of government and the LCBO," he said.

Ontario wine producers, said Peller, pay some of the highest taxes in the world.

"I can tell you the reason is because, instead of our policy leadership coming from agriculture or tourism, it came from the lottery and gaming commission: people who are in charge of sin taxes," said Peller.

"Sin taxes" are charged on goods seen as undesirable or harmful, and alcohol is on the list along with gambling and tobacco.

The federal government puts the wine industry under the same umbrella as gambling, cannabis and tobacco, rather than considering it agricultural, said Annunziata.

"So let's start there, federally, let's recognize it as an agricultural industry," he said.

Peller said places such as Spain, Italy, France

and Australia, "not only do they not tax them, they also provide subsidies to them to ensure that they'll invest capital and grow their region."

He said Ontario should have changed its policies around taxing the wine industry many years ago. "I've told people, half tears in my eyes, like, why has it taken us this long to get there?"

Zalepa said reducing the taxes doesn't mean cutting overall revenue.

"The opportunity is to grow the business such that the taxes generated from the growth are going to far outweigh any of the small taxes generated in the short term," he said.

Distribution of Ontario wine is also a huge roadblock for the province's wine producers, since it has to be done through the LCBO and faces strict rules on inter-provincial trade.

Wineries in other parts of Canada, like British Columbia, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia can directly deliver wine to customers and retailers across the country — a luxury Ontario doesn't have.

Peller said Ontario has the same market shares as it did 30 years ago and the LCBO is more focused on promoting imported wine than domestic vintages.

Imported wines represent about 75 per cent of total LCBO wine sales, according to the province.

Regions like British Columbia, Australia and the United States have domestic market shares by volume of 47, 82 and 60 per cent, respectively.

The report notes that if Ontario's market share by sales matched B.C.'s, the provincial economy would receive upward of \$800 million in additional GDP over a 10-year span.

Focusing on dominating Ontario's domestic market share is one of the steps forward in supporting the wine sector, Deloitte said.

Annunziata said the next step is allowing the government to absorb this information so it can hopefully start making the changes called for.

  
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## Harley tricks at Clare's

Thursday bike night at Clare's Harley Davidson in Glendale featured a Harley-Davidson motorcycle stunt show performance by the Highway Heathens Crooked Clubhouse Team. Riders were doing wheelies and riding through flames. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## Mayor disappointed in ruling against town

Continued from Front Page

"For the last five years I've always been saying I would rather communicate than litigate," the deputy lord mayor said.

Wiens argued that the Ontario Land Tribunal has a tendency to rule in favour of developers, and towns should do their best to resolve land development disputes on the municipal level.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa shared the same view.

"It's always disappointing when that kind of decision goes against what the town was hoping to do," Zalepa said.

Like Wiens, Zalepa stressed the need to work together with community members.

He said before the new council took office, "no communication avenues" were open between Solmar and the town.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor said from her perspective, Solmar was not treated any differently from other developers but stressed she was not privy to the day-to-day contact between town staff



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa. EVAN LOREE

and the developer.

Zalepa acknowledged though that not all parties in a dispute will play by the same rules or co-operate with each other.

"Sometimes you're not able to bring 100 per cent of people on board," he said.

"And, at the end of the day, councils need to make decisions that are tough," he added.

The decision to designate properties on the Rand Estate as heritage assets was made in 2018 under the former council.

It was a controversial decision and led to a barrage of legal fees, the subject of much criticism during the 2022 election.

As of April 2023, NOTL chief administrator Marnie Cluckie estimates the town has spent \$1.6 million in legal fees fighting Solmar.

The town spent \$25,000 to register the back half of the Rand Estate under the Heritage Act.

Solmar objected to the town's move and took the dispute to the tribunal for settling.

After almost three years of preparing for the hearing, the developer dropped the case in 2021, five weeks before the date of the hearing.

Tribunal vice-chair David Lanthier rejected the town's argument that this move amounted to an abuse of process, calling it "reason-

able, legitimate and not an abuse of process" in his decision.

Cluckie pointed out that the tribunal sets a high bar for people looking to recover legal fees in land disputes.

"The town thought that in the circumstances of this case, the case met the threshold. The Ontario Land Tribunal disagreed," she said.

She called the loss "unfortunate" but added it "wipes the slate clean" for staff, which can now focus on the goals of the current council.

O'Connor, who also sat on the previous council, said she was in favour of the town's decision for the historical designation of the old structures on the back half of the Rand Estate.

"They're worthy of being preserved," O'Connor said.

"If we do not stand up for our heritage here we will lose the character of the town," she added.

The future of the buildings on the back half of the Rand Estate hinges on another hearing at the tribunal scheduled for March 2024.



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# Black artistry on display at abolition celebration

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Over two centuries after the Act to Limit Slavery was introduced right here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, young Black creatives are showcasing the progress that has been made.

Fifteen-year-old honours student Tamiya Cox has been deeply involved in music her entire life, beginning her musical theatre training in the Grade 4.

At Sunday's celebration of the 230th anniversary of the Act to Limit Slavery, Cox sang Rihanna's "Lift Me Up" at Voices of Freedom Park, along with a song about Chloe Cooley written by Barbara Worthy specifically for the anniversary.

Cox said she and her vocal coach worked closely to choose which song would be appropriate for the celebration and landed on Rihanna's track for both its powerful message and how it complemented her vocal range.

"I've sung the song since it came out because I loved it so much. I love Rihanna and I love the message it sends," she said.

Cox also shared the honour of being able to tell Cooley's story through art.

Cooley was the catalyst for the formation of the Act to Limit Slavery, which came into law on July 9, 1793, prohibiting the importation of new slaves into Upper Canada.

Cooley was abducted and taken across the Niagara River by her enslaver in March 1793 to be sold in the United States.

However, by screaming and fighting to get away, her abduction was witnessed by multiple people, bringing its attention to the executive council of Upper Canada and leading to the act's creation.

"Knowing Chloe and her story and her struggle and being the one to represent her and feel her in the song, it was a major deal," Cox said.

Growing up in Niagara, she explained that showcasing Black artistry and excellence while honouring history is important.

"In elementary school especially, there was not a lot of Black representation in my life," she said.

In Grades 7 and 8, her class was assigned to do TED Talks on topics of their choice.

"The first year I did slavery and the Act to Abolish Slavery and I educated my very predominantly white school," she said.

The following year, Cox presented on the Black Lives Matter movement.

"I've kind of taken it upon myself – because my community is so small – to be an activist and to be a voice for the Black community," she said.

The hour-long celebration also featured words from artist and CFL running back Wayne Moore, who presented a piece of artwork inspired by Cooley, which will be on display at the NOTL



Fifteen-year-old honours student Tamiya Cox shared her gift of music with all attendees at Voices of Freedom Park on Sunday. Dozens of people came together in celebration of the Act to Limit Slavery's 230th anniversary. JULIA SACCO

Museum, before joining its permanent collection.

Moore said that he usually prefers to let his work speak for itself: The painting, depicting Cooley holding two flowers – the African daisy and the primrose – is meant to symbolize her wisdom, strength, determined

attitude, positivity and courage.

"I wanted to give Chloe Cooley her flowers," Moore said during the presentation.

Other guests included Shaw Festival musician Jeremiah Sparks, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, Rochelle Bush of Harriet Tubman

Tours, Black scholar and NOTL Museum representative Jan King-Watson, MP Tony Baldinelli and Shannon Mitchell, on behalf of MPP Wayne Gates.

The Chloe Cooley "Bound and Determined" exhibition is on at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum until Nov. 13.



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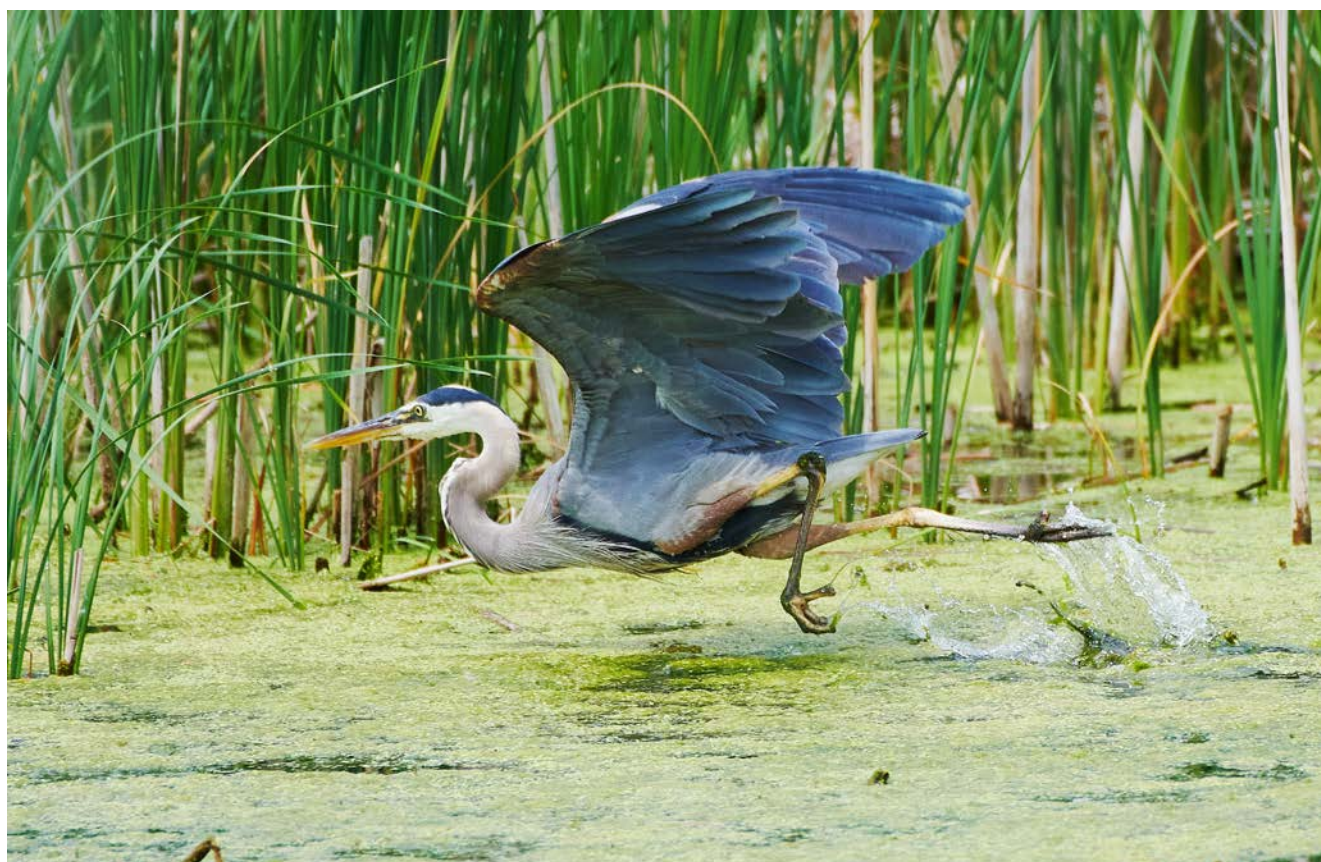




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## Blue heron takes flight

A blue heron takes off at a pond at Line 9 and Concession 3 roads. He hangs out there daily for several hours fishing amongst the reeds. He's all stealth. Narrow. Steady. Invisible to the fish. Until he strikes. He has long slender legs but yet huge claws, for stability. FRANK HAYES

## Virgil teen's bridge status app tops the charts

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

After his story gained thousands of hits on social media, a Virgil teen's Welland Canal bridge status app shot to the top of the travel charts on the App Store.

