



Living in the pandemic | Page 8

Home **safe** for Christmas

Eric VanNoort hopes to be seizure-free and driving again after frontal craniotomy. Family also donates \$13,000 to epilepsy research



Eric VanNoort presents a cheque to Dr. Taufik Valiante minutes before going into brain surgery. SUPPLIED

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Throughout the last four years of devastating seizures, lengthy hospital visits and multiple brain surgeries, Eric VanNoort says the worst part of it all was not being able to drive and losing that independence.

But that could all change, after his latest successful surgery.

VanNoort, a 23-year-old Niagara-on-the-Lake resident, returned home from the hospital Dec. 9 after having a right front temporal craniotomy for epilepsy, a disease that's caused him to have more grand mal seizures than he can count.

Since the seizures started in 2016, VanNoort has had to give up his licence and has spent more than a month in the hospital.

Now, it will be about a year before he'll know if he's seizure-free, but VanNoort and his family are hopeful for the future. The surgery has a 40 to 50 per cent success rate.

VanNoort, who has stayed positive throughout it all, says the interesting part of his latest surgery is that he was home just two days after having a piece of his skull cut out and put back.

He went in for the surgery on a Monday and arrived home on the Wednesday.

"I was discharged in stable condition," VanNoort said during a phone interview Saturday.

The surgery isn't very common, he said, especially in Ontario, where only about 30 such operations are done in a year by just one

Continued on Page 20



Developer Benny Marotta has filed another lawsuit against the Town of NOTL. FILE PHOTO

Marotta company sues town for **\$1M**

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Equity Venture, a company associated with Solmar Development Corp. and developer Benny Marotta, is suing the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for \$1 million.

The lawsuit alleges the town significantly reduced or eliminated the options available for servicing on a vacant lot at 412 Four Mile Creek Rd. at the corner of Line 9, where Marotta plans to build a commercial plaza next to his Cannery Park subdivision.

It alleges the town allowed a necessary strip of land for servicing the plaza to remain in private hands and be used for another subdivision (The Vintages), preventing the plaza from accessing the necessary services.

The statement of claim alleges that "at all material

times, the town was aware that the plaintiff was the owner of the lands, that the plaintiff intended to develop the lands for commercial purposes and that the plaintiff's ability to efficiently develop the lands would require the town to consider its interests (including servicing requirements) in concert with developments in the surrounding area."

"We regret having to have taken this action, but the town left us little choice," Marotta said in an emailed statement.

"The best practices for servicing the plaza would require the use of a very narrow strip of land adjacent to both the lot and (The Vintages) subdivision. Everyone seemed to understand that the use of this narrow strip of land was

Continued on Page 21

NOTL's 'mystery Monet' sought by Pumphouse

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre is on the hunt for the "mystery Monet" who has been leaving Christmas art around town.

Someone, whom the Pumphouse has called a

"future Banksy" (after the famous, elusive British artist), has secretly been hanging artworks on lamp posts in Niagara-on-the-Lake in the area of Rye, Paffard and Charlotte streets.

The paintings piqued the

Continued on Page 22



The Niagara Pumphouse wants to offer NOTL's mystery artist a free membership. SUPPLIED

The Lake Report takes a **holiday**, too

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and Season's Greetings to all!

This is the final edition of The Lake Report for this year as, like many of our readers, we take a two-week break over the holidays to relax, recharge and get ready for the new year ahead.

While our print edition won't return until Thursday,

Jan. 7, please continue to follow us on Facebook.

And check our news website, NiagaraNow.com, regularly for all the news that NOTL needs.

Meanwhile, keep in touch with us and let us know whenever you see or hear about news.

Reach us by email at, editor@niagarnow.com.

Happy New Year to all of our wonderful readers and supporters.

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 Boxing Day: Saturday 26th 11 am – 2 pm
 Sunday 27th Closed

Apothecary: Christmas Eve: Thursday 24th . . . 9:30 am – 3 pm
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 Boxing Day: Saturday 26th Closed
 Sunday 27th 11am – 3 pm

New Year's Eve: Thursday 31st 9 am – 3 pm
 New Year's Day: January 1st Closed
 Saturday, January 2nd 9 am – 5 pm
 Sunday, January 3rd Closed

New Year's Day: Thursday 31st 9:30 am – 3 pm
 New Year's Day: 1st Closed
 Saturday, January 2nd 10 am – 5 pm
 Sunday, January 3rd 11 am – 3 pm

SIMPSON'S

Thank you for the overwhelming community support during these challenging times. Wishing you all health and happiness.

