



SUMMER OF THE FLOOD  
Part 3 | Pages 6-7

## Council approves zoning change for Mary Street condominiums

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A proposed condominium development on Mary Street will help close Niagara-on-the-Lake's housing gap, says the town's lord mayor.

The condo was on the agenda of Tuesday evening's committee of the whole planning meeting, specifically a zoning bylaw amendment that would allow for the development of a four-storey apartment building with 41 units at 223 and 227 Mary St.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Couns. Erwin Wiens, Maria Mavridis, Adriana Vizzari and Wendy Che-

Continued on Page 2

## Olympic swimmer visits Pillitteri

Staff  
The Lake Report

She already had four Olympic medals under her belt before claiming bronze in the 200-metre backstroke in Paris this summer.

Now, as Kylie Masse celebrates becoming the first Canadian swimmer to stand on the podium in three consecutive Olympic games, she'll be in Niagara-on-the-Lake this weekend to meet

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# HEARTBEAT of the HARVEST

## Old tradition comes to Chateau des Charmes



Winemaker Amelie Boury picks Chardonnay grapes for sparkling wine during the first harvest of the season. DON REYNOLDS

Jill Troyer | The Lake Report

*Shiny silver and red streamers glint in the breeze, bird bangers boom through the vineyards and unwieldy yellow harvesters lumber along the lines and concession roads. Grapes hang in the late summer sun, their skins now dusky purple or mellow gold, nearing the moment of ripeness that will signal their time for harvesting. Row upon row of vines create peaceful vistas to admire at this time of year, but behind the signs of harvest visible to all, unseen stories and challenges unfold. Weather is one wild card, but there are multiple variables to juggle and everyone involved is in for weeks of inexorable work and exhaustion before it all is done. With this new series — Heartbeat of the Harvest — The Lake Report goes behind the scenes to capture some of the stories of the people who make it all happen.*

It isn't quite 7:30 in the morning yet, but the early hour doesn't deter an eager crowd from gathering in the bright September sunshine to celebrate the first day of the harvest at Chateau des Charmes — and to make their own contribution by hand picking grapes destined for sparkling wine.

A buzz of anticipation and excitement pervades the scene, as a new tradition for Chateau des Charmes is inaugurated.

Both winemaker Amelie Boury and sales and marketing head Anne Givens have experienced harvest time in France first-hand.

There is a tradition there of inviting people from the town and the farming community to come to the vineyard at the start of the harvest.

"It's a big thing to get invited. Everyone wants to go. They

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## Important to remember tragedy of 9/11, resident says during ceremony

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

On the 23rd anniversary of the 9/11 attacks this year, Niagara-on-the-Lake residents watched silently on

Wednesday morning as the American flag flying over Queen's Royal Park was lowered and raised.

This was part of the town's annual commemoration ceremony for an event that touched of lives

of many Canadians who, on Sept. 11, 2001, watched on their television screens as the Twin Towers in Manhattan fell in real time, as well as the catastrophic aftermath.

Beginning at 8:30 a.m.,

the ceremony featured words from Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, MP Tony Baldinelli, MPP Wayne Gates, fire chief Jay Plato and Chamber of Commerce director Kathy Weiss.

Ken Eden, who was in the crowd, was working as a fire chief in Tillsonburg, Ont., in 2001 when the towers fell.

"I was in a dentist chair, laying on my back watching TV and they said a plane had hit one of the Twin Towers. I had figured it was

a small private plane," he told The Lake Report.

He then walked out to reception to see that a second plane had hit the other tower and realized it wasn't a little

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Condos will **help seniors** stay in town: Mayor

Continued from Front Page

Cheropita voted to approve the amendment.

Couns. Sandra O'Connor, Gary Burroughs and Tim Balasiuk voted against the amendment..

The proposal was originally brought to a public meeting in February 2023 and was re-reviewed, with changes made as per suggestions from the urban design committee and public comments.

Richard Ellis, who lives at 216 William St., said the proposed condominium will be right in his backyard.

He is not against development on the Mary Street lands, but is against changing the town's official plan and established zoning bylaws to build the structure, he said.

Ellis described his own experience completing renovations on his home in 2022.

"The process of getting all the required approvals and variances for our improvements was daunting to say the least," he said during his delegation.

The renovations wound up costing thousands of dollars.



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Couns. Erwin Wiens, Maria Mavridis, Adriana Vizzari and Wendy Cheropita voted in favour of the Mary Street development. JULIA SACCO

"But we did it because it's how the rule book works," Ellis said.

He shared his story because of a growing concern in town that there are two sets of rules, Ellis said.

"One for individual tax-paying and voting residents like us and a completely different set of rules for developers and builders," he said.

Ellis continued, saying nobody changed the official plan or zoning bylaw for his additions, so developers should have to adhere to the same standards.

Wiens requested the town's director of planning, Kirsten McCauley, address the claims that developers follow separate rules.

"There are no two sets

of rules: we follow the process consistently," McCauley said.

"It does depend on the application, the context, the location, the proposal even."

She added this property was the subject of an archeological assessment as well, a process mentioned in Ellis' presentation.

"They did have to go through the same process for archaeology on this site as well," McCauley said.

In response to the official plan being changed, there is a process under the provincial Planning Act that allows for changes to the official plan and zoning bylaw.

Applicants or land owners are permitted to make applications to make changes, McCauley said.

Before voting, Cheropita cited survey findings from NOTL-based researchers Michael Ennamorato and Stephen Ferley, which found many residents wish to stay in town.

This development will address these wishes, Zalepa said.

"I believe that we need this kind of housing to allow people that live in this town to be able to remain and stay in this town and live where they want to live," he said.

While it may be uncomfortable for some residents, NOTL has a significant housing gap and this will help fix it, Zalepa said.

Cheropita agreed. "This is a difficult decision to make when there is pushback against it," she said.

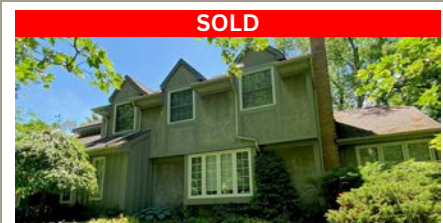
She empathizes with residents who dislike the development, but is ultimately in favour, Cheropita said.

"It's the right kind of development for the greater community," she said.

O'Connor said that with the building's current height, she could not vote in favour.

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People head into the vineyard to harvest the first Pinot Noir grapes of the season. DON REYNOLDS

# Harvest tradition is a house blend

Continued from Front Page

have coffee and French pastries, and then they pick grapes, and then they have mimosas. It's a celebration," says Givens.

"I did two harvests in Champagne and two in Beaujolais, and everyone does this. It's a time of joyful sharing," says Boury.

"So we said to each other, let's do it here," she says.

"I'm really happy to share this moment. This is exciting. Harvest for us is not just picking the grapes, putting them in a tank and making wine," Boury says.

That's one part of it.

"But what's important is that this is the fruit of six to seven months of hard labour. Our workers have made this possible," says Boury, inviting a round of

heartfelt applause for them, which they join in on.

Givens notes a lot of the winery's employees have never been part of the harvest in this way.

"So we invited everyone. Next year we'll do the same thing and it will probably get bigger, because it's special. We're in wine country and so many people love wine but they've never picked a grape," she adds.

That was about to change for those assembled. Once the coffee and pastries had been enjoyed, it was down to work.

Orange-handled pruners were arrayed on a nearby barrel table and Boury instructed the group, saying, "Go ahead and grab a pair of clippers. Don't cut yourself, all right? I have a stack of Band-aids, but we don't want to use them."

"We're going to head to those four rows of Chardonnay vines and I will give you a demo, and then you each own your own basket."

Crouching in front of a vine, Boury expertly wields her clippers, telling the group, "get down like this, to protect your back, don't bend over to reach the grapes. Put your hand under a cluster and nip right at the base."

"If you see a bunch that may have had some damage, do not put that one in the basket. And take your time."

That's all they need to know and everyone spreads out through the vineyards, their faces smiling in the morning sunbeams.

"It's so great to see everyone having fun. Look at those little kids over

there. We have all ages here today," says Givens, a broad grin on her own face. "We love that."

The group finishes the four rows of Chardonnay in good time, so they move on to the Pinot Noir grapes, which will also be used to make sparkling wine.

Their reward, once finished, is a well-earned mimosa, as well as a happy memory of a new experience and the satisfaction of contributing directly to harvest 2024.

In Part 2: Harvest is all about preparation, hard work and decision-making. Next week, we'll meet Stratus winemaker Dean Stoyka and see how he prepares the winery for harvest and how he evaluates the grapes to determine the ideal time to pick.



John Yoxall, alongside daughters Camilla, Elise, and Annabelle, helps harvest white grapes. DON REYNOLDS

## Chateau des Charmes by the numbers

- Acres to harvest: 115
- Grape varieties: 11 (Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Gewurztraminer, Aligote, Auxerrois, Pinot Noir, Gamay Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon)
- Yield: 450 tonnes
- Production: 306,000 litres
- Vineyard labour: 14 workers
- Handpicked: 104 tonnes
- Machine harvested: 346 tonnes



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# Cenotaph restorations continue

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

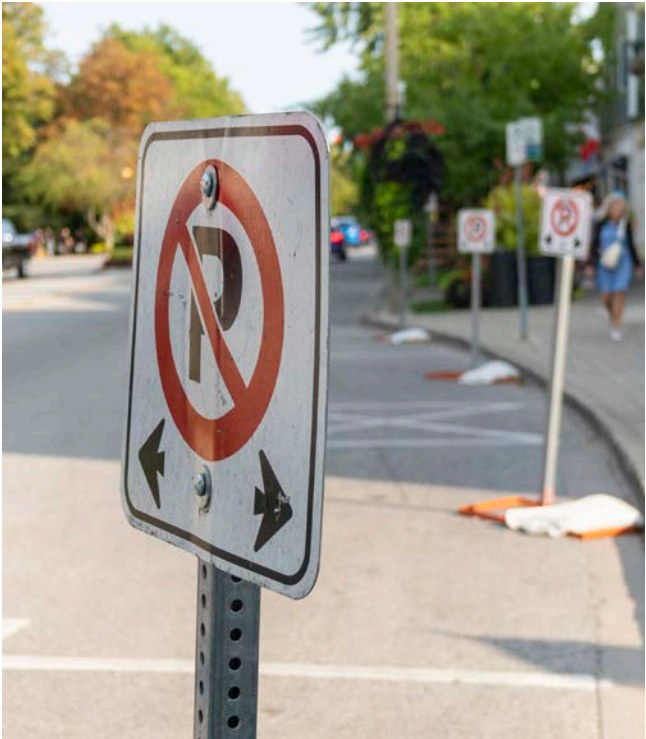
The long awaited cenotaph restorations have begun.