Between The Lake Report and Niagara Now's Facebook accounts, the article, "Virgil teen beats the bridge," reached an astounding 129,847 people on Facebook – and counting.

The owner and creator of the app, Steven Shelestowsky, said more than 700 people have purchased the 99-cent app, Niagara Bridges, since last week, putting his app in the number one spot in the travel category on the App Store.

"It's weird, but cool," he told The Lake Report, adding that it's not something he expected.

His app is a convenient way for people to see real-time information on the lift bridges.

For those curious, Shelestowsky gets his data from the Great Lakes St.



More than 700 people have purchased Steven Shelestowsky's Niagara Bridges iPhone app since The Lake Report's story about it last week. SOMER SLOBODIAN

Lawrence Seaway System. Given the app's niche target demographic, he said he wonders what would happen if he created an app geared to a larger audience.

"Imagine how many people I could get," he said.

He said he's had his hands full answering emails and even decided to update the app to make the bridge name selection easier for customers.

Originally, he was going to wait to update the app in September, when Apple launches its latest operating

system update, but he felt it necessary to do it sooner.

"Although I've gotten emails with questions, I've also gotten emails from people just like, 'Oh, I think this is really cool,'" he said.

"That's been really nice to see."


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Did you know that July is UV Safety Month?



# All about the pies at annual Cherry Festival

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Getting one of the famous homemade cherry pies at Niagara-on-the-Lake's annual Cherry Festival requires precise planning – and setting an early alarm.

Niagara Falls resident Barbara Perault says she was never one of the fortunate ones to go home with a pie – until this year.

At 10:02 a.m. on Saturday at St. Mark's Anglican Church, Perault was the last person to get a ticket for a freshly baked pie.

"I'm so excited. I feel like I won the lottery," she said with a big smile.

To ensure they got one or two of the \$22 pies, many people lined up on the sidewalk along Byron Street for nearly an hour before the gates opened at 9 a.m.



**PHOTO GALLERY**  
See more pictures at [niagaranow.com](http://niagaranow.com)

Left: Judy MacLachlan sells fresh cherries at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Cherry Festival last Saturday. Right: People were lined up an hour early to make sure they got their hands on one of the 749 cherry pies. The pies are a famous staple of the annual festival and sold out in an hour. SOMER SLOBODIAN

The fresh pies usually sell out quickly – on Saturday, they were gone a little over an hour into the six-hour festival.

This year's Cherry Festival had 749 pies all made during four sessions in April and May by a group of dedicated volunteers from the church.

The pies are split into three groups: freshly baked, frozen and individual slices

served with ice cream.

Perault said in prior years she was only able to enjoy one of the single slices of pie sold at the festival.

Diane Turner, chair of the pie-making contingent, has been volunteering with the church's festival for 12 years and said she enjoys the time she spends baking the pies.

"We make it a point to make it fun," she said.

After the pies were baked

in the spring, they were kept frozen in St. Davids, then brought back to the church the day before the festival and divided up into the freshly baked and frozen selling categories.

Turner said the baking takes up a lot of time and effort, so 749 pies is the most they'll probably ever make.

There were 25 volunteers at the festival assisting Turner with the pies,

she said, however, she added that she wouldn't be shocked if there were close to 100 volunteers overall.

Coun. Gary Burroughs was one of those helpers: he was stationed under one of the tents selling cherries from Quiet Acres Farms.

"It brings us, first of all, all together. And there's nothing better than a little stress to get people forced to work together," he said.

However, Burroughs was also selling his own frozen meals at the festival – something he does all year – called "Meals by Gary."

When it comes to the Cherry Festival, Burroughs said the festival is the community.

"It's a local thing, sure. There's lots of visitors and that's fine, but more importantly, this is community," he said.

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# Adventurer taught friends, family to **live for today**

Evan Loree  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

He lived like tomorrow was no promise and each day was a gift.

Niagara-on-the-Lake native Liam Neumann leaves behind the legacy of a fiery hopeful who was always trying to change the world. He was 34.

And his family and friends remember the fire-haired ginger as a happy-go-lucky globetrotter who marched to the beat of his own drum.

Waiting for the call on Tuesday afternoon to see if a body found in Twelve Mile Creek was that of her missing son, Barbara Worthy said what she's been saying since he vanished June 25.

"I'm breaking."

Worthy has described the loss of her son as "a horror movie that doesn't stop."

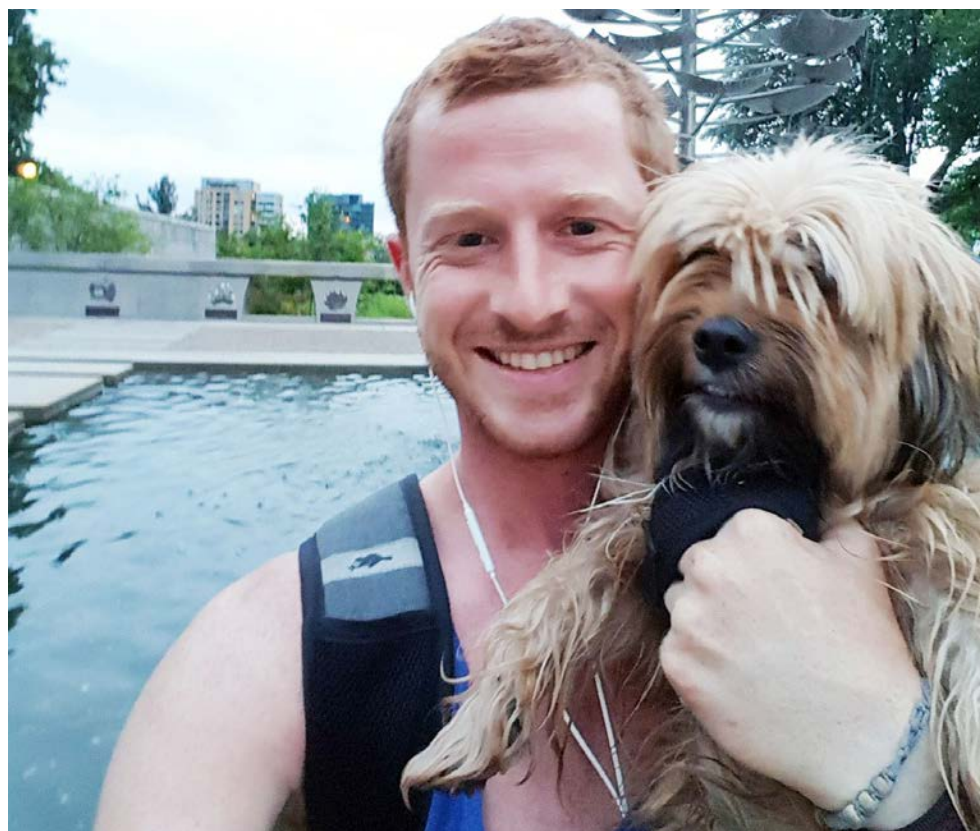
A body pulled from the creek on Canada Day was identified as Neumann 10 days later.

Worthy was frustrated by the long wait, saying her son should have been easily identified by the surgical screws in his head, the result of a snowboarding accident he had when he was 14.

His lifelong friend, Jordan Meyer, said his memory of the accident was "foggy," but he remembers that Neumann needed a steel plate and a couple of screws put in to repair a skull fracture.

"He was a tough kid, man."

Funeral arrangements



Liam Neumann and his dog Brody were two peas in a pod. He brought him on his travels to Africa and lost his life trying to save him from a raft. SUPPLIED

are being handled by Morgan Funeral Home in NOTL.

In conversations with The Lake Report, Worthy could only speak for a few minutes before breaking into tears.

In her own words, she "can't quite grasp it all yet."

"He was always an adventurer. We travelled everywhere together, and he was my best travel partner ever."

Meyer said Neumann and Worthy had just returned from a two-week trip to British Columbia where they were visiting family.

He was "fearless," Worthy and Meyer agree.

Neumann moved to the Ivory Coast in West Africa after graduating from the

University of Waterloo in 2016 with a master's in international development.

While overseas, he worked for the African Development Bank Group to deliver safe food and clean drinking water to vulnerable communities, Meyer said.

"He was always out there just trying to make the world a better place."

Neumann returned to Canada just before the start of the pandemic after contracting malaria, Meyer said.

In the months leading up to his death, he was between jobs and living on his own in an apartment in St. Catharines.

Neumann and Meyer

grew up close friends right out of the crib.

The two often played on the same sports teams and attended the same schools, first Parliament Oak and then Niagara District Secondary School.

After graduating high school, Meyer had his first of four children and Neumann went to the University of Guelph to get his undergraduate degree in international development.

They didn't talk too much about Neumann's professional life as they got older, but Connor Crickmore, who also grew up with Neumann, said he was one smart cookie.

"He was really smart and definitely demonstrated

that at Guelph University," Crickmore said in an email.

He pointed out that Neumann was on the dean's list at Guelph.

Crickmore remembers growing up and hanging around town with Neumann.

"He was always trying to make others around him smile and laugh," he said.

Meyer and Worthy said the same of the ginger getter.

In a moment of levity, Worthy described her son as a "good-bad boy" and "extremely funny."

For Meyer, there was something about the relationship between the mother and son he'll never forget.

"I'm gonna miss him for his mom," Meyer said, recalling "the way that she would smile when he walked into the room."

"I got four kids. When they walk into the room my eyes light up too."

Meyer feels a connection to Worthy as well, describing her as his "second mom."

When he was about nine, Meyer's parents got divorced and he took shelter from the turmoil at Neumann's home.

"It was nice. It was comforting to have someone like Liam," he said. "He knew how it was and how it felt."

Worthy and her husband Ron Neumann had divorced when the boys were about five, Meyer said.

Meyer remembers most how they bonded over sports, spending hours playing basketball together.

"He always won. He was way better," he said.

In 2000, before they went off to high school, they played on a hockey team together and won a tournament in Buffalo, with Meyer on defence and Neumann playing forward.

"This is going back like 23 years, right," Meyer said, guessing he was about 12 at the time.