Council **alters** short-term rental bylaw

Overwhelming industry opposition to principal residence rule prompts change, for now

Richard Harley
The Lake Report



Council listens to several presentations from short-term rental operators who oppose changes to the town's short-term rental bylaw. SOURCED

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake wants to crack down on illegal short-term rentals and make sure ones that are operating legally take responsibility for their properties and guests.

But how it will do that will likely remain unclear until at least the next meeting of council.

During a lengthy discussion about short-term rentals at Monday's committee of the whole meeting, councillors approved an amended staff report with proposed changes to the current bylaw. However, it seemed to be understood the issue needs more discussion and it should be revisited by council.

One of the most contentious proposals, to mandate that short-term rentals be owner-occupied, was deferred for further consideration.

Among the recommendations approved were an increase in licence fees to \$175 per room, to make it illegal for owners to advertise short-term rentals without a licence and that any such advertisement must include the licence number. As well, the town will hire a third-party firm to take complaints 24/7 and find rentals advertising without a licence.

As well, owners must ensure copies of the town's noise and nuisance bylaws are made available to renters, that non-owner occupied properties must provide a property manager's contact to the town and the to-be-hired third-party compliance company. In addition, the property manager must be able to visit the property within 45 minutes of a complaint.

Town clerk Peter Todd outlined some of the responses received from the public through the town's Join the Conversation page regarding the proposed changes.

Town staff's suggestion of requiring short-term rentals to only operate from principal residences was "definitely the most commented on" topic, he said.

"There was definitely an overwhelming amount of opposition to this requirement from the industry in the tourism sector," Todd said.

While he said a "small minority" of residents favoured the principal residence option, the overwhelmingly negative response from the industry prompted a recommendation to hold off on the decision until there has been further consultation with the public and stakeholders.

Some of the comments suggested staff had not done its due diligence or research before preparing the bylaw, Todd said.

However, Coun. Clare Cameron defended staff, saying research was done and brought attention to the number of times the word "industry" was used in Todd's presentation.

"There's been lots of references to the industry, which really refers to a collection of independent people that have had the opportunity to invest in additional properties," she said.

She asked Todd to clarify how many general residents (ie. people without "skin in the game") were speaking in favour of the principal residence requirement.

"We did receive support for the principal residence requirement from a small minority of the comments that were from general members of the public or from operators that were bed and breakfast operators that may not be affected by the changes. So there were people speaking in support of it," Todd said.

Councillors had a number of questions and concerns

about how effective it would be to hire a third-party compliance company located out-of-town to monitor complaints.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said the challenge is often that convictions in court need proof of a person staying overnight, not just an advertisement.

However, Todd said the town is also putting in requirements that rentals need to have a licence before advertising, which would eliminate the need for proof of someone staying overnight or a private investigator to gather such proof.

The third-party would also be able to take the offenders to court for the town, if required, though Todd said he wasn't familiar with how that process would play out.

"It's not entirely clear how that will work from a staff perspective, but at the very least they can provide us the evidence that we will need, ideally to move forward with prosecution," Todd said.

The 10-month pilot of the third-party program would allow the town to see whether it needs to hire "more resources" to tackle illegal rentals, Todd said.

He said with the compliance company, anyone with a complaint would contact an operator who would record the complaint as well as contact the property manager to ensure the problem is addressed within 45 minutes, with a fine if they don't respond within that time frame.

However, if a manager does respond and attempts to stop the problem and the noise continues, Todd said the town would rely on the Niagara Regional Police to

enforce the town's bylaws, as it does now.

Coun. Allan Bisback raised the point that police haven't been particularly helpful in resolving these issues in the past and asked what happens if police continue to have "bigger issues" to deal with.

Todd said at this point there is no intention to have staff working overtime to address complaints.

Bisback asked if the town had looked into escalating fines for multiple infractions, but Todd said he wasn't certain if the town can legally do so.

Coun. Erwin Wiens poked another hole in the issue, which is that it would be left up to property managers to determine if the complaint is legitimate.