The clock tower was unveiled in 1922 to honour those who died fighting in the First World War — it now memorializes dozens of individuals who died in service of their country in both world wars and beyond, with their names engraved on the cenotaph.

In a media release from the town on Monday, staff confirmed the work began on Sept. 3 and is expected to continue through Oct. 31, weather permitting.

The town credited generous contributions from residents as to why the renovations were able to start.

Repairs were estimated to cost \$80,500 and a campaign held in October of last year helped NOTLers reach that goal.



Temporary no parking signs have been put up around the cenotaph while work is completed. JULIA SACCO

The restoration of the cenotaph is a testament to the community’s generosity and spirit, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said.

“This effort ensures that

an important piece of our Town’s history is preserved for future generations,” he said in the release, thanking those who donated.

The work involved in the

restoration includes brick-work repointing, parging, clock face restoration, and interior renovations, the release said.

Marah Minor, the town’s communications coordinator confirmed the town’s facilities staff are overseeing the restorations from the town’s perspective.

Kevin Turcotte, manager of Parks and Recreation is the project’s lead.

Minor said that the contractor of the project is Robertson Restoration, a construction company operating out of Brantford.

The project team has planned for minimal disruption to traffic, with no road closures expected and only lane re-routing around the Cenotaph, the release said.

According to the release, the no parking signs placed in parking spaces adjacent to the Cenotaph to accommodate the work are temporary.

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

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# NOTL resident and home builder remembered as caring, genuine man

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

People are remembering prominent NOTL resident Kekoo Gatta as a kind, loving person and family man, a great sportsman and an individual whose innovative mind made him excel in his profession.

Gatta, 60, died Sept. 3 from drowning while swimming in the Niagara River not far from his docked boat.

He was the founder and owner of Gatta Homes, a custom home building company in Niagara-on-the-Lake known for its luxury designs.

“He was probably one of most humblest men I’ve ever met in my life,” said Chuck McShane, CEO of the Niagara Home Builders’ Association and a friend of Gatta’s.

“He was caring. He was genuine. Ninety percent of the time he had a smile on his face,” he added, pausing to gather his thoughts of his friend.

“It’s hard for me to get into it because it chokes me up.”

McShane remembers his friend as being someone who rarely thought of himself and “raised his children right.”

“Whenever anybody needed anything from Keck, he was there. Whether it was a charity, or anyone could knock on his door, and he would help them out with a smile.”

“That’s just the kind of individual he was,” he added.

Gatta followed that model of determination and professionalism in his life’s work too, said McShane.

On its website, Gatta Homes describes itself as a builder of elegant homes



Kekoo Gatta was the founder and owner of Gatta Homes, a luxury development company based in Niagara-on-the-Lake for more than 30 years. FILE

with vast experience and vision.

“I gotta tell ya, Keck was a visionary,” said McShane.

“If he saw something that he liked, like a building or whatever, he would take part of those items and he would draw them just on a piece of paper and say, ‘This is what I want this house to look like.’”

“And then the architects would get it, and they would finalize it. And obviously it came to fruition,” he added.

Besides being a well-known home builder, Gatta had been a coach with Brock University’s junior wrestling team.

His children Zubin, Cyrus and Farrantina have all been competitive wrestlers.

Brock men’s wrestling coach Marty Calder remembers Gatta fondly — and not just from his time helping with the university’s wrestling program.

The pair, he said, were big wrestling rivals during their high school years: Calder at Lakeport High School in St. Catharines and Gatta at Thorold High School.

In a 2022 story for The Lake Report, Gatta said that wrestling in his teen-

age years “kept me off the streets” as it was a “poor man’s sport,” not requiring equipment beyond a pair of shorts, a T-shirt and “lots of sweat.”

When Cyrus and Farrantina became Brock Badgers, Calder said Gatta jumped at the chance to get back involved in wrestling.

He played a huge role in raising interest in the sport at the university from the grassroots level, working with the university’s kids program that oversaw youth and high school athletes, said Calder.

“That program grew immensely through his hard work and determination,” he said.

Gatta and his coaching staff traveled throughout North America to competitions and camps. Calder has fond memories of a time they met while on the road.

“I was in Vegas for the U.S. Open and I found out Kekoo was there with the Brock group wrestling in a kids event and watching the open,” said Calder.

“He cooked meals at their hotel for the whole group so they could eat healthy.

These athletes were very lucky to have someone like him run the program.”

Around NOTL, Gatta built a reputation as being a genuine man who worked hard and loved his family.

Coun. Erwin Wiens, deputy lord mayor, knew him mostly on a business level, but also as a friend.

When the two crossed paths on matters of home development and municipal regulations and governance, Wiens was always impressed.

“It was a great relationship because he was very easy to work with. He was professional, friendly and did great work.”

Gatta will be greatly missed, said Wiens.

“It is a tragic loss to our community because he was a positive member of our community. He did a lot for our town and the other thing is, he did it quietly. He was just a positive influence and it is those types of people that make this a better place to live.”

A celebration of life was held at the family home on Ricardo Street in NOTL on Tuesday, Sept. 10.

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## Celebrated swimmer coming to Pillitteri winery this weekend

Continued from Front Page

fans and chat about her time in the latest Olympic Games.

The five-time Olympic medallist from LaSalle, Ont., will be at Pillitteri Estates Winery on Saturday, Sept. 14 from 1 to 4 p.m. as part of the Niagara Wine Festival’s discovery pass.

Earlier this year, Pillitteri, the official wine partner of the Canadian Olympic team,

unveiled its Kylie Masse wine collection, a 2021 red, which will be available to try at the event along with saucy chicken wings.

Masse will be meeting guests, signing bottles from the wine collection and sharing stories from her swimming career, including her time at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Pillitteri Estates Winery is located at 1696 Niagara Stone Rd.

## Terry Fox Run is Sunday

Staff  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s annual Terry Fox Run is this Sunday beginning at Simcoe Park on King Street.

With registration at 9 a.m., the marathon begins at 10 a.m. and is accessible to those on bicycles, rollerblades and wheelchairs.

This year marks the 44th anniversary of Fox’s Marathon of Hope, which began in 1980.

On July 12, 1980, he made a memorable stop in the town, taking a break from his run to visit.

The town planted a tree and added a plaque to a bench in Simcoe Park to honour him, she said.

As of Wednesday, \$39,000 of the NOTL site’s \$105,000 goal has been raised — and there’s still plenty of time.

To register for the run or make a donation, visit [run.terryfox.ca/55866](http://run.terryfox.ca/55866).

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# Town infrastucture **can't keep up** with heavy rainfall levels: Report

*Resident consensus in the wake of this summer's flooding in Niagara-on-the-Lake is that current and planned in-ground stormwater infrastructure is inadequate.*

*Homeowners from Old Town to St. Davids and elsewhere contend the town's sewer systems simply can't handle the amount of water major storms have unleashed. They think more development will just exacerbate the problem. The mayor has a different viewpoint.*

*This week in part 3 of Summer of the Flood, we take a look at the town's storm infrastructure.*

Richard Wright  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa concedes that the major storms that hit Niagara-on-the-Lake this summer were overwhelming but he says the town's sewer infrastructure meets all the necessary standards.

Areas of the community's of St. Davids and Queenston were particularly hard hit. "(The) storm sewer



Sandalwood stormwater pond filled to the brim following the June 18 storm. NOTL Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa says such ponds are built to government standards and overflow occurrences may be result of improper seepage from surrounding properties. SUPPLIED

has been designed as per guidelines set by the province and the region and municipality, and each particular part of St. Davids has been built out properly to those standards," said Zalepa told The Lake Report in an interview.

He agreed, however, that this summer's major downpours — which were well above the design capabilities of current underground piping and stormwater ponds — are challenging those standards.

"What we're having is natural rain events which

are putting strain on the system because those rain events are in excess of the capacity of the system."

The storms that tore through NOTL in June and July, backing up storm sewers, flooding streets and properties in rural and urban areas, caused incredible damage.

One area particularly hard hit is the west end of St. Davids, where new development in recent years has overtaken a part of town that was once open fields susceptible to natural seepage and flow.

And now, with two major storms happening within the span of a month, delivering huge amounts of rain in a short time, a movement has arisen to question the current criteria for establishing anticipated rainfall standards.

That criteria is paramount in the approval process for new development in NOTL.

For instance, at Win and Kal Laar's home in Queenston on June 18, more than 100 millimetres of rain was measured in just one hour, well above the capacity standards for all of NOTL's stormwater infrastructure.

"I don't have an answer for you as to what the capacity is," said Zalepa. "I would have to get that from (town) staff."

Director of operations Darren McKenzie was not available for an interview prior to deadline to confirm the town's rainfall capacity.

However, town staff are reviewing and updating what constitutes a 100-year storm rainfall level.

Staff has been directed to "consult with the relevant appropriate agencies" to consider a pair of recommendations.

The first recommendation is to look into "increasing the criteria used in the modelling for the 100-year average of Lake Ontario from 76.15 metres as identified in the (Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority) Lake Ontario Shoreline Management Plan (2009) to account for our changing climate."

The second recommendation is to look into "increasing the engineering design criteria" from the one in 100-year storm event, "which has been used for decades and doesn't address (the) increase in intensity, duration and frequency of extreme rainfall events."

Once the information is submitted, council will decide on the action needed, said Coun. Sandra O'Connor, who is pushing for changes.

O'Connor hopes town staff will be able to propose a solid definition on how much the storm management criteria needs to change.

"The engineering societies and the conservation authorities and the governments are all recognizing that it's a new norm now but nobody has come out and

said, 'We need to increase it to this,' " said O'Connor.

Currently, to be considered a 100-year storm in Niagara, four inches (101.6 mm) of rain must fall in 12 hours, while a 500-year storm is equal to 11 inches (279.4 mm) over the same period of time.

Staff is expected to present its report answering by the end of September.

When it comes to development that has yet to happen, but is in front of council for consideration — such as Tawny Ridge Estates in St. Davids — Zalepa said the town has approved the development, but with a "holding zone."

"The holding is to permit the development agreements to be created, which will detail out all the infrastructure and the servicing requirements for the properties," he said.

"So, we're going to have to get data from proper sources to determine if indeed there needs to be a change in the infrastructure, kind of an allotment to decide to manage higher flows."

*Continued on Page 7*



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BY CARLA

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# Former senior manager warned of continued flood damage

Continued from Page 6

### Four Mile Creek Drain Report

The Lake Report has learned that a recommendation to request an engineering report for the Four Mile Creek Municipal Drain has been in town records for years.