Over the last seven years, Neumann had been inseparable from his dog Brody and the day he went missing, he was rafting with Brody in the St. Catharines creek.

They came upon rough waters where the creek bends near Hillcrest Avenue in St. Catharines.

After paddling toward shore and climbing out, Meyer said Neumann got out to pull the raft the rest of the way.

In the process he lost the raft and slipped in trying to retrieve the raft and his dog.

"He loved his dog more than the world," Meyer said. "They travelled all over the world."

When Neumann moved to West Africa after university, Brody went with him.

Like Neumann, Brody is a "feisty" little guy, protective of his companion.

Meyer said he'd heard stories of Brody scaring off crocodiles and lions while the two camped out in Africa.

"They just had such a great connection."

Meyer said you learn a lot about yourself when someone you care about dies.

"Tomorrow isn't promised. Live today, for today," he said.

# Faces new and old come out for Village's **25th birthday**

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

The allure of living in the Village community wasn't quite as strong 25 years ago, with the patch of land off Niagara Stone Road a far cry from the development that stands today.

The first resident of the Village, Shirley Rock, moved in back in 1998 and hasn't left since.

At the community's 25th anniversary celebration in Dietsch Park on Tuesday, Rock came out along with other original residents to indulge in conversation – and cake.

For Rock, the most allur-

ing part of the community 25 years ago was the promise of new urbanism.

She told The Lake Report that after watching a program on TV about it all those years ago, she took the opportunity to be part of something she never experienced growing up.

Danny Pehar moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake from Mississauga around a year ago, choosing the Village for its close-knit community feel amid the beauty and culture of NOTL.

"When you walk down the street and say hi to people, you know them and they know who you are," he said.

When it comes to what has changed most in over two decades, one of the original residents Warren Fraser summed it up.

"There's a little bit of mud now. There was lots of mud before," he joked.

And it is true – more development is under way, said John Hawley, the builder behind it all.

"I'm not letting out any secrets today," said Hawley.

"I think everyone will be thrilled and it'll be a beautiful ending to crescendo what we've done."

Along with words from Village Community Association president Ardeth Staz, Lord Mayor Gary



First residents Sally Harmer, Eleanor Wilkie and Shirley Rock reminisced about their time in the Village and how things have changed over 25 years. JULIA SACCO

Zalepa and Hawley, a donation was made to Rising Angels charity, an organization that supports women who have been affected by commercial

sexual exploitation.

The \$1,300 donation was in honour of Hawley's late wife Liz, who played a key role in the development of the Village.

"She was as instrumental in this as I was. We discussed everything and reviewed everything together," said Hawley. "We would not be here without Liz."





## TLR

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Jill Troyer, Dave Van de Laar, Janice White,

Joanne Young and many more members of the

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## Paying it forward



The Pillitteri family presented Red Roof Retreat with a \$7,000 cheque on Tuesday. The money was raised at Joe Pillitteri's comedy night held on June 10 during the 30th anniversary celebration of Pillitteri Estates Winery. From left: Red Roof program co-ordinator Christa Rawsthorne, agency founder Steffanie Bjorgan, Joe Pillitteri, and Connie Slingerland and Lucy Friesen from the winery. SUPPLIED

### Editorial

## Regarding rants about rainbows

Richard Harley  
Editor-In-Chief

The Lake Report isn't shy about its advocacy for human rights or its support of Pride month and the LGBTQ+ community.

Every year we transform our masthead into rainbow colours in June. We also turn it purple for International Women's Day and have included banners to honour Indigenous month.

They are simple gestures, but mean a lot to marginalized groups who, to this day, are still fighting to be equally accepted.

In recent weeks, various letters have arrived that have been filled with misguided, ignorant and outdated views on Pride and what the month represents.

Arguments such as, “We shouldn't honour Pride month when veterans only get Remembrance Day,” or “Gay people are already accepted,” or perhaps the strangest argument, that “NOTL is accepting to gays because the Shaw Festival exists.”

The letter writers aren't being satirical, they really believe what they are saying. And they care enough about what happens in someone else's bedroom or how the community recog-

nizes marginalized groups that they write to us.

And in a few cases we have published their comments to shine a light on some of the viewpoints from our community. (To be clear, we are not pointing the finger at every letter writer, so please don't misconstrue this.)

Unfortunately, many of these views fail to take into consideration the historical, religion-based and ongoing prejudice against the LGBTQ+ community — and women, people of colour and Indigenous Peoples, for that matter.

So, let's set the record straight: It was never illegal to be a veteran. It isn't a choice to be gay. And for those who argue LGBTQ+ people are accepted, remember military veterans, for whom we have great respect, don't face condemnation from people who believe their “god” will condemn them to an eternity in hell ... for the way they were born.

It's a wild world.

While The Lake Report prides itself on printing a variety of opinions — often ones our editorial team strongly disagrees with — going forward, we will be even more selective about what views on these issues

we publish.

If they simply don't add to the conversation, are short-sighted and serve to fuel further hatred against an already marginalized group, we will avoid publishing them.

It is our responsibility as the most-read newspaper in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and the most-awarded community newspaper in Canada for the last three years, to further the conversation — but not to give a platform to views that only take us back in time.

So, going forward, if letters are based on tired arguments that can be easily disproved, we will not publish them.

If letters are filled with hatred disguised as an intellectual viewpoint, we will not publish them.

While we understand some people are of the mindset that LGBTQ+ people already are accepted and have rights in Canada, we need look no further than the immediate vandalism of NOTL's Pride crosswalk or those religion-inspired and hate-fuelled letters we mentioned. To us, these show there is a long way to go before a Pride month is not needed.

We simply do not accept hatred for people based on

their sexuality or gender or skin colour, or any other “difference.”

However, we also are torn: Despite the cheerleading, rah-rah approach that some in our community prefer, a newspaper has an obligation to show the reality of a situation. Even if it's negative.

And the unfortunate reality is that there is a clear dislike, in some cases possibly a hatred, for the LGBTQ+ community by some in NOTL. Many others just seem tired of hearing about LGBTQ folks.

To suggest this isn't the case shows a lack of critical thinking or a wilful ignorance of acts we regularly witness.

And we don't want to perpetuate hate against marginalized groups.

The Lake Report celebrates all types of people for their perceived differences. We embrace things we might not understand as long as people are happy and nobody is getting hurt. We applaud marginalized groups for making it known that they're here and they're proud to be who they are.

Because at the end of the day, everyone deserves to feel good about themselves.

And we simply will not be party to attitudes that only serve to degrade others.

**Correction:** A caption accompanying a letter by Jean O'Malley on June 29, (“Let's move on with our lives,”) wrongly stated that despite the hate-fuelled vandalism of NOTL's Pride crosswalk, people should just move on and abandon quests for equality. Her letter did not directly make such a suggestion.

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# OPINION



## Two views on a Parliament Oak hotel

### A hotel is the only option to preserve public access

Richard Harley  
Editor-In-Chief

Why are people so quick to want to kill all public access to the Parliament Oak site?

Several impassioned letter writers have written to this publication and municipal councillors, urging the town not to approve a hotel on the site.

But it seems these people haven't fully considered the situation.

Or maybe they just have it out for the developer, Benny Marotta.

Either way, their arguments seem to be crafted without much forethought — if any.

To really understand this situation we need to envision our future, not just react with blind passion. That's how we screw things up.

So, with forethought, let's ask ourselves: If Parliament Oak isn't a hotel, what will it be?

The answer isn't a retirement home. It's not a school or a community hub. It's nothing on the list of things that most idealists would suggest.

None of those things make enough money to satisfy a developer who paid \$8 million for the property.

So, let's get real, please: If it isn't a hotel, it's going to be homes — and not single-family detached ones.

Knowing the state of development in NOTL and Ontario, it will be

jam-packed with ugly cookie-cutter townhouses that cost stupid amounts more than they're worth.

Is that what people really want for Parliament Oak?

We should cringe at the thought of another subdivision named after the thing that was destroyed to build it.

Besides that, or the inevitable fact many of those "homes" would likely be Airbnbs anyway if the town can't get a handle on the wild west situation with short-term rentals, it also means the property is lost forever.

That's right, you can kiss Parliament Oak goodbye if homes are built there.

Kiss the greenspace goodbye. Kiss the historic plaque goodbye. Kiss it all goodbye.

They will be private homes with private roads that aren't even suitable for dog walking.

If that's progress, we don't need any.

Now, let's envision if it is to be a hotel like what is proposed.

The developer, despite having plenty of reasons to build as big as possible, has already said he would match almost the identical footprint of the former school building at Parliament Oak.

Sure, it's a bit tall, but he has proposed to keep the rest of the property as publicly accessible greenspace with an outdoor feature to showcase the historic plaques — something that would be much like the Monet Gardens at the Pillar and Post.

And based on the designs, the building looks absolutely "NOTL" — it's brick, like the Queen's Landing and the Prince

of Wales (two iconic hotels). The windows and roof look like they were almost based off of those hotels.

And there's a history and pattern of excellence in quality based on his Two Sisters Winery and newly opened restaurant and commercial plaza.

He wants to build underground parking so it disturbs the neighbourhood as little as possible.

And he wants to build a restaurant and bar in the hotel, which would be open to the public.

What more can we ask for? Seriously.

If we, the public, want to have any access to the property, we should embrace these plans.

Instead of whining and crying and trying to stop the tide, we should instead be focused on making sure Marotta sticks to his word about the greenspace and makes it something our town (and the man himself) can be proud of. A legacy to leave behind.

And if you want to blame anyone for this property not being a school or community hub, etc., blame our past town councils for not doing everything it could to buy it from the District School Board of Niagara. And blame the DSBN for selling it to a private company.

But that ship has long sailed.

The true value of Parliament Oak is the greenspace that would be open for the public to walk and play on. That is clear to anyone who grew up here and actually uses the property.

I don't want to kiss it goodbye for short-term rentals.

Do you?

### Proposal is simply not appropriate for location

Kevin MacLean  
Managing Editor

Niagara-on-the-Lake is no longer the quaint small town that many people who grew up here long for.

Now, among many things, it is a major tourist destination, a thriving agricultural community and home to purveyors of some excellent Niagara wines.

But it is growing and destined to grow more — and continue to change. I think we all know that, intellectually — though we all want a say in how that happens.

Not an unreasonable expectation, given the historic and special nature of NOTL.

With tourism growing (like it or not) and wine-loving visitors continuing to come here year-round, those guests need places to stay.

We don't want to see an eruption of even more short-term rentals in residential neighbourhoods, nor do many of us want to see luxury, boutique hotels pop up in established residential areas.

It defies sound planning practices, brings huge concerns about noise, traffic and congestion on narrow Old Town streets — and, really, is just plain un-neighbourly.