"That's how we would decide? The property owner would come and say, 'I deem this as a frivolous complaint?'" Wiens asked.

Todd said the property manager would have the opportunity to "provide the compliance company with more information" since they are essentially working as a mediator between the complainant and the guests.

But Wiens wondered how the town and compliance company would know if the manager was compliant or not, if there was no independent party to decide if a complaint is legitimate. For example, he said, what happens if there's a person who just complains about everything, or a property owner who ignores complaints because he decides it's not a big deal.

"It becomes anecdotal, does it not?" he said. "Because what's gonna happen is either side of it, they have their own perspective, or perception of what's acceptable."

"I'm quite cautious when we have independent people that aren't even in our area code investigating," Wiens said.

Coun. Gary Burroughs said the threat is not about bigger fines, but more about losing the operating licence if there are too many complaints.

"If you get legitimate warnings, and you get two or three, then you're no longer in business. That is an incentive to do it right," he said.

Another staff suggestion owners took issue with according to Todd's report was having mandatory signs outside their rentals, which some said was not safe and could negatively impact the aesthetic of a neighbourhood.

Seven town residents, all involved in the short-term rental industry, spoke out against the proposed bylaw changes during the meeting, with most of them outlining similar concerns as noted in Todd's presentation, especially the principal residence rule.

All of the seven speakers said the proposed changes would not solve the current issues, with most hitting similar talking points, such as how making short-term rentals operate from principal residences only would hurt owners of those rental businesses.

They also suggested noise complaints are few and far between, that a principal residence rule would not lead to more long-term rentals, only a flood of houses on the market.

However, no speakers provided evidence as to why those houses wouldn't be purchased as a long-term residence. In fact, current Bed and Breakfast Association president John Foreman suggested the housing market wouldn't be affected in the long-term, because people would still want to move here.

There was general consensus that the town does need more enforcement to tackle illegal rentals.

The presenters suggested NOTL neighbourhoods are not being hollowed out by short-term rentals.

Mike Matyjewicz, who owns a short-term rental in Chautauqua, said he thinks short-term rentals "enliven" the community rather than hollow it out, that limiting short-term rentals won't lead to more long-term housing.

"And, of course, it brings in many visitor dollars,"

said Matyjewicz. "I hope this underscores an important point. We're not absentee landowners. We're not a soulless, nameless corporation. We're two individuals who love this community and made a major investment here."

Foreman said requiring short-term rentals to be owner-occupied would mean that many cottage rentals and villas would be forced to close.

"This would cause serious financial hardship for the owners," he said, adding it could affect tourism — though he did not provide any evidence to suggest short-term rentals provide any more local business than a permanent resident.

Councillors didn't seem to feel the same as the short-term rental owners and generally agreed there is an issue with hollowing out of town.

Disero pointed out the town has lost many practical businesses over the years, adding that on some streets in town there are people who literally have no neighbours due to short-term rentals on either side.

Both Cameron and Bisback responded to presentations suggesting the town had not followed "proper governance" in bringing the bylaws forward. They said staff had prepared the report in a normal fashion and looked into the issues while also considering the sheer volume of complaints they receive about short-term rentals.

Bisback said from May to October it's the most frequent call he gets.

Cameron emphasized it is not council's role to ensure short-term rental owners can make as much money possible, but to act in the best interests of residents and the future of the community.

Other councillors agreed with Cameron and voiced strong concerns not only about noise — which most rental owners focused on — but the real hollowing out of communities that is shown to come along with short-term rentals.

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COVID update: Niagara's top doctor warns against **Christmas gatherings** amid rising cases

Richard Harley
The Lake Report



Dr. Mustafa Hirji, acting chief medical officer of health for Niagara Region. SUPPLIED

Niagara could be moving into the COVID red zone for Christmas and maybe a grey-level lockdown in the new year, the region's top doctor says.

During a COVID-19 update at a regional council meeting last week, Dr. Mustafa Hirji, the region's acting chief medical officer of health, seemed almost certain the region would move to the next stage of pandemic lockdown by Dec. 18.

"And, of course, that would carry lots of new restrictions on our businesses and be quite unfortunate, but I think it's what we're facing, because so many of those areas near us, such as Hamilton, Waterloo, are seeing such higher cases than us that

unfortunately, those cases are starting to bleed into us," he said.