The April 19, 2021, staff report suggests that more development in St. Davids will put the area at risk of increased flooding.

It was authored by Brett Ruck, who was irrigation and drainage superintendent for the town at the time, and included a number of his own observations and recommendations.

He pointed out that larger scale developments, such as subdivisions with more land and denser housing and road allowances, contribute to a more extensive change in land use.

“The increase in more impermeable surfaces and landscaping features, such as lawns, also significantly intensify the rate and volume of run-off in comparison to the original property,” he said.

“Without a new engi-

neer’s report to improve or extend the Four Mile Creek Municipal Drain upstream, the watercourse cannot be improved to deal with the increased flows and sediment problems it is currently subject to, and flooding and property damage may continue.”

In other words, information has been available for years indicating that, as a result of new development, infrastructure isn’t capable of handling stormwater levels, and that damage to properties could continue.

Zalepa said he is unaware of the 2021 report, but nonetheless does not agree with Ruck’s conclusion.

Rushing water over impermeable surfaces such as streets and sidewalks is part of residential drainage plans that need to be submitted by developers before approval, he said.

“In theory, each application or development is supposed to manage its water,” he said.

“So what that means is the functional service report that they will have to submit is going to have to show, from an engineering per-

spective, that they can manage their water on-site and not create an overflow issue with areas around them.”

That doesn’t appear to be the case when looking back at flooding in St. Davids and Queenston during the two major storms, which included rushing water flows that were in some cases more than ankle deep and enveloping residential streets, yards and ditches.

For now, Zalepa is happy with the way things are progressing.

“And I am confident that each of those applications that are in front of us are going through the proper process to adequately design a system that will manage their stormwater for their site,” he said.

Council has also requested a staff report regarding storm pond capacities, he added, once again making a concession, this time admitting some ponds were not large enough to contain the stormwater.

The problem, he said, is some stormwater ponds paid for and built by a developer could be receiving water due to seepage from other nearby properties.

“If (water) is coming from areas that shouldn’t be contributing to those storm ponds, then we have a bit of an issue.”

Zalepa said council has asked staff to conduct an audit to see if any properties are incorrectly actually contributing water to these storm ponds.

“Sometimes these other properties that are adjacent, they have had site plans done on them where they’ve had buildings added or farm buildings added or houses added, and their site plan dictates where their water is supposed to be going, and if their water is not going where it’s supposed to be, then they’ve got to deal with that,” he said.

### More money sought for infrastructure

Zalepa’s confidence in the state of current and proposed infrastructure isn’t shared by O’Connor.

“I think that the whole council realizes that the current infrastructure needs to be updated and maintained, not only for the amount of rain water we are getting but also for its age,” she told The Lake Report.

A big problem, she said,

is a lack of investment in municipalities from the two highest levels of government when it comes to essential services.

“Over the last couple of decades, the federal and provincial governments have really reduced their funding for infrastructure for municipalities,” she said.

For her part, O’Connor will be asking NOTL council to back a Federation of Canadian Municipalities’ initiative to push the federal government to increase infrastructure funding.

She will be asking council this month to support the federation’s call for more infrastructure money from senior levels of government.

In July, the federation published a written submission to the federal government as part of consultations ahead of next year’s budget.

Signed by federation president Geoff Stewart, it details the organization’s recommendations on a number of issues — infrastructure, with specific references to water, wastewater, climate change and disaster mitigation, was number three on his list.

Stewart recommends “that the federal government partner with local governments to address the urgent water and wastewater infrastructure gap and fully implement the national adaptation strategy to address growing risks from climate change and extreme weather.”

“Additionally,” the statement continued, “municipalities need long-term funding for disaster mitigation, adaptation and natural infrastructure, while supporting resilient, low-carbon housing and communities.”

O’Connor believes that there will be some political motivation to provide municipalities with the money needed to maintain safe and healthy communities.

“With elections looming, I think this would be something that they would be interested in supporting, and that’s what we’re hoping for,” she said.

The next fixed federal election date is Oct. 20, 2025.

**Next:** In Part 4 of Summer of the Flood we look wastewater infrastructure and talk to town staff about a planned study for the Four Mile Creek Watershed. [wright@niagaranow.com](mailto:wright@niagaranow.com).



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## Dancing in the moonlight

Even though the Niagara Pumphouse Art Centre's Moonlight Picnic was rained out, it didn't stop guests from taking the party inside and dancing the night away to the Niagara Rhythm Section. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

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## Opinion

# Time to embark on the next chapter



Kevin MacLean  
Editor Emeritus

It's time.  
Nearly six years ago, I got involved with this wee enterprise we call The Lake Report because I felt it had the potential to be something special.  
It was an upstart, launched by a young NOTL native named Richard Harley, who saw a need to bring genuine news and features to the town's residents — not just cheerleading and regurgitated news releases from the powers that be, so common in small-town news publications.  
With more than 40 years in the news trenches, mainly at the Toronto Star, I felt I had something to offer.  
Now, after watching The Lake Report prosper and grow into the most-awarded community newspaper in the country, it's time to step away and "re-retire."  
I informed the staff in July that as of 9/11, I would

no longer oversee the day-to-day news operations, the assigning of stories and planning of coverage. That will fall to Harley and our small but extremely capable staff and army of community contributors.  
While I won't be doing all that anymore, I will remain as a co-owner, regular contributor and "suggester" of stories or topics deserving of coverage. I'll simply be editor emeritus (retired).  
The news business is unique and working at the community level is really special. After all, you're doing stories about your neighbours and people you might cross paths with while walking the dog.  
You're writing about local politics, community events, sports — but most of all people, ordinary people, who often do extraordinary things.  
When readers enjoy what you do, they are quick to let you know. And when they aren't happy with what you publish, they are even quicker to tell you.  
That's one of the things that makes this job both rewarding — and tough.  
At the small-town community journalism level, when you make a mistake or do something really special

or anger people or forget something, you hear about it. At the post office, the grocery store, the library, on the walking trail — and by email or on social media.  
People are extremely proud yet protective of their community — as are we — and will let you know in no uncertain terms. "Journalist" is a very public position wherein whether you're right or wrong, readers judge your work daily.  
A lot of that is reflected in the incredible volume of letters, phone calls and news tips we receive from readers. We appreciate and rely on that correspondence to help keep The Lake Report engaged, relevant and timely.  
Another barometer of relevance in the community is the advertising that a newspaper carries. Those ads are essential to our success and it is so encouraging that dozens of small businesses choose our paper to reach their customers — and many have been with us from the outset.  
Sometimes I have to remind people that, no, we are not an arm of officialdom, here solely to publish happy, inoffensive stories that won't upset the status quo.  
We do dozens of "positive" stories weekly but we

don't shy away from contentious issues or compelling stories or letting you know our thoughts on issues in town.  
Despite what some people think, we don't try to create controversy. We simply aim to tell stories that deserve to be in the public realm. If it's news in NOTL, it should be in The Lake Report.  
Life would be far less complicated for professional journalists if we just avoided conflict and never questioned our leaders, criticized decisions or expressed strong opinions (on the opinion pages, not on the news pages).  
But that's not what most readers want or expect. Nor should they.  
We appreciate that you trust us to tell your stories and want you to know that The Lake Report will do so for years to come.  
This is a tough business in which to succeed. Change is constant but it's a challenge we're prepared to take on.  
With your help as readers and supporters, and our dedication to telling your stories, you can continue to expect big things from NOTL's little paper.  
Kevin MacLean has been managing editor of The Lake Report since 2019.



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## LETTER OF THE WEEK

### Gatta was a generous and valued member of community

Dear editor:  
I read with shock the news of Kekoo Gatta's drowning death in the Sept. 5 edition of The Lake Report.

Kekoo was a volunteer, business leader, philanthropist, family patriarch and valued member of this community.

In his business, Gatta Homes, Kekoo respected the rules, setting himself apart from some of the other developers in NOTL.

He took pride in building quality family homes. He



Kekoo Gatta.

valued the heritage of the region and was a community builder, not just a developer concerned with maximizing profits above all else.

He was a generous donor to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum and other community institutions. He did his giving quietly, without fanfare and expected nothing in return.

I met him on a few occasions. The first time was at a function at the NOTL Museum, where I am an active member.

We talked about fishing for salmon and he told me about his friend who couldn't afford his own boat but would borrow

Kekoo's to fish on Lake Ontario.

I mentioned how much my wife and I enjoyed eating fish and the next day he and his wife showed up at our door with five pounds of fresh salmon his friend had caught.

My heart goes out to the Gatta family. Your grief is unimaginable but hopefully you can take solace in the legacy Kekoo has left behind. He will be missed.

Stewart Hall  
NOTL

### In NOTL, houses devalue, migrants feast



#### THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner  
Columnist

Shortly before the stock market had a cow and the jobless rate shot higher on Friday, another place in my 'hood was listed. Yup, one more north of \$3 million.

There are now three of them at that nosebleed level, or higher, within a few hundred feet.

What does this tell us about Niagara-on-the-Lake? Is the property market reviving as the equity market plops? Do we inhabit a special dimension?

Nope. Listing a house and selling it are two different things. You can dump a bunch of RBC shares or a stock fund in seconds. Finding a buyer with a few million for your abode takes an eternity. Sometimes years.

Time for an update.

Not surprisingly, realtors say everything's ducky.

"Inventory is still holding fairly high, but recent improvement could be a sign of a busier than normal end of year for Niagara," claims the local board boss, Nathan Morissette.



The St. Vincent de Paul Society hosted a dinner for migrant workers in Niagara-on-the-Lake. SUPPLIED

We've had three rate cuts. Two more are coming in the next three months. Mortgages are a third cheaper than a year ago.

So listings are up as we head into the autumn market (by about a fifth over last year). The length of time it takes to sell is creeping higher. But August saw a giant hike in the number of NOTL properties changing hands — in fact, 69 per cent more (27 as opposed to 16 last year).

Why? Cheaper home loans, for sure. ("This gives buyers even more confidence needed to move ahead with the process and come off the sidelines," says Morissette.)

But it also looks like valuations have cracked. The average selling price is now \$97,600 less than 12 months ago, and has dipped below the million-dollar mark. This is a meaningful drop of 9 per cent. Moreover, it's three times the rate of decline for Niagara Region as a whole.

Witness: A decent five-bedroom place near the golf course was just reduced — by \$240,000. It'll sell for hundreds of thousands less than the owners paid. Oops.

But these are "one percent" problems. Let's keep stuff in perspective.