The fact that the Parliament Oak redevelopment project is the brainchild of developer Benny Marotta doesn't

matter. Or it shouldn't.

However, Marotta has done little to soften his aggressive approach to development, seemingly bulldozing his way toward getting what he wants.

That is unfortunate. But it also doesn't really matter.

All that should really matter is what is appropriate for the former elementary school site — and a booming boutique hotel is not the right choice in my view.

Whether there is even a business case for another NOTL hotel is questionable, but I'll leave that to the developers and planners to figure out.

A long-established, quiet, low-rise residential area of Old Town should not be seen as a place in which to build a sprawling hotel.

The proposal — which requires a zoning change in order to become a reality — has faced criticism for many of its physical features, including its look and height.

These are valid concerns given the neighbourhood in which Marotta's company wants to build.

The hotel project just doesn't fit in.

The proposal by a previous owner of the land, Montreal-based Liberty Sites (3) Ltd., was met with equally vigorous opposition, when that company proposed an apartment building and a few semi-detached homes.

I know developers expect (and perhaps, given the risks they take, deserve) to earn a healthy return on their investments.

Land development is

essential to growth — and growth in NOTL is inevitable.

Something that has always confounded me about Marotta — a man I have never met, nor ever spoken to — is how he has never been able to find a way to give people a bit of what they're asking for (in this case, mainly single-family residential homes) to earn a quick-and-easy win.

And a large public greenspace could make it lasting legacy.

I know NOTLers can be demanding. As community news publishers, we experience their feedback every week. Sometimes those expectations are reasonable, sometimes not. It's a conversation.

But rather than a war of attrition — and lawyers and court cases and land tribunals — how difficult can it really be for Marotta to try to work with the larger community to produce a win-win for all involved? Too naive and Pollyanna-ish?

No doubt both sides wouldn't be 100 per cent happy with the outcome, but at least they wouldn't be at war. And shovels would be in the ground.

Marotta literally owns NOTL. By my top-of-the-head estimation, he has acquired more land and owns more businesses than anyone else in town.

So, he is not going away. He has a home here, a major winery (with another under development), restaurants ... plus many undeveloped projects.

Niagara-on-the-Lake and its largest developer would both benefit from working together.





Doug Ford's legislation for building homes will allow developers to steamroll municipalities and takes away rights of towns like NOTL, says Brian Marshall. FILE/EVAN SAUNDERS

## What Ontario's new **planning statement** means for development



**ARCHITEXT**

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

Despite widespread voter opposition, last fall Premier Doug Ford and his government rammed through the More Homes Built Faster Act, also known as Bill 23, a piece of legislation which blatantly pandered to large developers at the expense of the provincial greenbelt, the environment, heritage, local governments and so on.

The ramifications of this legislation were the topic of several articles in this column and widely covered by many other newspaper and media outlets, none of which were complimentary at any level.

Hot on the heels of the Bill's passage (perhaps even before), work began on the Provincial Planning Statement that would put more tracks under this runaway train.

So, just what is a Provincial Planning Statement?

The Ontario government's Environmental Registry website defines

the new statement as a replacement for the 2020 version and for 2019's A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, which, taken together, "both provide comprehensive, integrated, whole-of-government policy direction on land use planning matters."

In short, this statement will provide the "marching orders," direction and authority to the provincial bureaucracy responsible for enforcing the Planning Act and all associated legislation (like Bill 23).

On the same Environmental Registry website the government identifies five "pillars" within the proposed policy: Generate an appropriate housing supply; make land available for development; provide infrastructure to support development; balance housing with resources; and implementation. Detailed under these pillars are a total of 28 bullet points of which 17 begin with or include the words "require municipalities".

Incidentally, many of these "requirements" will involve downloading functional responsibilities from the province to said municipalities while the authority is retained at the provincial level.

Of course, this is a planning statement, so there is no suggestion relative to

where the money is going to come from to pay for the expanded bureaucracy to perform these duties at the municipality, a level of government whose coffers have been recently slashed by Ford's elimination of their development charges income.

In a province that holds the unenviable title of the most indebted sub-sovereign government in the world (was before COVID-19 and is worse today), I doubt money or the ability to raise money will accompany the downloading.

Further, I suspect even doubling the property tax revenues – that would be you and I once again paying for a government debacle – would cover the increased costs at the local level.

Unless, perhaps, the associated planning functions were skeletonized?

Now, that would allow the developers, and many other industries, to operate with virtually no oversight with the inevitable negative and lasting impacts to the greenbelt, environment and so on, but it would be consistent with the Ford government's actual track record.

While it is impossible to fully explore the proposed policies within this statement in this column's space, we can cite a few examples.

Under the housing portfolio, past governments have generally defined "affordable" as a function of income for ownership and rental housing. This definition has been removed from the proposed Provincial Planning Statement for 2023.

This approach is consistent with the Ford government's position on changes to the inclusionary zoning regulation (O. Reg. 232/18), which prescribes the lowest price or rent that can be required for inclusionary zoning units to 80 per cent of the average resale purchase price or average market rent, as opposed to relying on an income-based approach.

So, if the average resale price in a given municipality happens to be \$900,000, "affordable" is defined as \$720,000. Similarly, if the average market rent for a one-bedroom apartment in the municipality is \$2,200 per month, then "affordable" rent is \$1,760 per month.

Under settlement area expansion, in an effort to curb urban sprawl past governments have required municipalities to complete a comprehensive review to demonstrate there were insufficient opportunities to accommodate the forecasted growth through intensification or on designated urban lands, before

expanding its settlement area boundaries or identifying new settlement areas.

This "needs test" has been removed from the proposed provincial plan. The statement also reduces the criteria that a municipality must consider before identifying a new settlement area or allowing a boundary expansion of an existing settlement, leaving only the proviso that there is sufficient capacity in infrastructure and public service facilities to support the expansion or new settlement area, and avoiding or minimizing impacts on agricultural land and operations.

While the statement does include some protection of prime agricultural lands, it simultaneously devolves the designation of those lands (including specialty crops) onto the municipality – an organ of the province subject to ministerial dictates including the direction to expand settlement areas.

The proposed planning statement also resurrects development in and on prime agricultural lands by allowing a property owner to construct two additional residences on farmland and also permits the severance of up to three residential lots from any given agricultural property (a practice that was eliminated over 20 years ago to halt the gradual loss of prime farmland).

Reflective of the Ford government's stance on the environment, the proposed statement shifts the focus from conserving biodiversity and protecting essential ecological processes to one that balances the use and management of natural resources with attention to appropriate housing supply.

It eliminates the standing direction to maximize vegetation in settlement areas, where feasible, to merely consider the mitigating effects of vegetation and green infrastructure.

And management plans to conserve and protect any manner of cultural heritage (including that of Indigenous communities) have been completely eliminated in the proposed planning statement.

All this, combined with Bill 97 – which gives new and almost dictatorial powers to the provincial minister – foreshadows a very scary future for this province.

The proposed Provincial Planning Statement is open for public input at <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-6813> ... Please read it, and Bill 97, then get involved and make your opinion known on the future of Ontario.

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





# Disheartened by comments about LGBTQ+ community

Dear editor:

I am writing to express my deep concern and disappointment regarding the amount of hate directed toward the LGBTQ+ community.

It is truly disheartening to witness such prejudice and discrimination in our society.

What is even more distressing is when individuals attempt to compare the LGBTQ+ community to the Canadian Armed Forces or other honourable

service members.

It is important to recognize that most people in the armed forces are highly respected for their dedication and sacrifice. They are not subjected to disownment or death threats simply for their choice to serve their country.

As a young person who reads this newspaper, I strongly believe that we should not give any attention or platform to those who do not fully support the LGBTQ+ community.

It is crucial that we stand together in solidarity and promote inclusivity and acceptance.

While some people can be grateful for the ability to “move on with their lives,” as one letter writer suggested, members of the LGBTQ+ community face daily challenges and discrimination, even in the most mundane activities such as going to a grocery store.

This is unacceptable and highlights the urgent need

for education and support in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

It is my sincere hope that this newspaper, as a respected source of information, will take a proactive role in promoting understanding and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community.

By providing more education and support, we can foster a more inclusive and compassionate community for all its members.

**Ryan London  
Virgil**



Writer Ryan London doesn't want newspapers like this one to give a platform for hateful messages. SUPPLIED

# Column on downtown was off the mark

Dear editor:

I just read another of Ross's Ramblings, (“NOTL is a pretty town. It's also noisy, congested and smelly,”) and the only part I agree with is the town's parking meter problem.

For anyone who has to use them, they are a real problem.

I spend literally every day of the week through the summer months, starting about 7:30 a.m., working in the Queen and King streets area, gardening and caring for the flower displays at many commercial businesses.

I am there on the street actually watching it wake up every day but for your columnist to label our special historical and really beautiful downtown as messy, noisy and congested – and can you believe, smelly – is really odd and offensive.

The downtown area does have moments when deliv-



Writer Christopher Allen says NOTL is a unique and special town as it is. FILE

ery trucks stop to support our local merchants, but they only are there for a few minutes.

And later, usually on a weekend, it can be a bit of a traffic jam, but this is part of what makes our downtown a real living, breathing downtown.

It is a real local business area, employing many people and keeping this town alive. It is not sterile and tidy in a phoney way.

I, for one, do not want our town compared to Whistler or to become what that community has become, ever.

That may suit Ross perfectly, but we have a unique and special town that seems to always be under threat these days.

I think we need to preserve and protect and improve wherever we can.

**Christopher Allen  
NOTL**

# The importance of reinvesting in quality education

Dear editor:

The right to education is a fundamental human right and is an integral part of achieving gender equality.

However, today millions of girls today still face obstacles such as child marriage, gender stereotypes and societal stigmas that prevent them from receiving an education.

Over 1.6 billion students were affected by school closures and lockdowns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the World Bank, 70 per cent of 10-year-olds are unable to read and understand simple text.

At the G7 summit in 2018, Canada placed global education at the forefront, resulting in the Charlevoix Declaration, which involved an investment of over \$4

billion, including \$400 million from the Canadian government.

In 55 projects across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, the investment was pivotal as it created a significant impact for four million girls and women to receive education services, while strengthening the international economy and advancing the discussion of gender equality.

In the 2023 federal budget, this provision was not renewed, leaving millions of girls around the world with an uncertain future.

Canada's reinvestment in quality education is essential for the economic development, peace and stability of the local communities.

**Muskaan Waraich  
Student, Brock University**

# Neglect of Canada's military is embarrassing

Dear editor:

The state of our armed forces is a major concern. It is a total embarrassment that we are fourth from the bottom for not keeping up with our financial commitment to NATO.

While we are not a country of militarism, we punched well above our weight in the two world wars. In the First World War we had 650,000 personnel fighting (out of a population

of 8 million) and captured many places that others had failed to do.

In the Second World War, we performed similarly, including on the beaches on D-Day.