As of Wednesday, Niagara-on-the-Lake had 11 active cases of COVID-19 (up from seven a day earlier) and a total of 75 cases since the start of the pandemic.

The region set a daily record with 71 new cases

Sunday. Niagara had recorded 2,723 cases and 92 deaths as of Wednesday.

"If we start having large Christmas parties, and we have people gathering a lot at Christmas, we are likely to see another spike," he said.

That could lead to Niagara "going into a lockdown

scenario along with much of the rest of the province" in January, Hirji warned.

He said public health is urging people to limit their Christmas gatherings, pointing out that there were big spikes in case numbers after other holidays like Thanksgiving and Labour Day.

With Christmas not far off, "I'm very concerned that we may be heading into the red level," Hirji said.

"We're going to have another big spike of cases coming out of that. And so a really big part of our messaging over the next few weeks is going to be really trying to encourage people to limit their gatherings and their Christmas festivities," he said.

His advice: Celebrate lots with your household, but connect virtually with the rest of your family.

Pleasant Manor expansion will cost **\$37.5 million**

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor



Tory MPP Sam Oosterhoff reannounces plans for the expansion of Virgil's Pleasant Manor. KEVIN MACLEAN

The Ontario government unveiled \$38.2 million in grants this week to build more long-term care facilities in Niagara and confirmed major expansion plans for Pleasant Manor in Virgil.

The new 160-bed Niagara-on-the-Lake facility will cost at least \$37.5 million, Radiant Care CEO Tim Siemens told The Lake Report.

The project was already announced a month ago, but Progressive Conservative MPP Sam Oosterhoff visited the site Monday for an "echo" announcement to reiterate the government's plans.

The previous Liberal government had approved 81 new spaces in 2018, but that proved to be an uneconomical project for Pleasant Manor to undertake.

The province in November allotted 38 more beds to Radiant Care, which operates the NOTL home as a private not-for-profit charitable entity.

Combined with the centre's current 41 beds, the latest provincial promise will allow Pleasant Manor to build a new 160-bed facility as part of a "campus of care," Oosterhoff said.

The new centre will be built on Elden Street, behind the current facility, on land occupied by a fruit orchard.

Siemens said it is anticipated the province will cover \$37.5 million of the project, nearly 90 per cent of the construction costs.

The existing 41-bed facility will be converted into community housing for seniors, he said.

The new building has been a long time coming, Siemens told a small crowd assembled for the announcement.

"Since 1998, Pleasant Manor has been developing a plan to replace its current long-term care home

with a new, state-of-the-art building, including with this plan, the prospect of bringing greater long-term care bed capacity and better, safer living spaces for our long-term care residents," he said.

Among the other Niagara sites allocated funding in Monday's announcement are: \$16.6 million to Linhaven Long-Term Care Home in St. Catharines for 81 new spaces and upgrading 41 existing spots; Westhills Centre in St. Catharines (\$10.4 million, 96 new spaces, 64 upgraded); Foyer Richelieu in Welland (\$6.1 million, 66 new spaces, 66 upgraded); and Royal Rose Place in Welland (\$3 million, 64 new spaces).

* Read The Lake Report's earlier story for full details on the Pleasant Manor expansion plans at <https://www.niagaranow.com/news.php/ml/4823>.

NOTL waste collection **delayed one day** over holidays

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

If your garbage, blue box, grey box and green bin collection falls on a Friday, it will be delayed by one day

due to Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, where many households have Friday pickup, that means Boxing Day and Jan. 2 will be the days to put out

your trash or recycling.

As well, for the week of Dec. 28 to Jan. 2, residents can put out two extra bags or cans of trash without a garbage tag, the Region of Niagara says.

Christmas tree collection is Jan. 11 to 15. All ornaments and decoration must be removed. Trees wrapped in plastic, buried in snow, or placed on top of snow banks will not be collected.

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Contributed by Patty Garriock
 "Do something today to improve someone else's life." - Patty Garriock



Contributed by Norm Arsenault:

Did you know? Generating enough electricity to cook for an hour in a standard electric oven creates 2.7 pounds of CO2. A toaster oven creates 1.3 pounds over 50 minutes; a microwave creates 0.5 pounds over 15 minutes. Use a microwave to save energy. Microwave ovens use around 50% less energy than conventional ovens do. (World Wildlife Association)

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Editorial: Spreading festive cheer 2.0

Kevin MacLean
 Managing Editor

The people of Niagara-on-the-Lake seem to take Christmas decorating and holiday lighting very seriously.