Have you been following the migrants-are-slaves story? Me, too. Apparently the UN has a person mandated to chase "contemporary forms of slavery." In his crosshairs are migrant farm workers, as in NOTL.

"Canada should end labour migration arrangements that foster exploitation by creating dependency situations that tie workers to their employers," the snowflake wrote.

"They institutionalize asymmetries of power that favour employers and prevent workers from exercising their rights."

There are some 1,500 workers around here. Most stay eight months. They do tasks Canadians reject. Our growers depend on them.

To my eye, they also respect and help them.

The other night I walked into a church hall in the Old Town where volunteers feverishly prepared for a dinner migrant workers would enjoy.

Barbecuers cooked outside. The kitchen was buzzing. Tables had favours and flowers. Soon about 100 men from Mexico, Colombia and elsewhere feasted on burgers, dogs, greens and treats.

The hosts were from the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Food came from the St. Davids Lions and the Peach Festival. The \$900 tab was footed by private donations. This is a sliver of what folks here do.

The Gateway gang fixes and makes available bicycles. Farmers/employers provide shelter and transport. Volunteers stock refrigerators and wash bedding before the men arrive. Some of the workers return annually to the same farms, making wages critical for families they left.

Slaves they are not. Nor are they citizens. Temporary foreign workers have also become a flashpoint for xenophobic Canadians who think these guys are stealing jobs or jacking up house prices. In truth, they're taking a toll. They make us stopping staring at our navels.

Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.

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# Why is it OK for developers to request changes?



Brian Marshall  
Columnist

Several years ago, a Canadian mining company was brought to my attention. This corporation purportedly had holdings that included some of the richest rare earth minerals (the elements required for the manufacture of electric vehicle batteries) deposits in North America.

I was intrigued, particularly given our federal government's policy underwriting the shift to electric vehicles.

So, after completing proper due diligence to confirm that the mineral assays bore out their claims, I purchased a sizeable quantity of shares in the company.

Now, for reasons I will not go into here, that investment did not pan out and I took some losses. But, that is the risk one runs in any business undertaking.

Fact is, even armed with thorough research and information, on occasion something will go south and the smart business person simply cuts their losses and moves on.

This is normal, typical and accepted practice in businesses large and small across virtually every industry sector — well, all except one.

No corporate executive or business owner makes an investment decision partially or wholly predicated on the belief that their return on investment (profit) will be safeguarded, or increased, by completing a government application to have that elected body change a few laws or grant a few exemptions for them.

On the face of it, that is a ludicrous premise — except for one industry.

In fact, for those in this industry it is normal and

common practice to make such an application with the expectation that the government will, indeed, change, alter or grant exemptions to the prevailing legal framework.

Moreover, this industry's expectation must be considered "reasonable," since every level of government in this province accepts and endorses the practice.

The industry? Real estate development — and, for both infill and new development, the applications abound.

To get some idea of what these applications might look like, let's examine a few.

In Virgil, at 1537 Concession 6 Rd., 448 Line 2 Rd. and unaddressed lands on the northside of Line 2 Road, we have the Konik Estates Phase 2 application.

The developer applied for the property(s) to be rezoned, from Virgil community zoning district — residential development (RD) for detached single-family residential to residential (R2) with site-specific provisions and residential multiple with site-specific provisions.

So what are these "site-specific provisions" — modifications to existing bylaw/planning requirements — you ask?

In this case, they include reduced lot frontages, reduced lot size, reduced setbacks (front yard, side yard, accessory building, swimming pool, etc.), increased garage door sizes, increased driveway width and special provisions for porches, patios and steps to encroach into the setbacks.

In short, a fairly lengthy set of provisions specifically designed to increase the yield (dwellings per acre) on the property(s), thereby positively impacting the developer's return on investment.

Moving to Old Town, where the spectre of an apartment building at 223-227 Mary St. has raised its nasty head once again, a developer is applying for rezoning from an Old Town community zoning district — established residential (ER) zone to an Old Town



A revised perspective of the Mary Street condo project. SUPPLIED

community zoning district — residential multiple (RM1) site-specific zone.

While this revised design is significantly improved over the initial 2023 overture, since the focus of this week's column is not to comment on design, this columnist will refrain from doing so — except to say it is a good design in the wrong place, at the northwest anchor of Old Town's established residential district, and every single abutting property will suffer from a loss of privacy and from the shadow cast by the proposed building.

So, what does the rezoning mean?

In real terms vis-à-vis the application, it allows for a building height of 12 metres as opposed to the current maximum height of 10 metres (32.81 feet).

But the developer has, in their application, asked for a site-specific provision allowing the height of the building to be 14 metres (45.93 feet), not including the parapets and, I assume, rooftop mechanical enclosures.

Furthermore, the town's Official Plan specifies that medium density (RM1) residential developments will not exceed a net density of 30 units per hectare, however, the application asks for a net density of 99.25 units per hectare ... an ask of more than 107 per cent in excess of prevailing legislation.

Now, we'll head back out

to Virgil where another application for re-zoning and site-specific provisions has been filed relative to part of the lands at 1570 Niagara Stone Rd. (Cornerstone Church).

In 2023, the lands were rezoned to Virgil community zoning district — village commercial holding zone and Virgil community zoning district — residential holding zone in order to facilitate the severance of the property.

The new application is for rezoning to Virgil community zoning district — residential multiple (RM1) with site-specific provisions to allow the developer to construct a condominium comprised of a row of townhouses and an apartment building (the latter not a permitted use in the RM1 zoning).

And that is the first ask, for a site-specific RM1 zone that allows for the construction of the apartment — something normally allowed only in RM2.

And the application continues with site-specific provisions, which for the townhouses include increased lot coverage, 50 per cent compared to RM1's standard 35 per cent, significantly reduced front, side and rear yard setbacks, reduction in the distance between buildings and increased allowance for encroachment into the setbacks for porches, decks, steps and etc.

For the apartment, the ap-

plication is identical when it comes to increased lot coverage, and the ask includes reduced setbacks (actual distance somewhat different than for the towns).

In this case however, there is also a request for an increased maximum height from the existing RM2 (a more practical standard given the proposal is for an apartment building) of 10.5 metres to 13 metres — a 30 per cent height increase.

From these three examples, which are typical development applications drawn from the town website, it becomes very clear that the requests contained within the applications are generally not minor in nature nor few in number.

By this point, you may be a little curious regarding how this state of affairs came to be.

Well, planning in Canada from its earliest advent in the 1890s has always been a bit of a battleground between those with conflicting interests.

In his 1981 thesis entitled "The Evolution of Urban and Regional Planning in Canada," Thomas Gunton suggests that after the Second World War:

"Housing and land were defined as one of the sectors of the economy affected by market failures. Major government reports defined a new postwar system of urban and regional planning to mitigate these failures in land and housing markets. The reports were highly

critical of the type of planning existing in the '20s and proposed a new, more comprehensive system of planning and of controls over property."

Gunton continued, "The urban liberals, however, who were the dominant group, were apprehensive about the increased role of the state envisaged in these reports. Consequently, they only partially implemented the recommended reforms. Urban and regional planning, although strengthened, was ultimately subordinated to the interests of private markets and property. It again became a passive system of regulation providing necessary services to accommodate private expansion and regulations to enhance property rights."

He then wrote, "The tendency of liberal planning to shift back and forth between more aggressive intervention during times of crisis and very passive intervention during times of stability has meant that, because of the long lag times between the emergence of crisis and the creation of plans and institutions capable of managing the crisis, Canadian planning has been strongest after the crisis has already subsided or when it has changed form. Consequently, the ability to plan has been highest when the need to plan has been lowest."

In short, we have a passive system designed to support the interests of private developers and, during the last few decades of relative stability, the ability of planners to aggressively intervene has been distinctly curtailed.

Thus, as the economic and resultant political power of the real estate development industry has grown, the planning agencies responsible for holding them in check and accountable to the various planning instruments are at their lowest ebb since the 1940s.

And, we have the Wild West without sheriffs.

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

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# RIVERVIEW

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# Ceremony remembers impact of 9/11 tragedy

Continued from Front Page

plane after all, Eden said.  
In total, 2,977 people died from the attacks, which involved planes being hijacked and crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., plus one flight that didn't reach its intended target after plane passengers revolted, but was crashed in Somerset County, Pa.

Back at the fire hall, Eden said the tragedy didn't have an immediate or direct impact on how work was done that day, but even in the small community of Tillsonburg, people were ready to help if called.

It's still important to come out and commemorate the tragedy every year, Eden said.

"It can happen again. And it'll be the same response: the first responders will go in and some won't come out," he said.

Of the 2,977 people who died, 343 were members of the New York City Fire Department and one was a New York Fire patrolman.

In the years following the



Fire chief Jay Plato lowers the U.S. flag to half-mast on Wednesday morning during a 9/11 ceremony. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

attack, more firefighters and other first responders have died from 9/11-related illnesses.

Eden's wife, Shirley, was with him at the ceremony and said the couple often walks along the nearby memorial to remember the 24 Canadians who died that day.

Coun. Erwin Wiens could relate to working in emergency services at the time the towers fell.

"I was working at the time on the tactical team in Hamilton, (my wife) was in the hospital in Toronto and I got mobilized," Wiens said.

The police tactical unit was in a holding pattern

because of Hamilton's international airport, he said.

"We didn't know what was happening so, being the tactical team, we just mobilized and waited," Wiens said.

Plato was in high school on 9/11, long before any experience working in emergency services.

In the field of work that he is in, it's a day that you forever think about, the town's fire chief said.

"As many people were running out, emergency services were running in with the knowledge that this might be it," Plato said.

"It's heartening to think about the people who, when

tragedy is striking, are trying to get in there to help others. That's the spirit of emergency service," he said.

Coun. Gary Burroughs was lord mayor in 2001 and was on the way to a Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority meeting when he heard about attacks.

"By the time I got to the conservation authority, there was nothing but televisions out. We were all watching," he said.

When it comes to the annual ceremony, Burroughs said it reflects NOTL's connection to the United States.

"There's lots of Niagara-on-the-Lake families and people who lived in the U.S. across the border. Before 9/11 we used to travel back and forth all the time," he said.

Zalepa said NOTL has a fluid border with the United States.

"Many of our families, including my own, we're all intertwined," he said.

Many NOTL residents work in America, and vice versa, Zalepa said.

"Our country was there for them at that point and so was our community," he said.



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# Trisha Romance to be honoured with first-ever key to the town

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

When Trisha Romance’s daughter Tanya told her she was being awarded the inaugural key to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Romance had trouble believing it.

“At first it came by quite a shock and surprise,” she told The Lake Report.