Today, we have fewer than 90,000 personnel which includes all three services, all ranks, and both regular and reserve.

We have given a lot of equipment to Ukraine (which I don't regret) but are

not replacing it.

Yes, we have ordered new fighter aircraft but we won't have all of them until 2036. Our ships are at the end of their lifespan but new ships under construction are way overdue and over budget because we insist on making them here in Canada.

While this would be ideal, we need them now. Our army is also in need of new equipment.

Recruiting is totally

ineffective. We now use the forces as a labour pool, not necessarily for their actual purpose of being capable of defending our country. We have good people ready to do the job but need to make sure they have all the tools they need.

Neglect of the forces has been going on for years despite whatever party is in power. Politicians focus on issues that will get them elected but they also need to



Doug Johnson says Canada needs to improve its military.

look after all their responsibilities.

I don't remember any mention by any party in the past election even bringing up the state of the military and their plans to handle defence issues.

Relying on the Americans

to protect us is not the attitude an independent country should have. Next election ask your candidates their party's policy on defence and ask for specifics, not platitudes.

**Doug Johnson  
NOTL**



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# With grandson off to Julliard, family seeks help with tuition

Tim Taylor  
The Lake Report

Dance phenom Ryan Sherk has one tenacious grandmother in his corner.

Ryan, 18, has just been accepted into the world-renowned Juilliard School in New York to study dance.

He'll be enrolled in the bachelor of fine arts program, one of just 20 students chosen for this fall from among thousands of applicants around the globe.

Ryan's Gramma Sue — Sue Sherk to her friends — has quickly jumped into action, working tirelessly to help her grandson find the estimated \$80,000 (U.S.) a year needed to attend the prestigious institution.

Susan Sherk is a real townie, a five-generation Irish immigrant, from the Lavell family who arrived in St. John's from County Mayo in Ireland in 1802 and eventually found their way to Niagara-on-the-Lake. Her family has at least five plots in the St. Mark's cemetery church yard.

Susan's Old Town childhood provides insight into her current-day determination.

She grew up on Castlereagh Street, just past the museum.

"I really had to work for everything," she remembers. "The rest of our gang were on the other side of the tracks. We all took riding lessons. Of course, I had to pick strawberries at Lailey's to pay for the riding."

"The stable was way out on Concession 2 at Line 5. This big station wagon with all my friends would swoosh by my bicycle on the way to the stable. I had to stay all day, clean the stalls and help out."



Ryan Sherk in full flight at the Canadian Dance Awards in 2020. SUPPLIED

She attended Parliament Oak and Niagara District Secondary School.

On graduation, Susan became a student nurse at Toronto General Hospital, then followed her soon-to-be husband Rick to the University of New Brunswick, obtaining her nursing degree. They were married at St. Mark's church in 1972.

Then followed a decade wandering around Ontario with Rick's banking career, to Windsor, Sarnia, Ancaster and so on, finally returning to Niagara to enter the insurance business in 1983.

Fast-forward almost 40 years. In a few short weeks, Ryan will be off to New York City.

His dance journey started at the age of 4½ watching his sister Marisa during her dancing lessons in St. Catharines. Marisa is two

years older and studying dance at Toronto Metropolitan University.

"I started in hip-hop classes," says Ryan, clearly excited about his future, something he has worked toward his entire life.

"Marisa was my main inspiration. I just wanted to do what she did. The moment I took my first dance class, it felt so natural."

"Dance has always been my calling — such a big part of my life. I just like moving to music and connecting with others in an artistic format. I love solo on stage. Having that time to be one with yourself."

He believes dance has brought him endless benefits: "Discipline, time management, physical strength and creativity."

Ryan tried hockey and soccer. "None of them fulfilled me the way dance did."

The recent graduate of the District of Niagara Academy for the Arts at Laura Secord Secondary School in St. Catharines (an Ontario scholar and gold medallist), Ryan admits he has little free time or social life outside his dance community.

"I rarely have a day off. I dance every day of the week."

His dedication is paying off. In 2021, Ryan won the American Dance Award for "America's Teen Dancer of the Year" in

Boston, a competition that attracts hundreds of dancers from around the world.

And just this past week, he was named America's Male Dancer of the Year at a competition in Rhode

Island. These awards highlight a long pedigree of competitive victories over the past five years.

The three-page resume provided by Ryan's talent agent in Toronto is impressive. It stands as a kind of preamble to his future goals of becoming a professional dancer and choreographer.

To gain Juilliard admission, Ryan entered the fray with thousands of applicants from all over the world.

The process included an essay, references, auditions and personal interviews. In the end, he was one of only 20 students admitted into this fall's four-year degree program.

"I've had a huge journey in dance," Ryan says with all the understatement of an 18-year-old phenom.

"So many different moments and my family has always been there, supporting me. They've always been my biggest cheerleaders."

"Dancing is not like a traditional job, being a doctor or whatever. It is also

such a huge commitment financially."

It's the financial side that has Gramma Sue so focused.

She describes herself as "Rabid Granny."

"It is really hard to be a granny," she says, in the voice of every granny everywhere. "You've gotta step carefully with your grandchildren. You have to bite your tongue occasionally."

Her real worry is the cost of attending Juilliard, a huge amount by any standard.

"Ryan is a person who will make the most of it. We are so proud of him. We have faith in him."

They have left very few stones unturned.

Along with friends, family, and dance coaches, Sue has attempted to open every funding door available.

They've started a GoFundMe campaign. They're exploring the taxation status for Canadians donating directly to Juilliard. They are working with accountants and lawyers on both sides of the border.

They are searching for former Juilliard graduates, now living in Niagara, who might provide insights.

They are connecting to area service clubs, particularly those interested in the arts.

"We're helping wherever we can, RESPs and so on."

And she makes certain this story includes a link to Ryan's GoFundMe page: Please help support Ryan's journey to Juilliard! (That entire sentence must be entered into the search line of the GoFundMe site).

She believes helping a small-town dancer achieve international opportunity is a cause worth supporting.

  
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# Jane's Walk a journey through time

Staff  
The Lake Report

On Thursday, July 20, at 7 p.m. in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake, participants in the third annual Jane's Walk will set out on a short walk, starting at the historic Steward House at 507 Butler St.

Over the next 90 minutes, they will hear stories from a lineup of expert speakers with a shared passion for the environment, history and the natural world.

The walk is co-chaired by Jo-Ann Fraser and Kate Sullivan, who are excited to introduce a guided walking tour that will lead participants down Butler Street and delve into some hidden corners and landmarks that have shaped the town's rich history.

Jane's Walk is a global movement that celebrates the legacy of urbanist Jane Jacobs by organizing guided walking tours designed to help communities discover and appreciate the unique stories woven into their neighbourhood tapestry.

"I like the sense of community and caring for our environment that the walk promotes," says Sullivan.

"It is exactly the kind of activity we need more of, so I decided to volunteer. I'm happy to be part of the 2023 Jane's Walk."

Beginning at the Steward House, Elizabeth Pilzecki will unearth forgotten stories and connect the home's fun and heroic past with NOTL's first settlers. There may also be a ghost story, or two.

"Past residents, William and Susannah Steward, both read and wrote, unusual at the time," says Pilzecki.

"William was a teamster,



Jo-Ann Fraser and Kate Sullivan are co-chairs of NOTL's Jane's Walk on July 20. VICTOR TARNOY

a prominent figure in the Black community and one of the signatories on the petition to release Solomon Moseby, who fled to Niagara to escape enslavement in the United States."

Next, Mary-lyn Hopper, a master gardener, will take the spotlight to outline the value of native gardening and dispel some common misconceptions.

"A native plant garden doesn't have to be wild and filled with only native plants," she says.

"Native plants can be used in a variety of garden designs. I use visual design principles to both create beautiful gardens and foster an ecosystem that supports wildlife."

Moving closer to Two Mile Creek, walkers will hear from Jean Hampson, secretary of the Peninsula Field Naturalists, a member of a large community of people conducting bird counts and working on projects and campaigns to protect bird species, populations and habitats.

"Birds can be found on every continent and almost every habitat on the planet," says Hampson.

"Because many species migrate, birds help connect our world and can be an indicator of the health of our ecosystems."

Participants will learn how both migrating and local bird populations need interconnected green areas for their survival and will take away some useful resources and ideas on how they can assist our Niagara birds.

Next, Dr. Adam Martin, an ecologist and assistant professor of sciences at the University of Toronto, will give participants an overview of pests and diseases that have been wreaking havoc on the trees in NOTL.

"By sharing tips to identify pests and diseases, various life cycles and their impact on our trees, we can arm our community with ideas to combat and manage our ongoing challenges," says Martin, whose work focuses on plant diversity and plant responses to climate change.

"I'd like to foster a deeper understanding of tree health and encourage proactive measures we can use to help maintain our unique forest canopy."

Finally, the stage will be set for Rick Meloen, an avid history buff, to transport participants back in time and recount the struggles and triumphs of Col. John Butler, one of Upper Canada's great leaders.

"Butler helped to create Niagara-on-the-Lake," says Meloen.

"He was an exceptional man, who served as deputy superintendent for the Indian Department, justice of the peace and, in addition to forming Butler's Rangers, also helped establish St. Mark's Anglican Church and the Masonic Order in Ontario."

Participants will gain a new appreciation of the contributions of the Butler family, the significance of the Butler homestead and Butler's Burial ground, where many found final solace and sanctuary.

"Jane's Walk is an evening of community exploration," says Fraser. "Our goal is to bring together diverse voices, spark conversation and empower people to learn more about our history and our environment."

"We want to fuel our community with knowledge and an appreciation for both our natural environment and our shared history."

So, lace up your walking shoes, bring your curiosity and join the third annual Jane's Walk to learn more about the town's vibrant tapestry.

**Details:** *There's a new date, a new route and new speakers for this year's Jane's Walk in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It kicks off on Thursday, July 20, at the historic Steward House, 507 Butler St., at 7 p.m., rain or shine.*



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

This song from "Toy Story" earned Randy Newman an Oscar nomination.

Last issue:

Category: BIRD BRAINS

Clue: Some birds wield twigs and sticks to accomplish tasks, making them among the handful of animals known to use these.

Answer: What are tools?