How else to explain the amazing displays of decor around town?

If ever there was a year when we all could use a healthy dose of cheer, this is it.

The Lake Report's photo display last week, featuring incredible pictures of decked-out homes all over town, drew raves from near and far as people revelled in the joy these splashes of colour and decor brought to an often joyless 2020.

So, thank you to everyone who has taken it upon themselves to bring a little light to our darker days.

In particular, thanks to Brenda McArthur, who selflessly opens her spectacular John Street home (the former Trisha Romance estate) to the public for the NOTL Rotary Club's holiday house extravaganza.



You couldn't take it in this year, thanks to COVID, but we offer you some exclusive photos this week of what you would have seen, inside and out.

And kudos also to the owners of the famous "house up on York Road," as we so often hear it called.

For about 20 years the owners, (who prefer not to be interviewed, so that way it's all about the lights), have put together an astonishingly impressive display that attracts drive-by visitors from all over Niagara.

We also would like to single out the people from the Town of NOTL, Santa's helpers for the Santa Around The Town parade on Sunday.

Thanks for your help and ingenuity, along with the Christmas parade committee, to ensure that the jolly old fellow put in an

appearance in all five of NOTL's communities. It was a brilliant solution, well-executed. There's even an app for that.

No one needs to be reminded what an unforgettably forgettable 2020 has been. It will be memorable for many sad reasons, thanks to the upheaval it has created in the lives of literally everyone worldwide, and to the death and suffering it brought to so many millions of people. Many of us have seen the ravages of COVID up close or lost ones we knew or loved.

COVID made it a tough year for our municipal leaders, Lord Mayor Betty Disero, town council and senior management of the town. They faced unprecedented situations and did what they felt was essential to keep NOTLers safe. They succeeded.

Despite thousands of visitors, the result has been relatively few COVID cases in town (11 active at the last count and 75 total over about 10 months). And there have been no outbreaks in any of NOTL's long-term care homes, a remarkable achievement. More for which to be thankful.

As noted on Page 1, this is the final edition of the print edition of The Lake Report for this year (we'll still post news online as it happens). We are taking a two-week holiday from striving to bring you the most current, relevant and interesting news, features and information about NOTL, week after week.

That would be an impossible task without the faithful support of you – our readers – plus our loyal advertisers, and the numerous community contributors who generously help us tell stories. And all those who let us into their lives so we can tell those stories.

In turn, you reward us with your readership and support. editor@niagaranow.com



Collateral damage thanks to short-term rentals

Dear editor:

I have been listening for several weeks to the back and forth regarding Niagara-on-the-Lake's current Airbnb situation.

I understand the income potential, especially in a town like Niagara-on-the-Lake.

But at what cost do we continue to exploit this town? When is enough, enough?

The little town that boasts of being the pride of Ontario is becoming a kind of façade.

It's so overrun with tourists that I'm reminded of a quote by Yogi Berra: "Nobody goes there anymore. It's too crowded."

I have already heard people complain about lines, crowding, traffic ... and they are tourists. I can't even begin to speak for those of us who live here year-round.

When my husband and I moved here 13 years ago, it was to escape Toronto's noise.

Both of us were born within the region, and with elderly parents close by and a job for me at the Shaw, it only made sense to stay.

At that time, the town boasted several hotels and a plethora of bed and breakfasts, which seemed to satisfy the needs of visitors.

As an artist who works primarily as a director at the Stratford Festival, buying a home was out of the question, and so we rented.

At the time, there were several options and all of them were reasonable.

Since then, we've been evicted twice. In one instance, the home was being sold and torn down (it never was.) Instead, the house underwent renovations and

was then rented out for more money.

On Dec. 1 of this year, we received our second eviction, this time so the landlord can move in.

We are the collateral damage of not only COVID-19, but the influx of short-term rentals. On our street alone 25 per cent of the homes are Airbnbs.

What we are currently facing is an insurmountable attempt to find a new place to live. Letters to the paper from out of towners who want a "home away from home" for two weeks means that someone like myself (despite losing a contract at Stratford, we continued to pay rent all through COVID-19) can't find a "home" at all.