“Then, a strike of humility hits you, I didn’t understand, why me?”

The artist, who moved to town from New York state 40 years ago, has become synonymous with Niagara-on-the-Lake’s beauty and charm through her work.

Throughout her career as a painter, Romance has been honoured with the Order of Ontario in 1996, won the Canadian Artist of the Year for four consecutive years from 1995 to 1998 and carried the Olympic torch through NOTL in 2010.

The key to the town — to be presented during a public ceremony on Sunday, Sept. 15 at 2 p.m. outside of the Old Courthouse 0151 is a different honour, Romance said.

The honour also marks the 40th Anniversary of the opening of Romance’s original King Street gallery.

“I love the town so much, I loved it at first sight and I’ve never stopped,” Romance said.

She said this honour will be different from others.

“The town has given me so much. The reason this is so different is because this award, I feel, is not just for me,” Romance said.



Trisha Romance loved Niagara-on-the-Lake from the moment she first visited. The key to the town ceremony will be a celebration of her thanking the town and residents for supporting her work, she says. IAIN CRAWFORD

She added that the award is also for all of the people who have collected her work over the years, for people who come to the gallery and return time and time again to purchase pieces.

The ceremony will be a celebration in terms of me thanking those people who have been there along her career and certainly thanking the town as well, Romance said.

“Without Niagara-on-the-Lake, I wouldn’t have the inspiration to paint all of these paintings in the first place,” she said.

Throughout the four decades she’s lived in NOTL, Romance has captured moments in time along the town’s evolution.

She emphasized the importance of preserving the beauty and heritage of the town, saying that her paintings are a place to hold these memories and moments no matter what.

“Every time I painted a building I thought, at least it’s going to live in a painting. Even if something happens to it or development takes over and changes it, at least it’s been painted,” she said.

Each of her paintings has a beginning, middle and end, capturing the idyllic nature of NOTL, Romance said —because of that, people want to come see the town for themselves.

“I have volumes and volumes of guestbooks of people coming to see NOTL for the first time and then consequently returning for anniversaries, weddings,” she said.

In a media release announcing the ceremony, the town recognized Romance’s contributions to NOTL’s cultural and economic vitality.

“Her work has given the world a glimpse into life in Niagara-on-the-Lake, significantly contributing to its cultural and artistic heritage,” the release stated.

The public ceremony will feature remarks from dignitaries, the presentation of the inaugural key to the town and a showcase of Romance’s paintings. Members of the public are invited to attend.

The first 100 people in attendance will get the chance to meet Trisha Romance — volunteers with the NOTL Ambassadors will be handing out wristbands to those who make the cut.

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

# Royal Oak, Legion to honour Canadian soldiers

Julia Sacco  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Royal Oak School is partnering up with Legion Branch 124 to teach students about the importance of Remembrance Day.

On Wednesday, Sept. 18, the school’s students in grades 7 and 8 will visit St. Mark’s and St. Vincent De Paul cemeteries, accompanied by two veterans, for an 11 a.m. ceremony where they will place Canadian flags on the graves of soldiers.

Head of school Julia Murray said along with the act of remembrance, students will also learn significant



Royal Oak students will visit St. Mark’s Cemetery on Sept. 18, along with members of St. Vincent De Paul, to post Canadian flags on veterans’ graves. JULIA SACCO

parts of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s history.

“They’re going to get a little bit of history on how the soldiers served and then they’re going to replenish the flag that is on their graves to ensure that they are beautiful and ready to go for the Remembrance Day ceremonies in town,” she said.

This ceremony adds crucial context to what the students are learning in class around this time of year, Murray said, and will help them connect with class material.

“When you learn more about historical individuals who lived in the same town as you, possibly even down the street and how they contributed to what we now know as our town, it makes the sacrifice resonate a little bit more,” she said.

The ceremony is one of many community partnerships that Royal Oak School has with different organizations across Niagara-on-the-Lake, Murray said.

The school aims to use the outdoor classroom and the wider setting of the town to help students learn, she said.

“We live in the most beautiful, historic town in our area, we are drenched in history all around us.”



# Angel Inn to host patio dog show

Staff  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Olde Angel Inn will become a dog heaven on Sunday, Sept. 15 from 2 to 5 p.m. with the establishment's first-ever dog show.

Officially tagged: A Pawsh Afternoon - A High-Tea Hound Affair, the event will feature a red carpet-style setting with contests, prizes, doggy bags and refreshments for owner and pets.

"We are going to have best dressed, best hair, best matched pair — that's for people who look like their dogs — best trick and then a Mr. And Mrs. Congeniality, which will be for best behaved, best mannered, prettiest walk," said Olde Angel Inn marketing coordinator April Brown.

As of September 11, 15 dogs had been registered to take part.

Brown said that while



Bring your dogs out to the Angel Inn Sept. 15 .

more registrants are welcome, she is urging dog owners to register quickly because there will be a cut off of around 20 for the show.

"I had to limit the amount just because we don't want 1,000 dogs on the patio. I do have a lot of entries but we still have room to do a little bit more."

Members of the public can attend without dogs and can purchase tickets through the Inn.

But beware, Brown warns again, those tickets are limited as well.

"The capacity for our patio is 120 people and I am selling 100 tickets," she said, pointing out that the doggy contestants will take

up the remaining allowable space in the room.

"We are going to space the dogs out (at tables around the room)."

The dogs won't be at their individual tables for long, however.

In grand Best-in-Show-like fashion, each dog will have a turn at strutting their stuff in front of the guests with attendees being integrated into the final decisions making.

I got a little runway," said Brown. "We are going to put it down the path that goes through the middle of the tables and everyone (pet and owner) will walk the runway for the contest categories, and then all the people at the tables are going to be the judges."

To register a dog or to purchase tickets to attend visit [www.oldeangelinn.com](http://www.oldeangelinn.com).

Brown said a portion of the proceeds will go to Angel's Rest dog sanctuary in St. Davids.

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TEAM OF THE WEEK

Red Roof Retreat U13 travel team



The NOTL Soccer Club's U13 Red Roof Retreat travel team is one of The Lake Report's featured Teams of the Week. Surrounding coach J.P. Konik are, from left, Taylor Nickerson, Gracie Cherney, Ron Slootsky, Cale Cramp, River Konik, Luca Della Marina, Nickola Waller, Declan Schrupp, Ilias Dritsakos, Adam Abraham, Alp Rahnamayan, Max Tsuji, Keith Quinones and Thomas Stevenson. Absent are: Hunter Lindqvist, Niko Kamerik and Finn Bentall. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

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# The Brock Chronicles: Who was Brock?

One of those most revered names from the War of 1812 is that of Maj.-Gen. Sir Isaac Brock. Referred to as the “Saviour of Upper Canada,” Brock has roads, churches, universities and towns named after him — but why? Through this chronicle, we are going to delve into who Brock was and why he was so beloved in both life and death.

Amanda Gamble  
Special to The Lake Report

Born on Oct. 6, 1769, on the English Channel island of Guernsey, Isaac was the 11th child (out of 14) of John Brock and Elizabeth DeLisle. Brock’s family was part of the gentry of England, which provided him with many opportunities as a young man. Brock was sent to boarding schools in England, and to study abroad until he was old enough to join the army, with his family purchasing him a commission as an ensign in the 8th Regiment of Foot in 1784. Brock quickly made a name for himself within the army, rising through the ranks through merit and the purchasing of commissions. Prior to coming to Canada in 1802, Brock was stationed in Barbados and Jamaica, saw action at the

Battle of Egmont-Op-See in Holland and met Lord Nelson while supporting the British Navy in Copenhagen. In 1802, Brock and the 49th Regiment were sent to Canada, where he would spend the rest of his life. Throughout the 10 years that Brock was stationed in Canada, he continued to rise through the ranks and make a name for himself as an able and empathetic leader. Unlike other military commanders at the time, he worked hard to ensure the men under his command were properly cared for, putting in requests to ensure that living quarters were adequate, providing his men with tools like fishing nets and muskets and establishing a garrison garden at Fort George so that they could subsidize their meager army rations. In 1811, Brock became a Major-General in the British Army. That same year, he also took over as the civil administrator and president of the province of Upper Canada after Sir Francis Gore returned to England. In these roles, Brock was responsible for overseeing many new initiatives that prepared Upper Canada for war. Brock made many changes to the Militia Act of 1793 to ensure that the militia



Maj.-Gen. Sir Issac Brock.

was prepared to defend their homelands: he changed how often the sedentary militia trained; created flank companies of militia that were trained like regular soldiers; and, he ensured they were properly compensated for their dedication to the Crown. He authorized the creation of the Rifle Company and Troops of Horses, as well as two troops of Niagara Light Dragoons. He approved the creation of a Coloured Corps that was trained at Fort George. Heworked hard to win the support of the Indigenous warriors. Just like with the militia, Brock worked to ensure they were compensated for their support.

Brock also oversaw the creation of batteries along the frontier, and worked to ensure that fortifications like Fort George were updated and prepared to defend Upper Canada. After war was declared on June 18, 1812, Brock moved quickly, ordering the commander of Fort St. Joseph to attack American Fort Michilmackinac, which surrendered without a shot being fired. In August 1812, Brock fought alongside Tecumseh, leading a force of British regulars, Canadian Militia and Indigenous warriors, in a successful attack on Detroit. For the capture of Fort Detroit, Brock was awarded a knighthood of the Order of the Bath. Through these bold, decisive actions, Brock showed the soldiers, their allies and civilians of Upper Canada that he was serious in protecting Upper Canada from invasion, bolstering the confidence, determination and support of those under his command. Amanda Gamble is the executive director of the Friends of Fort George, a non-profit, charitable organization that supports Parks Canada for the protection, preservation and interpretation of Niagara’s national historic sites.



This week’s riddle is “Jeopardy!” style.  
Category: “C’S” THE DAY”

This holiday that commemorates the victory of Mexico at the Battle of Puebla is also a day to celebrate Mexican culture.

Last issue:  
Category: **ALSO A CANDY**  
Clue: It’s when you get your peanuts for all your hard work.  
Answer: What is a PayDay?  
Answered first by: Claudia Grimwood  
Also answered correctly (in order) by: Jane Morris, Lynda Collet, Jim Dandy, Sheila Meloche, Bob Wheatley,  
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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# Paws on the Trail fetches funds for heritage trail expansion

Paige Seburn  
The Lake Report

Kathy Weier wasn't going to let a little rain stop her or her pooch Sandy from enjoying a day out at Paws on the Trail.

Weier and Sandy joined dozens of other dog owners at Veterans Memorial Park on Saturday, Sept. 7 for the Upper Canada Heritage Trail committee's biggest fundraiser of the year.