Answered first by: Jim Dandy

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Lynda Collet, Sheila Meloche, Elaine Landray

(Last week's riddle in print was repeated from the previous week. It was updated online. Apologies for any confusion)

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

Email answers to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto: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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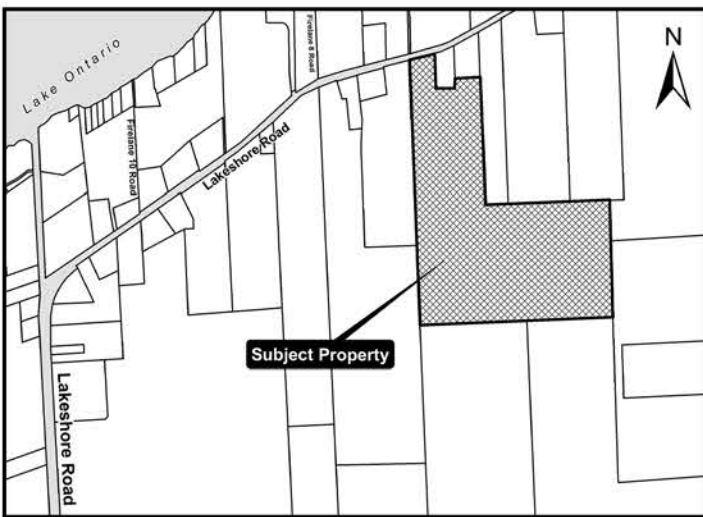
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## NOTICE OF INTENTION TO PASS AMENDING ZONING BY-LAW TO REMOVE HOLDING (H) SYMBOL

- What:** Notice of Intention to Pass an Amending Zoning By-law to Remove Holding (H) Symbol (under Section 36 of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990 as amended).
- Regarding:** File ZBA-08-2023  
911 Lakeshore Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake
- What is this:** The Zoning By-law amendment application proposes to remove the Holding (H) symbol that applies to the subject lands (see location map) through site specific Zoning By-law 500XH-18.



The Council for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake may pass the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment to remove the Holding (H) symbol from the subject lands no earlier than the **July 25, 2023** Council meeting. However, Council may consider the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment at a later meeting.

Under Section 36(3) of the Planning Act, only the applicant has appeal rights with respect to the removal of a Holding (H) symbol. There are no third-party rights to appeal the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment.

**Town Hall is open for the public to attend Committee of the Whole and Council Meetings, including Public Meetings, in-person. Alternatively, the public will continue to have the option to register in advance to participate electronically.**

If you wish to participate electronically to make an oral presentation or ask questions at the Council meeting, you must register in advance with the Town Clerk ([clerks@notl.com](mailto:clerks@notl.com) or 905-468-3266). You will receive an email on the date of the meeting with instructions to connect to the meeting on your computer, tablet or telephone.

If you wish to attend the Council meeting in-person, registration with the Clerk is appreciated.

If you wish to view the Council meeting for information purposes, registration is not required. The meeting will be available for viewing at the following link:

<https://www.notl.com/council-government/mayor-council/meetings-agenda-minutes>

**For more information:**

Please contact Victoria Nikoltcheva, Planner II, at 905-468-3266 ext. 253 or via email at [victoria.nikoltcheva@notl.com](mailto:victoria.nikoltcheva@notl.com) if you require additional information.

A copy of the application and supporting documents for the proposal may be obtained on the Town's website, <https://www.notl.com/business-development/public-planning-notices> or at the Community and Development Services Department within Town Hall (1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, ON).

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, July 13, 2023  
Shaunna Arenburg, Acting Town Clerk

## Friends of Fort George celebrates 210 years of 'Pride and Prejudice'

Staff  
The Lake Report

It's been 210 years since the world was introduced to the captivating romance of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, a creation of British novelist Jane Austen through her sophomore book, "Pride and Prejudice."

Today, "Pride and Prejudice" is considered one of the most loved novels in the English literary canon and a favourite for many.

The Friends of Fort George is inviting fans of Jane Austen to join them for a tea party and a special lecture commemorating the novel's anniversary.

The Regency-themed tea party is happening on July 20 at Navy Hall on Ricardo Street, starting at 7 p.m.

There will be tea and treats, book trivia and discussion, shopping, period games and more. Participants can try writing with a



Jane Austen will be celebrated July 20. SUPPLIED

quill pen in the style of Jane Austen, as well as other Regency-era activities.

Those who come dressed in period costumes will receive a 10 per cent discount in the Friends of Fort George's gift shop.

Then, later this summer, on Aug. 3, Navy Hall will host a special lecture, "Pride and Prejudice: Or, How to Write the Perfect Novel" with Barbara Seiber, a professor of English at Brock University who specializes in Jane Austen's work.

The lecture is at 7 p.m. Tea and treats are available.

Tickets for the tea party are \$20 each, while lecture costs \$15. Both are available for purchase through the Friends of Fort George's website under "Special Events," at [friendsoffortgeorge.square.site](http://friendsoffortgeorge.square.site).

Proceeds from ticket sales will help to support student summer employment at Fort George and Brock's Monument. For more information, call the Friends of Fort George at 905-468-6621.

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# Columnist Jaime Watt reflects on **highs and lows** in new book

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

For Toronto Star columnist Jaime Watt, the hardest part of the job is the hindsight of what he could have said, or written, differently – usually, the day after his column comes out.

“I often wake up on Saturday morning thinking of what I wish I had said, so I just decided, ‘I have over 400 columns, so I’m gonna go back and have a look,’ “ Watt told The Lake Report.

However, in Watt’s new, debut book, “What I Wish I Said: Confessions of a Columnist,” he gets to revisit 48 of his past columns through a retrospective lens of what he did right and what he wishes he could change.

Watt, a NOTL resident and member of the Shaw Festival board of directors, also is executive chairman of Navigator, a major Canadian communications and crisis management firm.

He held a book launch and signing Sunday at the home

of Lyle Hall on King Street property.

Watt’s book looks critically at the way he tackled past issues in his column, including topical sections focusing on COVID-19, Trump politics, human rights and more.

His portfolio of columns includes around 400 different works. Watt’s publishing team, which included working journalists and his friends, went through hundreds of his columns and hand-selected what would work best in the book.

“I wanted to bring particular issues forward,” said Dean Baxendale, president and CEO of Optimum Publishing International, who helped with the selection process.

“Especially around Donald Trump, some things around civil liberties, specifically around COVID, LGBTQ rights issues,” he added.

One column that stands out for Watt is his piece on a certain president’s imper-



Toronto Star columnist Jaime Watt signed copies of his book “What I Wish I Said” for friends and readers during Sunday’s release party. JULIA SACCO

manence.

“I wrote that Trump would be a hiccup, that he was nothing. I told everyone to calm down,” he said.

Watt said that initially,

he didn’t understand how the many judges Trump appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court would change the power dynamic and just how lasting Trump’s influ-

ence on the North American political sphere would be.

“We’re seeing it now, the attack on women’s rights with dominion over their body,” he said.

The book is not just a collection of regrets, though. It features some of Watt’s career highlights and pieces closest to his heart.

For example, a column showing Watt’s early reporting on the severity of the opioid crisis compared it to the AIDS epidemic.

“The one closest to my heart is about my transplant,” he said.

Watt explained that he waited much less time than the average person for a kidney – because he received one from his partner.

“Most people have to wait 11 years for a kidney,” he said.

These personal touches are what make a good columnist, along with strong opinions and unpredictability, he said.

“Adrienne Clarkson said I was the only columnist that she couldn’t predict what they were going to say next. That was an amazing compliment to me,” Watt said.

The book is now available in stores and online.

**23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL NOTL KINSMEN**

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# Young NOTL artists receive \$200 scholarships from Pumphouse

Staff  
The Lake Report

It's been 210 years since two of Niagara-on-the-Lake's aspiring young artists have received \$200 from the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre this summer for their talent and dedication to their craft.

James Couroux and Cecilia Noble, graduates from Holy Cross and Laura Secord secondary schools, respectively, are winners of the art centre's annual scholarship.

"It is so exciting to see the talent, enthusiasm and passion of these artists moving forward in their post-secondary programs," Pumphouse board member Marina Glencross said in a media release.

The arts centre awards the scholarship to graduating high school students from NOTL who are



Students James Couroux and Cecilia Noble, pictured here with Pumphouse board member Marina Glencross, are the recipients of this year's scholarship. SUPPLIED

pursuing a recognized post-secondary visual arts program.

Couroux uses art to transform his dreams into visual images, exploring themes of wonder, horror and nostalgia. His artistic pursuits

include drawings, pictures, designs and films.

He plans to pursue a bachelor of film and television degree at Sheridan College, with the goal of becoming a professional filmmaker.

Noble has been a visual

artist since she was young and is exploring the world of three-dimensional artworks, incorporating various mediums, textures and unexpected physical elements. She's planning to pursue a degree in arts and culture at Brock University and explore new artistic styles.

The Pumphouse arts scholarship has been supporting young artists since 2010.

Every year, the recipients are chosen by specific staff members at their schools, who nominate deserving student applicants.

This scholarship was established in memory of Ian Butler, one of the Pumphouse's founding members, to honour his dedication and passion for art education.

The scholarship recipients' works can be viewed online at niagarapumphouse.ca.

# Friends of Fort George offer an exclusive look at Old Fort Erie

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

You can finally take a look behind the scenes at Old Fort Erie.

Together with the Niagara Parks Commission, the Friends of Fort George are offering a bus trip to the fort, including a stop at the Battle of Chippawa site, a stop for lunch and of course a VIP tour of the fort itself.

The bus departs Fort George at 10 a.m. on July 19 and returns at 4 p.m.

Historian and former Fort George superintendent Ron Dale will lead the presentation at the Chippawa Battlefield.

"The Battle of Chippawa

was a very important battle for Indigenous warriors, so he will be highlighting that," executive director Amanda Gamble told The Lake Report.

Gamble explained that before COVID-19 hit, they ran a popular members-only excursion to Fort Niagara and had one planned to Old Fort Erie since then.

"For us, it's a way to raise awareness about other historic sites in the Niagara region," she said.

Tickets are available at \$100 each for members and \$110 for nonmembers. Reserve a limited spot by calling the Friends of Fort George at 905-468-6621 or emailing admin@friendsof-fortgeorge.ca.



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# The world of meditation and mindfulness



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

Twenty years ago, few people were aware of meditation and fewer still, the term mindfulness. These days, both are practised by a growing number of Canadians.

A local family health care team recently offered an online mindfulness program – within a day, it was oversubscribed.

Even giants like Harvard University's Mass General Brigham health care service now offer regular online and in-person courses in alternative medicine programs.

The Mayo Clinic also supports similar initia-

tives as part of a holistic approach to wellness and disease.

Once the requisite neural underpinnings for symbolic thinking and language, storytelling and imagination and creativity were in place to support them, meditative and mindfulness practices in some form probably followed and may have been widely practised as early as Paleolithic times.

Meditation especially has been a part of Judaic, Christian, Islamic, Buddhist and other religious practices for as long as they have been around. The near-universal survival of such meditative practices strongly attests to their value.

Unfortunately, the impact of science in the 19th and 20th centuries weakened these ancient practices to the point when at one point, meditative practices almost disappeared in the Western world, except

in monasteries and other retreats from the march of modernity. They were relegated to the "fringe" by mainstream medicine.

What was fringe in health care not so long ago has become not only respectable but actively promoted by mainline health organizations probably under pressure from patients to adopt more holistic approaches.