The citizens of NOTL are at a crossroads here. Do we choose to live in a town

that is exclusively for the wealthy? Or do we choose to live in a community that includes people from different walks of life?

Supposedly people come here to enjoy the Shaw Festival, but if artists like myself cannot live here, what does that say?

Stopping or limiting the Airbnb situation in NOTL may deter some people from coming here, but in the end, it may benefit this town as a whole.

There are plenty of ways to make money in this town. Perhaps some enterprising individual could purchase land and build actual cottages?

Must affordable, available housing be eliminated at the expense of, what in some instances is, greed?

Lezlie Wade
 NOTL

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OPINION

It's time for the people to **speak out** against Ford's Greenbelt plans

David Israelson
Special to The Lake Report

Despite many loud objections, Ontario Premier Doug Ford just drove a few more nails into the Greenbelt's coffin.

Here's the problem: Half of Ontario's Greenbelt Council, including its chair David Crombie, quit to protest Ford's plan to disembowel conservation protection in the province.

Yet Ford's principal henchman in this anti-environment scheme, Municipal Affairs Minister Steve Clark, insisted he was "frustrated" because the people who quit won't go along with his efforts to "expand the quality and quantity of the Greenbelt."

Not that Ford or Clark offered details about those so-called efforts. Pay attention to what they did more than what they say.

Here's what they did: Last week, Clark and Ford plowed ahead to pass an item they slipped into the provincial budget, called Schedule 6, that severely weakens the ability of the province's 36 conservation authorities to protect watersheds and wild areas.

How does expanding green space square with making it easier to pave and pour cement? If we weigh the evidence, it looks as though Ford and Clark can't connect these — nor do they intend to do so.

What they do intend, it seems, is to make it much easier to turn Ontario into a wasteland of poorly planned, tacky suburban tracts — not the nice kind — with a few thin strands of trees and green space to break the monotony here and there.

Think this is an exaggeration? We should wish. Look carefully at what the Ford government, including Clark, did by passing this ill-advised legislation. Then look at what Clark has been saying.

Then look at where the Ford government is heading with this legislation and look one more time at the responses Clark gave



If Doug Ford gets his way, there could be a lot more tree cutting happening on Greenbelt properties. FILE

to Crombie and the other council members' resignations.

It's not good. First, the actions so far. The Ford government has already issued some 35 minister's zoning orders (MZO) since coming to power in 2018. MZO used to be rare, but Ford and Clark are using them to ram developers' projects onto land over the wishes of elected municipal councils.

"The MZO we are making on non-provincial lands have been at the request of local municipalities," Clark says. That's a surprise to elected officials such as Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas — he told the Toronto Star that the minister's office called and said they are approving the jamming in of a subdivision with as many as 75 houses on land that Aurora didn't designate for housing.

"This is not how you grow communities. This is how you ruin them," the mayor told the Star.

Clark's defence to this heavy-handed use of MZO is twofold — he says the province needs wide powers to address COVID-19 and the economic fallout it is causing, and he insists he

wants to grow the Greenbelt.

None of this meshes with the Schedule 6 provision that Ford and Clark pushed through in the budget bill.

This schedule guts the power of conservation authorities to do what they are supposed to do — conserve and protect watersheds and sensitive lands from over-development, planning mistakes and the potential for flooding and storm damage, a problem that's growing with climate change.

Neutering the conservation authorities has nothing and everything to do with the Greenbelt at the same time.

It means nothing because the Greenbelt is separate from what the conservation authorities deal with.

Created by legislation in 2005 by Ontario's then-Liberal government — and resisted by the Progressive Conservatives — the Greenbelt protects about 800,000 hectares (2 million acres) of land over 325 kilometres from Niagara to Rice Lake.

It's a patchwork, because the Greenbelt is within the most heavily populated area in Canada. Many of the lands and watersheds that aren't within the Greenbelt

are still subject to review by conservation authorities; if you want to build on these non-greenbelt lands it might be OK, but the conservation authorities are supposed to be able to put the brakes on if they think it's not safe.

Ford and Clark cut those brake cables.

So when Clark says he wants to expand the Greenbelt, he's talking about something completely different from his plan to allow unbridled construction everywhere else whenever he gives an OK through an MZO.

At the same time, the Greenbelt means everything.