The third annual walk wasn't just a fun outing for her and Sandy; it was also about supporting the restoration and expansion of the heritage trail, a place they visit regularly.

Paws on the Trail saw more than 50 participants and their furry friends enjoying a scenic, traffic-free walk along the trail, while helping support the trail's expansion.

For Weier, restoring the trail is key. Being a local, she values having a well-maintained trail for their regular walks.

Sandy proudly sported a new bandana and munched on her new beef trachea treats that Weier picked up



Barb Geld gets a smooch from Lake, the vizsla, during the Paws on the Trail fundraiser. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

from one of the vendors. "The dogs all loved it," she said.

At the end of the walk, participants were rewarded with plants and each dog received a medal for their efforts.

Committee chair Rick Meloen said organizers expect to raise around \$10,000 this year, which is more than double what was raised last year.

"We're very happy about that. And we're very happy about the support that people have been giving. The people coming today are very supportive of the trail, since many of them are frequent, daily users," he said.

The fundraiser featured various vendors showcasing things like dog accessories and treats, as well as a doggie kissing booth and

swag bags for both pets and their owners.

Meloen said area businesses donated prizes and cash to support the cause, including Gatta Homes, Inniskillin, Jackson-Triggs, The Village, Bosley Real Estate, Irish Design, Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty, Oast House, Pet Valu, Sunset Grill, Willy's and Upper Canada Mechanical.

Ashley Briggs-Jude from Pets Alive, a vendor at the event, said there was a dual purpose in their participation.

They were there to showcase dogs available for adoption and to raise awareness, she said, one of the pups being being Forest, a friendly dog eager to find his new home.

Although adoptions were slow this summer,

she said events like Paws on the Trail provide valuable exposure.

People love Forest and every bit of exposure helps, she said.

"The photos just don't do him justice. He helps raise the money — he sells the product," Briggs-Jude said.

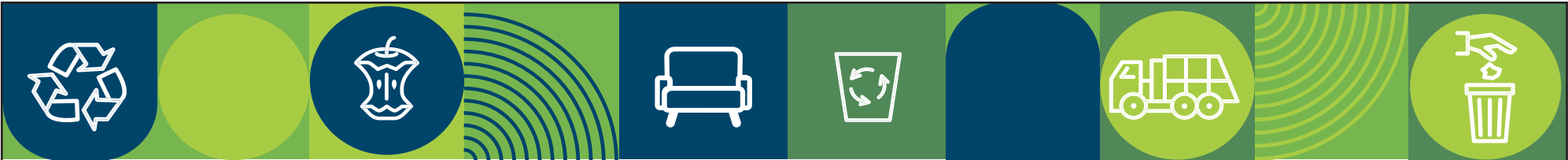
Eden, a street dog from Barbados who arrived last year, was rescued by Pets Alive. Laura Fakla, who helped organize the fundraiser and volunteers with the organization, adopted Eden in November.

Gail Hawkins, who brought her dog Otis, said the fundraiser was a great community gathering for a worthy cause.

"The heritage trail is an amazing spot for everybody. We walk along there regularly," she said.

Hawkins was recognized for her generosity with the largest donation of the day, contributing \$525. She was awarded a prize for her outstanding support.

Weier was also celebrated for her contributions. She won a prize of dog treats for Sandy and was honoured as the fourth-most generous donor.



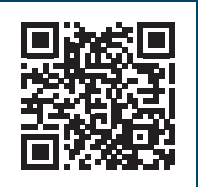
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# ‘Snow in Midsummer’ is a ‘baffling blizzard’ of overcrowded ideas

“SNOW IN  
MIDSUMMER”

★

(out of five)

*Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre, 2 hours, 10 minutes, one intermission. Ends Oct. 5*  
*Adaptation written by Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig*  
*Based on a Yuan dynasty drama by Guan Hanqing, “The Injustice to Dou E that Moved Heaven and Earth.”*  
*Director: Nina Lee Aquino.*

Penny-Lynn Cookson  
Special to The Lake Report

Have we become blasé about global climate change? Unresponsive to corporate greed? Uncaring about injustice and inequality? Inured to guns, murder and casual violence? Unfazed by coarse language? Unmoved by family melodramas?

“Snow in Midsummer” is a baffling blizzard of these themes swirling around the story of a young widow accused and executed for a murder she did not commit.

Her revenge will be snow in midsummer that will destroy crops followed by three years of drought, dust storms, devastation and locusts.

Ghost-like, the deceased Duo Yi’s memory drifts in and out of the consciences of those who inhabit New Harmony, a remote factory town in the east coast province of Jiangsu, China.

We, the audience, are in a whiteout trying to find our way, seeking clarity in this convoluted story.

All the action takes place within an empty rectangular floor space symbolic of the drought and emptiness brought to land and lives.

This space is surrounded on four sides by a stone wall one to two feet high suggesting the confinement of those trapped within the town. Two chairs are used as props when necessary. The time is the present and three years prior.

Tianyun Lin (Donna Soares), an entrepreneur businesswoman, arrives with her teenage daughter Fei-Fei (a hyper-fey Eponine Lee) to buy the defunct factory.

She wishes to manufacture fake flowers as no live flowers are growing in the surrounding dry wasteland. But what really is her motive?

The seller is Handsome Zhang (Michael Man) who limps, supported by a cane, due to a foot smashed in a vicious fight.

Handsome is gay, keen to quickly sell and move away with his lover, an ailing, wan and weak Rocket Wu (Jonathan Tan).

Other characters drift in and out. Dr. Lu (Kelly Wong) is an unethical, smooth surgeon eviscerating and selling for profit the organs of the deceased. Eyes going here, hands there, innards

everywhere and no organ donation forms to fill out.

In the marketplace, three stooge police officers jostle, jest, threaten and insult one another and others with gratuitous coarse language. Workers sweep presumably dead locusts while we, in the audience, sit stupefied for a good five minutes or more.

The space becomes a drinking bar run by Nurse Wong (Manami Hara) and a massage parlour where the elderly Mother Cai inflicts excruciating pain on her clients to exorcise evil.

Daughter Fei-Fei is obsessed and possessed by the spirit of her “snow princess sister.” She acquires a heart, once Duo Yi’s, transplanted to Rocket which after his death, she buries and waters to grow new spiritual life.

The overbearing Master Zhang (John Ng) tries to force his son Handsome to marry and maintain family honour and continuity. The homophobic, brutal assault of his son leads to his own death.

To protect the murderer, a corrupt “on the take” judge orders the immediate execution of the innocent Duo Yi (understudy Lindsay Wu).

She is accompanied on her journey to the underworld by the guardians Ox-Head and Horse-Face.

In Chinese mythology, the Ox-Head and Horse-Face heads are atop human male bodies. They capture human souls and bring

them before the courts of Hell where they will be rewarded or punished according to how they performed during their lifetimes.

Duo Yi is clearly rewarded as she drifts up and down stairs from the underworld, always beautifully coiffed and clothed in the finest Jiangsu silk flowing gowns.

The mystery solved, the true murderer arrested, Duo Yi exonerated, mother/daughter relationships restored, peace, hope and plenty will return to the land.

“Snow in Midsummer” is part of a trilogy commissioned from Cowhig by the Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford-upon-Avon, as part of their Chinese Translation Project, a cultural-exchange program. It premiered in 2017.

The 13th-century love story and drama to right the wrongs of injustice has been brought into contemporary times.

The play and this production simply do not work. Too many ingredients are thrown into the mix of themes, character identities, sound bangs, music, lights, constant coming and going and plot confusion.

This fortune cookie, on breaking open, reveals nothing. It is empty.

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

## Concert highlights musical talents of Shaw’s ensemble

Paige Seburn  
The Lake Report

When Shane Carty and David Adams first dreamed up the idea of showcasing the hidden musical talents of the Shaw ensemble, they didn’t anticipate the overwhelming response.

“Last year, it was a huge hit. It was unlike anything people had gotten used to around here,” said Carty, who’s an actor with the Shaw Festival.

Now an annual tradition, the Autumn in the Air concert, which includes a silent auction, is set to return to St. Mark’s Church on Sept. 16. Tickets are available for purchase on Eventbrite for \$35.

“It’s always nice to offer an audience something a

little bit new — something a little bit different from what they’re used to,” he said.

It will be an evening of classical music performed by actors, prop makers, wardrobe staff, and so on — many stepping into the spotlight for talents they rarely showcase in their day-to-day roles, he said.

Carty will be co-hosting the event with Shaw ensemble member Jade Repeta and credits Adams with bringing the idea to life.

“David is a great classical singer, and he’s a great actor. Last year, he thought, wouldn’t it be nice to see all of these very talented people doing something that they don’t often get to do, even though they’re all excellent at it?” said Carty.

The silent auction offers a diverse array of items. Carty said that this year’s auction will include not only physical items but also a variety of experience-based opportunities — a shift from last year, which mostly focused on material items like artwork.

St. Mark’s Church, with its rich acoustics and historic charm, sets the perfect backdrop for this show, said Carty.

The church’s intimate setting allows the classical pieces to resonate beautifully, he said, which enhances the experience.

“We’re not using any amplification or any microphones. It’s a purely acoustic concert,” said Carty. “Which, virtually,

is the way all of this music was meant to be heard.”

Proceeds will go to the Boxill/Doherty Fund, which provides financial aid to artists facing hardships or emergencies, a common struggle in the often unpredictable world of the arts, Carty said.

This fund has supported Niagara’s artistic community since the late 1970s, and raised roughly \$5,000 last year doing this concert.

You can participate in the auction even if you’re not attending the concert. Donations to the Boxill/Doherty Fund are also welcome.

Carty encourages everyone not to miss out on an evening of extraordinary music while supporting a great cause.



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- Across**
- 1. Masked (9)
  - 6. Mexican money (5)
  - 9. Diving bird (5)
  - 10. Life story (9)
  - 11. Yorkshire town on the Wharfe (5)
  - 12. Commonplace (8)
  - 16. Hard-shelled pupa (9)
  - 17. Pilsner (5)
  - 20. Swellings (5)
  - 22. Fit for publication (9)
  - 24. Fashion industry (3,5)
  - 26. Effluent carrier (5)
  - 29. Apiarist (9)
  - 31. Strong thread (5)
  - 32. Trials (5)
  - 33. Necessary to get to Mars (9)
- Down**
- 1. Stalks (4)
  - 2. Protected from the weather (9)
  - 3. No good (7)
  - 4. Weeps (4)
  - 5. Pair (3)
  - 6. Incomplete (7)
  - 7. Above (5)
  - 8. Cunningly (5)
  - 13. Rural (6)
  - 14. Scrutinize (4)
  - 15. Inclined (6)
  - 18. Nonsense (9)
  - 19. Regretted (4)
  - 21. Wave riders (7)
  - 23. Stage (7)
  - 24. Capital of Morocco (5)
  - 25. Valleys (5)
  - 27. Extent of space (4)
  - 28. Quick sharp bark (4)
  - 30. Step in ballet (3)

Have some fun

Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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# A special afternoon, in the right place



## Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

Sometimes one does the right thing. In the right place with the right people, at the right time. For the right reasons.