The movement to re-introduce such practices hasn't come from basic neuroscience – far from it.

The brain is much too complex for most basic neuroscientists to study without focusing on more manageable subsystems and regions of the brain such as the visual system, memory, position and grid cells in the temporal lobe – studies on each of which led to Nobel prizes.

These bite-sized, manageable ventures were triumphs, unlike much harder-to-tackle grand

subjects such as the nature of consciousness, as Francis Crick found out to his chagrin later in his career.

Whatever the neuroscience behind meditation and mindfulness, they fill a void in the spectrum of health care services that mainline medicine lost many years ago when practitioners focused on the science of what they were doing and less on listening to and empathizing with their patients.

Few doubt the benefits that science brought to the treatment of heart disease and stroke, many cancers, and the prevention of many infectious diseases through vaccination.

Unfortunately, lost in the triumphs of modern medicine is what was formerly called bedside medicine – the emotional bond and understanding between patients and care providers.

That was one driver behind the growing popu-

larity of meditation and mindfulness. People want more control over their worries, anxieties, and the pressures and urgencies of daily life.

Is there anyone who hasn't suffered from some of those troublesome symptoms who doesn't want an answer to them, including those bodily symptoms, which are so clearly connected with constant stress?

Mindfulness and meditation recognize the truism that the mind, body and immune systems affect one another. That's especially the case for what's going on in the brain affecting the gut and immune systems. When we're anxious, we often feel it in a roiling gut or headache.

Two years ago, a six-week series on the brain was held at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library with a heavy focus on the basic functions of the brain such as move-

ment and balance, sensation, memory and speech.

Unfortunately, too little attention was paid to a more holistic approach.

David Elkins, who reviews the annual Nobel prizes in economics and peace, stepped in with a seventh lecture on meditation.

It was well-received. Given the public interest in meditation and mindfulness, Elkins and I plan two programs for the fall.

First is a three-week introduction to the nature of these disciplines on Aug. 30, Sept. 6 and 13 followed by a second more practical series on Sept. 20 and 27, Oct. 4 and 11, all at the NOTL library at 2 p.m.

A warning: you might want to sign up soon.

*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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1963 - 2023

# Slick putt proves profitable as Murray cashes in \$420 win

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report



Glen Murray.

Lefty Glen Murray was a winner on the course and on the putting green last Thursday, becoming the first golfer to cash in on the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club men's league putting contest.

Murray sank a hard-breaking 20-foot putt to scoop the prize money that had grown to \$420.

Each week one participant gets to try his luck at sinking a long putt.

No one had turned the trick all season and the distance would shrink one foot each week, waiting for someone to nail it. And the prize money would grow.

Murray also won a gross skin for a birdie on the sixth hole.

Meanwhile, former club champion Stephen Warboys was in fine form, shooting a 1-under 35 to take low gross. He also totalled 22 points in modified Stabfords scoring, good for top spot.

Other winners were: Zach

That meant some excellent shots went unused and some, uh, miscues won the roll.

First place went to Maria and Brodie Townley, Carolyn and Drew Porter who shot an admirable 2-under 34. Second, by retrogression, were Eileen and Jack Hanna, Kim and Oleh Hrycko, also with 34.

Janice and Jim McMacken, Peggy Larder and Gerry Shelly also broke par with a 35, while Julie and Bill Smethurst, Marilyn and Cal Cochrane were fourth with even-par 36.

Jeff Brookhouser was closest to the pin winner on #4, while longest putts on #8 were sunk by Ron Newman and Maria Townley.

Patrick Craig was the big winner in this Tuesday's men's WOOFs league, carding a 1-over 37 to win low gross and sharing closest to the pin honours on #9 with Ken Burr.

Ian Rutherford was low net with 30 and Jeff Jacques won the hidden hole with a spectacular eagle 2 on the eighth hole.

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# Three Thunderhawks teams reach semis at Oshawa tourney

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Three young Niagara Thunderhawks lacrosse teams competed in a weekend tournament in Oshawa and all three made it to the semifinals in their division.

The U9 major, U11 and U13 teams played last weekend in the Braver Than Brave Tournament.

All three NOTL teams battled hard, winning some games to earn berths in the semifinals.

The U9 major team is coached by James Sticca, Chris Riddle, Matt Dietsch, Kevin Coffey and Adam Stewart.

Players are: Ryan Riddle, Lucas Froese, Colton Dietsch, Smith Kaposy, Kaleb Coffey, Rily Hill, Theo Moore, Reed Francis, Lee Jay Allen, Jason Young, Ethan Sticca, Sydney Heriman, Noah Scaringi and Weston Stewart.

The U11 Thunderhawks are coached by Jay Thorimbert, Dave Funk, Chris Riddle, Jason Meleskie and Brandon Berry.

Players are: James Froese, Owen Thorimbert, Jace Szabo, Brody Cech, Chris



Members of the Niagara Thunderhawks U9 major team at the Braver Than Brave Tournament in Oshawa. MATT DIETSCH

Washburn Jr., Jesiah Paul, Conor Bailey, Hunter Berry, Nicholas Riddle, Nikolaas Peters, Nash Funk, Blake Bedic, Colton Meleskie, Charlie Fratangelo, Peter Kostanis and Bentley Barry.

The U13 team is coached by Connor Watson, Dan Willms, Aaron Ward, Ben Froese and Braedon Rawsthorne.

Players are: Mason Jaeckle, Elijah Paul, Hunter Froese, Malakai Visscher, Jax Johnson, Jack Sartor, Ace Washburn, Jett Jimereson, Max Plomish, Miller Davis, Barrett Fiwchuk, Ryder Kallies, Lorenzo Ball, Jack Kislasko, Logan Dodd, Benjamin Eramian and Tyonih White.

The Braver Than Brave

Tournament is named in honour of lacrosse player Tucker Williams, who was diagnosed with cancer and ultimately lost the battle at the age of 8.

The short, heartbreaking history of Tucker's battle with a rare form of cancer can be found at [oshawab-lueknights.ca/braver-than-brave](http://oshawab-lueknights.ca/braver-than-brave).



Top: Blake Bedic, Jace Szabo and Jesiah Paul of the Niagara Thunderhawks U11 team pose with Shawn Williams, the father of Tucker Williams, the child who inspired the creation of the Braver Than Brave Tournament. NAHTANHA HILL PAUL Bottom: Players on the Thunderhawks U13 team huddle around their coaches during the Oshawa tournament. PAM FROESE

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# Train, work, sleep and repeat

## St. Davids boxer is focused on preparing for Pan Am qualifiers in Colombia

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

As a champion amateur boxer by day and a nursing student by night, McKenzie Wright has little time for anything else in life.

“My mindset is just one day at a time, just keep powering through,” the St. Davids fighter says.

She’s juggling full-time night shifts at a long-term care facility in Welland, needed to get her nursing diploma from Niagara College, and training for a chance to compete in the Pan American Games this fall.

Wright has been working straight nights five days a week at the facility since early May.

This might be normal for some people, but she is also preparing to represent Canada at the Pan Am Games qualifiers in Cali, Colombia, in less than a month — and training for such a competition is gruelling.

Coming in the top four at the Aug. 3 to 10 qualifiers would be her ticket to the Pan Am Games in Chile this October. A top two finish at the Pan Ams means a trip to the 2024 Paris Olympics.

“I understand these are once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, so I’ll do whatever it takes to take advantage of them,” said the national champion in the 50-kilo-gram weight class.

She trains six days a week at City Boxing Club in Niagara Falls with her coach, Jesse Sallows, a two-time Golden Glove champion.

Wright also works out on her own three to four days a week on top of her gym sessions.

Her intense schedule



In less than two weeks St. Davids amateur boxer McKenzie Wright will be in Cali, Colombia representing Canada at the Pan Am Games qualifiers. A fundraiser to help pay expenses will take place July 19 at the Sandtrap Pub & Grill. FILE

leaves her with five to six hours of sleep a night and one day off a week to rest.

“I don’t have room for anything else right now. I have absolutely no social life outside of the gym, which is tough,” she said.

“But it’s priorities as well. The people closest to me, they understand,” she added.

She knows this is what she needs to do if she wants to go all the way.

“I have a really good understanding of what this sport takes and to be at a certain level and be successful at that level,” she said.

“I just understand that you have to be all in and if you’re not all in, you’re not going to make it.”

She wakens after her night shift rest at around 2 p.m., has a cup of tea and

right away prepares for her first training session.

Her conditioning days consist of different types of running exercises.

On Tuesdays, she sprints up and down a hill near her home; on Thursdays, she runs five kilometres as quickly as she can; on Saturdays, she goes to the track; and on a day in between, she’ll do a light five-kilometre run.

She said the track days are the worst.

“I do 800 metres twice, then 400 metres twice, 250 metres twice and 100 metres four times,” she said.

“That one induces a little bit of anxiety because it’s gonna be bad no matter what.”

These different conditioning sessions simulate how rounds of boxing work.

Running 800 metres at

top speed takes about three minutes.

“So I’m going as hard as hard and as fast as possible for three minutes because that’s one round of boxing,” she said.

Her other conditioning workouts are more touch-and-go, with energy spikes and drops that simulate the brief bursts that occur throughout boxing rounds.

“You go hard, then you might circle the ring, you might pick your moments more, but then you’ve always got to be ready to go into that hard, powerful burst again,” she said.

Since the altitude in Colombia (about 3,200 feet) is higher than it is here, maintaining her conditioning regimen is especially important.

“I am going eight days in advance before the competi-

tion starts, so that’s even more motivation for me to be on top of my conditioning,” she said.

She’s hoping those eight days in Colombia beforehand will help her adjust to the altitude.

Here in Niagara, after her conditioning sessions, she’ll go home and have breakfast at 3:30 p.m., rest, have a cup of coffee, then head to the boxing club.

“We start at 5:30 p.m., and that training is just everything boxing-focused,” she said.

For two hours, Wright will skip, shadowbox, hit the heavy bags, sometimes spar and then do more conditioning.

“If it’s not a sparring day, then after my shadow boxing I’ll glove up and I’ll get time to do hand pads with my coach Jesse,” she said.

By the time she finishes around 7:30 p.m., she heads back home to St. Davids, eats dinner and gets ready for her 11 p.m. shift.

She tries to get a nap in, but isn’t always lucky.

“If I can’t, it’s because I’m thinking about boxing. So, in those times where I do try to nap, my mind is thinking about sparring or what I need to work on tomorrow,” she said.

The she heads to work, gets off at 7 a.m. — and does it all over again.

“What I’m doing right now, it’s not sustainable,” she said.

“I know, it’s crazy and I’m not sleeping enough and I’m tired all the time, but I only have a few weeks left, so I know I can do it,” she added.

The hardest thing for her has been how exhausted her body feels all the time, she said.