Be confident that I will not be making any world-changing statements or thinking deeply into the current situation in the Middle East. I leave that to much more intelligent minds who spend much more time reviewing the past, analyzing the present and predicting the future.

I went to high school in St. Catharines in the 1960s, enjoying six wonderful years at Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School. The bricks and mortar didn't make the school

a sitcom. The students were special, so diverse in so many ways.

We had such divergent interests and goals. Incredibly, of about 800 students, only Terry Martin was a person of colour.

Religion was not discussed, to the best of my knowledge, and people were just people. Was your family name Smith or Oblinski or Rubin? Or Feldman or Robinson? Nobody seemed to notice or care.

I love my parents for many reasons, including the fact that the differences between gentile and Catholic and Jewish were never discussed. I went to a Christian camp as a camper and a cook, and I taught Sunday School at Mountainview United Church.

I still don't know all the differences between Muslim and Hindu and Hebrew and Catholic.

To my mom and dad, people were people. Most were good and, sadly, a few were bad.

And even now, I don't want to understand organized religions. To the best of my knowledge, my son



Ross Robinson says life is all about peace and acceptance.

and daughter don't care either. They are 27 and 24 now, world travelers and making their way in an increasingly complicated world.

They haven't allowed organized religion to cloud their thinking. Daughter Carrie studied world religions, but seems to treat everyone fairly.

They understand the Golden Rule and try to be kind.

A few weeks ago I read in the St. Catharines Standard that the Congregation B'nai Israel of St. Catharines was going to celebrate its 100th anniversary at the Performing Arts Centre.

I thought about it for about three seconds and decided that I had to attend. This must-do was immediately entered into my planning calendar.

A chance to see many high school chums and to chat with many friends of my mom and dad from the 1960s and 1970s.

Some of my high school pals were named Bernstein and Rubin and Newman and Slepko and Tomarin and Tick. My parents absolutely loved Dolly and Bernie Cooperman, playing bridge with them almost every week, and enjoying theatre trips to Toronto.

As vice-president of

purchasing for Atlas Steels in Welland, my dad did a pile of business every month with scrap dealers named Adelstein and Newman and Goldblatt.

They loved him and he loved them. It was just the natural thing to do. Unconditionally. You treat me right and I'll treat you right.

A verbal deal was a deal, over the phone. No written contracts were needed.

So imagine my shock when I read the president's message in the 100th anniversary program at the Performing Arts Centre. I had never realized that antisemitism pervaded my childhood Garden City.

Dr. Howard Slepko, the chair of the board of the St. Catharines Synagogue, wrote: "Now, I find myself thinking back to the world when the founding (Jewish) families banded together and determined to build a synagogue."

"Jacob Cooperman had to ask a non-Jewish friend to buy the property for us because the owner would not sell to a Jew. At that time, our people were not welcomed at the St. Catha-

lines Tennis Club or the Port Dalhousie Yacht Club or the St. Catharines Golf Club. Those barriers did not start to drop until the mid 1960s."

"No one today would even think twice about our becoming members anywhere and there are laws to protect us against such virulent antisemitism. Now, instead, we have to consider our personal security when we attend the synagogue, or as we plan for the gala concert and reception at the Performing Arts Centre in downtown St. Catharines."

Not that long ago.

At the gala concert, several friends from NOTL were surprised and happy to see me. Frankly and happily, I had not realized they were Jewish. Thanks again to my parents.

Sitting at the PAC that day, several times I sensed my mom and dad looking down from heaven and saying, "Thanks, Ross, for being there in our stead. Give our love to our friends."

I was in the right place that afternoon, surrounded by love and kindness.

Bless you all.

# Set your lawn up for success with these tips



## GROWING TOGETHER

Joanne Young  
Columnist

The day and nighttime temperatures are starting to come down as we approach the beginning of autumn.

The cooler temperatures mean that it is the ideal time to tackle a lawn renovation.

With the amount of rainfall that we had this spring and summer, our lawns did not go through that brown, dormant period that they sometimes do.

So, at least they are not as stressed and in need of as

much work as they normally would.

With that said, there are still some things that you can do to set your lawn up for success.

One chore that we usually associate with a spring chore is aerating our lawn.

Who of you reading this has heavy, clay soil? I imagine that most of you have your hand raised.

If so, you will know how hard it is to even get a shovel into the ground. That is because the clay particles are so small that they pack together tightly, forming large clumps.

With less porous space in the soil, there is less oxygen available to the roots. Oxygen in the soil is vital for healthy root growth to occur.

Aeration is a process where small cores of soil are removed out of the lawn area allowing more oxygen to reach the roots.

By taking out cores of soil

in the fall, it allows the fall rains and melting snow during the winter to penetrate the soil better.

Another fall activity is dethatching your lawn.

Thatch is the layer of slowly decomposing grass stems, dead roots and debris that accumulates above the soil and below the grass blades.

When does thatch become a problem? If it is thicker than a quarter-inch.

A thick layer of thatch will hang onto the moisture, stopping it from getting to the roots, and it will also stop the nutrients from getting down to the roots.

Thatch is usually more of a problem in acidic soils or where high-nitrogen fertilizers are used too frequently.

Also, because of the amount of rain we received this summer, the lawn really didn't go through the usual dormant period in July and August.

So, with the extra amount of cutting we did, there is more decomposing grass blades that have been returned onto the lawn.

Dethatching should be done just before vigorous growth either in the fall or spring.

To check if you have a thatch problem, cut out an inch-by-inch section of lawn and lift it by sliding a spade just under the roots and examine that corky, brown layer in between the roots and grass blades.

To dethatch your lawn yourself, you can purchase a dethatching rake, which has stiff, diamond-shaped teeth, or use a garden rake (not fan rake).

As you pull it through the lawn it will pull out the brown, decomposing material (it also serves as a very good workout).

Now is also a great time to reseed your lawn.

Making your lawn as



After mowing your lawn, topdress the grass by spreading a thin layer of topsoil or triple mix or compost over the area.

dense as possible is the best way to curb weed growth. Wherever there is a bare spot, nature will fill it in with a weed.

Grass seed germinates best when the air temperature is around 15 C. Make sure you choose a type of grass seed that is right for your light conditions.

You will usually see grass seed sold as a mix of different types of grass. For a sunny area, you want a higher percentage of Kentucky bluegrass.

For a shadier location, you want to buy a mix with a higher percentage of fescue grass.

The first step in reseeding is to mow the lawn. Next, topdress the lawn by spreading a thin layer of topsoil or triple mix or compost over the area.

This will provide a loose medium for the seed to start rooting in to. Sow the seed.

Keep soil moist until the seed has begun to germinate, which usually takes 10 to 14 days.

Making a little effort on your lawn now will make a big difference come spring.

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



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**EXPLORING HISTORY**  
WITH NOTL MUSEUM

# Cavalry at Niagara Camp, 1909



Here is a coloured postcard of uniformed soldiers performing manoeuvres at Niagara Camp in the Niagara Commons. The cavalry in this image are not playing polo but the King’s Dragoons Guards did play the game during their stay from 1838 to 1842. The Royal Canadian Dragoons also played in the 1930s. Although the games were for the spectator’s enjoyment, polo was a training tool for the cavalry to hone their riding skills on the field, carrying a mallet in one hand rather than a sword. In 2024, we get to witness polo again on the historic Commons with the Toronto Polo Club, which will play in support of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum’s Niagara Polo fundraiser. Hope to see you there.

## SPONSORED

# Stronghouse Contracting, Niagara’s chimney repair specialists

SPONSORED  
The Lake Report

With a combined 80 years of experience, Peter Bernatowycz and Robert (Bob) McDonald have positioned Stronghouse Contracting as the go-to for challenging chimney and masonry projects in Niagara Region.

Founded in 1995 by Bernatowycz and led with the support of McDonald, Stronghouse Contracting boasts experience from thousands of projects, full insurance, WSIB compliance and a 100 per cent customer satisfaction policy.

In its early years, the company took on various types of work before eventually focusing primarily on chimneys.

They have restored and rebuilt more than 2,000 chimneys and Bernatowycz ensures that all brick rubble is sustainably reused for driveway bases and other projects.

A typical project starts with clients reaching out online, followed by Bernatowycz assessing the chim-



Two examples of chimney restoration. Call Stronghouse Contracting at 905-394-1526 or visit [stronghousecontracting.com](http://stronghousecontracting.com) for a free estimate on repairing your chimney.



ney and providing a quote. “The majority of the time, they want to do it, because they’ve already looked into us and they see all our five-star reviews,” he said.

Approaching its 30th year, Stronghouse Contracting’s expertise extends beyond residential work.

They have handled heritage sites such as the Breakenridge House at 240 Centre St. in Niagara-on-

the-Lake and the First World War memorial in Simcoe.

They also work for Ridley College, various heritage societies around Niagara Falls and several area churches.

Their team of seasoned industry veterans, each with a minimum of 25 years of journeyman experience, has devoted their lives to masonry work. This extensive experience and dedication are vital to

the company’s success.

“They do a lot of work to ensure the customer is happy,” said Bernatowycz.

Over the years, they have acquired specialized equipment for hard-to-reach chimneys, enabling them to take on projects other companies avoid.

“Between Bob and I, putting our brains together, we make it work,” said Bernatowycz, who has worked alongside McDonald for

many years.

Teamwork is a key factor in the company’s achievements, demonstrated not only by their A+ Better Business Bureau rating and five-star customer satisfaction reviews, but also by their reputation for clear communication and reliability.

“We always keep our clients updated on scheduling and progress,” Bernatowycz said.

To maintain this reputation, the company ensures every project is completed with the highest levels of safety, cleanliness and professionalism.

Caring for the well-being of their workers is paramount.

“Safety is a huge priority to us,” said Bernatowycz. “We always make sure the crew is trained properly, has the right certifications and always works safely.”

When it comes to cleanliness, the company goes above and beyond, he said.

“If you read the reviews, you’ll see that we leave their house cleaner than when we got there,” said Bernatowycz. “I learned from my old employer that you respect someone’s home the same way you respect your own.”