She loves boxing and has no trouble motivating herself to do it, but said she’s just “battling pure exhaustion.”

“Muhammad Ali says something like, ‘Suffer now and live your life as a champion,’” she said.

She finishes up her nursing co-op in soon and leaves for Colombia on July 24 for 18 days for her shot at the Pan American Games.

“It’s once in a lifetime, so I’m all in,” she said.

**FUNDRAISER:** Next Wednesday, July 19, from 3 to 5 p.m., friends and family have organized a fundraising meet-and-greet session for Wright at the Sandtrap Pub & Grill on Mary Street. For more information, contact her father, Dow Wright, by email at [dwright24@live.com](mailto:dwright24@live.com). A GoFundMe has been set up to help cover the cost of her trip to Colombia.

## Kickboxing-on-the-Lake: MMA fighter opens new gym on East & West Line

Maddy Gordon  
The Lake Report

After retiring from a seven-year career in mixed martial arts, Dwayne Hinds knew he had to find a career that would let his passion for fitness shine through.

That’s why the Niagara-on-the-Lake resident has opened a new gym at 256 East & West Ln.

Originally from Trinidad and Tobago, Hinds began his MMA career fighting in

barnyards with no professional influence, eventually graduating to fight and train in over 10 countries across the world.

“I wrestled in high school and university in the U.S., and then got into judo. I actually watched one of my buddies from judo fight and thought, ‘I can do that,’” said Hinds.

Now, he’s bringing that passion and experience to his new venture, located inside Caughill Automotive

(where the mechanic still works).

Hinds offers a variety of fitness programs to members, including strength conditioning classes, personal and group training, personal and group kickboxing lessons and kids kickboxing lessons.

Hinds said he hopes to make exercising fun for people who struggle to find enjoyment in the activity.

“I don’t think anyone is motivated by burpees, bicep

curls and squats,” he said.

“Linking fun with skill development so people look forward to coming to training, that’s the goal.”

Hinds finished his MMA career with two losses and 13 consecutive wins as a professional fighter in 2015, later opening a gym in Trinidad and Tobago before migrating to Canada in 2019.

“I’m just happy I get to go back and do what I love,” said Hinds.



Boxing coach Dwayne Hinds plans to call his new gym Kickboxing-on-the-Lake. MADDY GORDON



**EXPLORING PHOTOS**  
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## Road construction in the summer of 1914

As we all endure road construction season during the summer months, let's check out this photograph of a 15-ton steam roller that was laying new pavement on King Street near Queen in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Note the rail tracks in the bottom left corner. Lord Mayor W.H. Harrison is the man standing in the middle and the workers, from left, are William Murray, Alf Tester, Harry Mathews, Curt Gordon and Ivan Armstrong.

## A unique Niagara moment filled with **music and memories**



### Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

Back about 10 years ago, Atis Bankis dusted me during a men's tennis league night at the Memorial Park tennis courts. While enjoying a cold Oast House's Barnraiser after the match, I told him he "had played me like a Stradivarius."

A bit ironic as he is a master violinist, the founder and artistic director of Music Niagara, now in its 25th-anniversary season.

He had learned to play violin and tennis in his native Lithuania and continues to create musical magic. Tennis? Not so much.

Last weekend at Iron-

wood Cider House on Lakeshore Road, in a unique venue with an appreciative and supportive audience, Atis and his peers created an evening that resembled a musical salon.

A salon is a gathering of people held by a host, in this case Music Niagara. Salons first appeared in Italy in the 16th century, and flourished in France in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The concert/salon was sponsored by Patrick Little, the senior partner at Murray and Associates LLP, a St. Catharines law firm. Peter Millard, a member of the Shaw Festival company for some 30 years, was the master of ceremonies, and deftly described Schubert, Schumann, Dietrich and Brahms.

To someone like me from Kirkland Lake and Winnipeg, it was a challenge.

My comfort zone is describing hockey players like Frank Mahovlich, Tim Horton, Ted Lindsay



Music Niagara director Atis Bankis. FILE/RICHARD HARLEY

and Allan Stanley – all tough lads from northern Ontario, who used their hockey sticks like violin bows, to make nice passes and goals.

They didn't play a sonata in A minor or a piano quartet op. 47 in E flat major.

By the way, Stradivarius violins were made by Antonio Stradivari in his shop in Cremona, Italy, until his death in 1737. A true mas-

ter, and the North American equivalent to such a category leader might be Frank Zamboni.

Zamboni invented the ice-resurfacing machine in California and the Boston Bruins were the first NHL team to use one, in 1954. Since then, thousands of Zambonis have been sold.

The ice-making maestro is in the Ice Skating Institute Hall of Fame, making it clear that Stradi-

varius and Zamboni were two Italian leaders in their fields. Back now to Ironwood Cider House on Sunday evening.

The venue was sans pareil, with intermission among the peach trees. Light foods were provided by the District from St. Catharines and my Mexican sweet corn tapa was to die for. Especially at \$8, with sweet corn, feta, cilantro lime cream, garlic butter and paprika.

And how classy it was to be dining with a light wooden spoon. Ironwood's Ciderita and other ciders were available chilled to complement the food offerings.

It was spectacular to enjoy the music of Atis Bankis on violin, Victoria Kogan on piano, Liubomyr Kliufinskyi on viola and Jonothan Tortolano on cello. They thrilled us with such wonderful talents at Ironwood, and we counted our blessings to be part of this Music Niagara gem.

There are several more concerts throughout the summer, at various

delightful venues, and a special highlight will be on Sunday, July 30, when they celebrate Ukrainian music and culture at St. Mark's Anglican Church at 4 p.m.

This will be a breathtaking and heartfelt musical experience featuring internationally renowned soloists and musicians. I have a dashing blue and yellow shirt pressed and ready, and invite NOTLers to be at St. Mark's to show solidarity with our Ukraine fellows.

Bankis has the musical Rolodex of Rolodexes, so please be with us.

Let us delight ourselves. As Peter Millard said, "Where words fail, music speaks."

Step out of your comfort zones, join other Niagara-on-the-Lake residents and visitors, close your eyes, and let the music overtake your senses for a few hours. You will be a better person.

Music in Niagara with Music Niagara. We are all so fortunate to live in Canada in 2023.





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Left: Deadheading snowcap shasta daisy. Right: Deadheading gaillardia. JOANNE YOUNG



A sign warns swimmers the beach is closed. JULIA SACCO

## E. coli levels close Queen's Royal Beach

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

E. coli levels at Queen's Royal Beach may put a damper on your weekend plans.

The Region of Niagara has deemed Queen's Royal Beach unsafe for swimming after routine testing of the water.

"There are a number of factors that could contribute to the high levels of E. coli in the water," said Brandon Krupa, the region's manager of environmental health.

He cited weather as a likely contender, with the amount of rain and wind potentially altering the water's quality.

"Each beach is different, with its own characteristics and some have better flow, some are more stagnant. All that plays a factor into the water quality," Krupa said.

The beach at Ryerson Park, about two kilometres

west of Queen's Royal, is not listed as an official beach and therefore is not tested.

The water at Queen's Royal Beach is tested each Monday, Wednesday and Friday in summer. The quality level is updated 24 hours after testing – the next update will be on Thursday, July 13.

"The important thing to remember is that samples are just a point in time: the wind changes, the weather changes, the rain, the amount of animals," Krupa said.

Queen's Royal Beach has been open for swimming 76 per cent of the time this season.

Krupa urged swimmers to be mindful of water status before heading in for a dip. Updates are available at NiagaraRegion.ca.

If one beach is posted unsafe for swimming, Krupa said there will be other options available.

# Let the **deadheading** begin



**GROWING TOGETHER** 

Joanne Young  
Columnist

All these hot, humid days may be making you feel like a bit of a dead-head. And speaking of deadheads (see what I did there?), one way to keep your garden blooming throughout the summer is by deadheading your flowering shrubs, perennials, and annuals.

If you are a beginner gardener, don't worry, it is not a difficult task. Deadheading simply means removing the flowers once they have finished blooming.

To better understand the importance of deadheading, it helps to understand how a plant thinks. The goal of most plants is different than the reason we have placed them in our gardens.

Our goal is for the plant to provide beautiful flowers for

our enjoyment. For a plant, its goal is to produce a seed to reproduce itself. The flowers are just the means of producing seeds.

So, why is this important to know? Once a plant has finished flowering and the petals have dropped off what remains there is its seed (or fruit containing seed).

If the seed is left there to ripen, it signals to the plant that it has finished its job and does not have to continue flowering. On the other hand, if you rob the plant of that seed, it signals to the plant that it now must bloom again to produce seed.

So, you can trick the plant into blooming multiple times, keeping your plants colourful throughout the season.

There are also other benefits of deadheading. Removing the spent blooms keeps the plant looking tidy and will also encourage the plant to grow thicker and fuller.

If you have a plant that spreads rapidly from reseeding itself and you want to control it, deadheading will help to control its spread.

One caution though, deadheading can become addictive. I know that I find

myself deadheading other people's plants for them. I just can't stop myself!

As far as the question of timing is concerned for deadheading, you can remove the finished flowers at any time. Of course, the sooner you remove the spent flowers, the quicker it will rebloom.

The more important question is how to deadhead. The biggest mistake I see is that people will just pull off the dead flower petals, but this does not remove the seed head.

Others will cut the flower off right below the flower. This removes the seed head, but you will be left with a dry and unattractive flower stem.

For a basic rule of thumb, deadhead your spent flowers and stems back to a quarter-inch above a new lateral flower, lateral leaf or leaf bud. This encourages new growth from that point and that new growth will produce new flowers.

Most annuals will require regular deadheading to keep blooming for you all summer. A lot of the deadheading can be done by simply using your fingers to pinch off the spent flowers and stems.

When it comes to perennials and shrubs, you will probably need to use secateurs to remove the old flower and stem.

Not all plants will repeat bloom, especially ones that don't flower until late summer. Some examples of annuals that benefit from deadheading: geraniums, marigolds, zinnias, snapdragons, petunias and angelonia.

Examples of perennials that will benefit from removing the spent blooms are hollyhocks, delphiniums, Shasta daisies, coneflowers, salvias, campanulas, bee balms and gaillardia.

Some flowering shrubs that will bloom more than once if deadheaded are everblooming hydrangeas (such as the endless summer hydrangea varieties), weigela, some varieties of spirea, potentilla, roses, Bloomerang lilac and butterfly bush.

So, if you want a garden that will perform for you all summer, let the deadheading begin!

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



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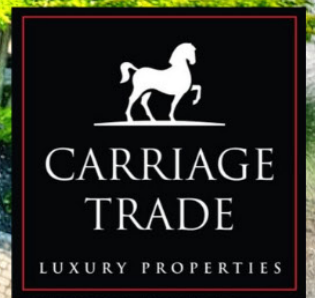






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