In an industry where trust is essential, selecting insured and compliant contractors is extremely important.

Stronghouse Contracting has \$5 million in liability insurance and is WSIB-compliant, setting them apart from many other companies.

Bernatowycz cautions against unlicensed contractors, emphasizing the importance of verifying WSIB clearance and liability insurance.

He envisions continued growth and specialization for his boutique business.

“We’re right in the middle. The big companies won’t do these jobs, and the little guys can’t do them. That’s the kind of niche we’re in,” he said.

This unique positioning allows Stronghouse Contracting to continue to thrive by offering specialized services that others can’t handle.



# Arriving home and learning to navigate NOTL

**JODEY'S JOURNEY**  
Jodey Porter  
Special to The Lake Report

*After almost a month at the world-famous Seeing Eye Guide Dog School in New Jersey, I am on my way home to begin my life with Doc, my new four-legged companion.*

*The story of my blindness started some 60 years ago when I lost most of my eyesight as a child. Then just three years ago, after a series of surgeries, I lost all my vision. Completely.*

*The journey to guide dog school is the culmination of an incredibly challenging effort to return to independence and normalcy. Both Doc and I have learned a great deal. And we are both scared to death of what's ahead.*

*We're coming home.*

\*\*\*\*\*

I really didn't want to come home. I don't think anybody in our class wanted to come home.

It's not that the school wasn't tough, because it was

wickedly tough. But it was a world where blindness was understood.

And none of the worlds we live in are worlds where blindness is understood.

And, believe it or not, Niagara-on-the-Lake is really bad for blind people's accessibility.

For my practices with Doc, the school couldn't find me a town as poorly marked as NOTL, in all of New Jersey. Only two per cent of the streets in Niagara-on-the-Lake are appropriately marked for blind people. And even those are wrongly placed.

I am beyond anxious.

When the Seeing Eye people came here to assess me, they were shocked at how poorly adapted we are here.

Three per cent of our population have less than under 20 per cent vision. Thankfully, I have a battalion of friends to help.

On Good Friday of the Easter Weekend, Doc and I arrived home. We were scared to death.

The dog was just trying to figure out which end of the house was up.



Jodey Porter.

Like any young dog in a new place, Doc did what I call the "zoomies" — they lose their minds, running around madly.

It was uncomfortable, it was bizarre. A new world.

That same weekend, a friend walked with me and Doc to Easter service at St. Mark's Church. Just getting there was an adventure. I was dressed for Easter in my cute little pink dress and cute little pink shoes. Big mistake.

The dog was wildly enthusiastic. All the smells were new. All the people were new. As we rushed down the street, Doc was very excited and I was

literally skiing in my little pink shoes.

Thankfully my friend and I were able to swap shoes — her runners for my little pink ones — and we made it to church.

We settled the dog down. All good. Except that every time the organ played, he thought it was a car crash. And every time we stood up during the service, he thought it was time to go and enthusiastically pulled me toward the door.

In the weeks since we've been home, we have both become much better at our jobs.

Early on, not so much.

A month or so ago he took a sudden right turn on a nearby street. I thought it was wrong, but I wasn't focused. I got all turned around. We headed down what I thought was a sidewalk.

But, in fact, we were in someone's garden. Their security camera went on. They were in Muskoka but, on their cellphone, they could see I was sort of wandering around their back garden.

They recognized me and

called a friend in town to help, but she was in Toronto. So, she called her husband who was in a dental chair in Niagara Falls. They finally connected with another friend, who ended his tennis game, to help.

We were saved. It takes a village ...

Another fun story. Doc and I and my white cane were at the bank trying to pay my taxes. A young teller asked me for my driver's licence. Really.

My friend quipped, "The dog hasn't learned to drive yet."

It has been quite a challenge getting to know the streets. But we are getting better. I am a lot more focused.

And I now use a program on my phone called Voice Vista that tells me "Next intersection Rye Street." So, at least I know I am going in the right direction.

And Doc is learning, too. He learns things so fast. I have to learn how to trust his decision-making.

I needed to get Doc to look for places for me to sit when I enter a room. So, I taught him a new command:

"Chair."

At my next Rotary Club meeting, I said: "Doc, chair." Doc dutifully found me a chair. Unfortunately, there was someone in it and I almost sat on his lap.

Oh well, more to learn. And he is learning.

A few walks ago, I was with a Doc and a sighted friend along a Commons path. The friend saw a bicycle approaching and quietly suggested that I tell Doc to "Hup left" — which means move to the left. The dog hopped me to the left, safely onto the grass.

Now, he does it every time there is a bicycle. And then he wags his tail and wants to be thanked, as if to say: "I'm smarter than you are."

It's quite a partnership. It's good to be home.

*Next: Having Doc as a friend and colleague is changing my life. I will try to explain how.*

*NOTL resident Jodey Porter is a former provincial assistant deputy minister of health and member of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Her story is told in collaboration with writer Tim Taylor.*

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## Gary Torgis



TORGIS, Gary — With profound sadness, we announce the passing of Gary Torgis, a man whose life was a testament to passion, commitment, and love.

Gary is survived by his devoted wife, Sandra Morris, with whom he shared a boundless love and unwavering dedication. He also leaves behind his beloved children, Amanda, Christopher, and Ashley, of whom he was immensely proud. Gary's legacy continues through his cherished grandchildren, JD and Oliver, and his sister, Sharon Antidormi, along with their respective families. His absence will also be deeply felt by his treasured furry companions, Oscar and Otis.

Gary's interests were as varied as they were passionate. He earned a second-degree black belt and had a lifelong love of music.

In his younger years, he enjoyed playing the classical guitar and had a genuine love of playing the piano. His passion for flying spanned over three decades, from mastering glider flight to earning his private pilot's license and IFR designation. Today, the heavens have gained a skilled co-pilot.

Throughout his life, Gary found solace and joy in nature. He spent many years with his family at White Fish Lake, enjoying the beauty of the outdoors at Pine Bluff, a cottage he helped build with his father as a teenager. These moments by the lake were among his most cherished.

For Gary, life was about creating joy and unforgettable experiences for others. He was the consummate host, welcoming guests from around the world with warmth and charm. During the years he and Sandra owned their luxury bed and breakfast, Rye Park Manor, Gary's exceptional hospitality made every guest feel at home. His love for entertaining and connecting with people left a lasting impression on all who stayed with them.

Gary dedicated over 40 years to his career as a CPA. He began at his family's firm, Torgis and Son, and later worked with the Toronto Symphony and two of Canada's top law firms. His longest tenure was at Aird & Berlis, where he cherished his role and loved working with an exceptional team that became like family. Gary was renowned for his professionalism, relationship-building, and unwavering integrity, leaving a lasting impact on those who worked with him.

Taken too soon, Gary faced his diagnosis of a highly aggressive brain tumour with immense strength and dignity. Despite his untimely passing, he inspired all who knew him.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who showed love and support during Gary's illness. Your kindness and words of encouragement will never be forgotten. We are especially grateful to Lydia, whose extraordinary support and time spent with Gary meant so much. We also thank Dr. Ramos, Dr. Greenspoon, Nurse Tanesha, and the Juravinski Cancer Centre team for their compassionate care. We also thank The ParaMed Team, Nurses Helen, Diane, Paul, and Johanna, and Niagara Palliative Care Services for their unwavering support, which enabled Gary to remain at home during his illness.

At Gary's request, there will be no funeral service. Donations to the Canadian Brain Cancer Foundation, or a charity of your choice, would be deeply appreciated in his memory.

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com).

## Robert MacKenzie



Robert Bruce MacKenzie (February 25, 1960 – September 1, 2024)

We announce the passing of Robert Bruce MacKenzie, respected architect and beloved husband, father, and son, who passed away from complications of acute leukaemia on Sept. 1, 2024, at the age of 64.

He is survived by his wife, Deralyn, his son, Colin, and his mother, Jean.

Rob grew up in the village of Erin, Ontario born the son of late Wellington County Warden Lawrence George and Jean Agnes (Robertson) MacKenzie. Rob studied architecture at Carleton University's Azrieli School, and apprenticed under renowned architect Carlos Ventin. His professional practise began under the mentorship of Brian Watkinson in Niagara Falls, and later under Stan Butcherd in Port Colborne who would later choose Rob to succeed him. In 1998, Rob joined Quartek Group Inc. as the principal architect and help grow it into its current form as a leading Niagara-based multi-disciplinary design firm specialized architecturally in municipal, commercial and heritage restoration projects across Niagara and throughout Ontario. Rob's dedication to craft, mentorship, and optimism were the qualities by which his colleagues, associates and friends will continue his legacy.

In Rob's capacity as a volunteer, he served the Niagara-on-the-Lake Municipal Heritage Committee for 15+ years, and for two terms was Chair of the Niagara Society of Architects. His efforts also extended to advancing the Friends of Laura Secord First Nations Peace Monument, Willowbank School of Restoration Arts in Queenston, Brown House, and Niagara Falls Hydroelectric Power Station restoration efforts. Rob was also an active and dedicated member of Smuggler's Cove Boat Club, to which he devoted thankless hours and effort. Rob also found a sense of purpose and satisfaction in pursuit of flight; as a private pilot and active member of the St. Catharines Flying Club, some of his most memorable adventures were piloting club flights to Oshkosh or Myrtle Beach. Not an engine failure mid-flight, nor cancer diagnosis could deter him, and to the last moment Rob remained determined to return to the skies.


Friends, family and professional associates are invited to celebrate Rob's life at a gathering to be held at Niagara District Airport on Sunday, Sept. 15, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please RSVP by contacting Colin. Friends are encouraged to donate blood with Canadian Blood Services, or donate to the The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation. Rob has and will forever be, a loving father, husband, and mentor to us all.

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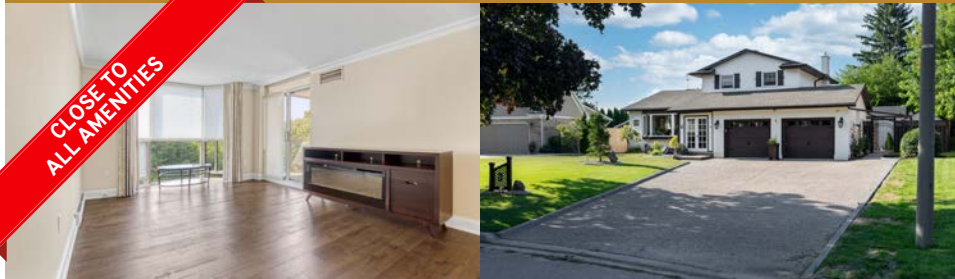
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