Why? Because as David Crombie said after his principled resignation from the Greenbelt Council, "everything is connected."

You can't protect a small patch of river or woodland within the Greenbelt while allowing anything and everything to happen on properties that are right next door. Yet this is precisely what Ford and Clark are proposing — with minimal review, minimal oversight by experts and virtually no opportunity for anyone from the public to object to what developers want.

Ford says his government is "for the people." If this is so, it's time to listen to the people.

Stop pretending that listening to developers is the same as listening to Ontario voters.

Stop Clark from saying "I want to expand the Greenbelt" without offering a single idea as to what that means.

Stop pretending that catering to special interests helps us fight COVID.

Stop them from getting away with passing Schedule 6 without an outcry. Tell them it's time to start caring about the environment.

David Israelson is a non-practising lawyer, author, journalist and communications consultant. You can follow him on Twitter @davidisraelson or on LinkedIn. This article updates a version that appeared in the Lawyer's Daily on Dec. 11.



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Needless tree-cutting affects entire street



Trees being cut down at 6 Luther Ave. SUPPLIED

Dear editor:
The unique character of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Chautauqua neighbourhood is defined by its narrow, tree-sheltered streets. We are protected and charmed in every season by our towering oaks and maples, catalpas and pines, by privet and cedar hedges that line our friendly streets.

We feel we are better neighbours for the lack of unshaded lawns, curbs and sidewalks. In Chautauqua, every street is our street. Every street feels like home.

And every tree is our tree, and the loss of each is a loss to the whole community.

When services have been upgraded, municipal and public works in charge have been mindful of why we choose to live in Chautauqua, and respect our reasons for wanting to preserve our old trees, our old vegetation and our sense of the timeless quality of this quaint and eccentric neighbourhood.

When proposed homes exceed municipal bylaws, the neighbourhood unites to ensure that important trees are not harmed and to encourage an appropriate, or at least non-destructive development that will enhance the neighbourhood. Something that every community deserves.

When we were notified that a proposed development at 6 Luther Ave. was requesting a variance to

reduce the rear yard setback to 3.9 metres (13 feet), we realized that this would endanger the century scarlet oak tree at the rear property line. We also learned that this variance would create a four-car parking area in front of the house.

The proposed house would be the only two-storey building on Luther Avenue, which is the narrowest of streets, and be one of the largest buildings in Chautauqua – on one of the smallest lots.

Eighteen neighbours wrote letters and presented objections at a NOTL committee of adjustment hearing. The setback would endanger the heritage oak and create an opportunity for excessive parking. The massing and siting of the house would adversely affect the streetscape. The committee of adjustment ruled against the proposal.

We encouraged the applicants, as future neighbours, to respect the reasons for wanting to preserve the trees and the timeless quality of the street and the neighbourhood. Instead, the applicants

appealed and lost again.

We were not surprised when the "Lot for Sale" sign was posted a week later. It seems they obviously hadn't wanted to live here after all.

But we were devastated when a crew arrived early on Tuesday, Dec. 15, and cut down almost every single tree on the property. Eight mature and healthy 30- to 40-foot tall trees were taken down and an enormous hole was added to the Chautauqua tree canopy.

Why?
All of the trees that were removed were along the property lines, not hindering future development and had a beneficial effect on the adjacent properties. All of the trees had been healthy and thriving this last summer. There are only 10 houses on Luther Avenue and effectively, on Tuesday, Dec. 15, about 10 per cent of all the trees on the street were cut down.

Why?
Shockingly, all of the trees were legally removed. The vigorously healthy Manitoba maple and black alder were

listed as "nuisance" trees, and the thriving ash trees were considered "diseased," therefore exempt from the town's tree bylaw.

Does a "nuisance" tree produce less oxygen, sequester less carbon, provide less of an animal habitat or provide less shade? Why is a permit required to cut down a dead pine tree, yet a healthy Manitoba maple, part of the local tree canopy, can be removed without a permit? Is this a fatal flaw in our tree bylaw?

This is not the first property to be considered as a development opportunity. This episode was simply a brief and clumsy stop on a journey to make money, with some bad manners thrown in.

Whether the trees were cut down out of revenge, or to make the property appear more developable, the result is that Luther Avenue has been diminished. Chautauqua is poorer. The empty lot at 6 Luther, now, truly empty.

Victor Tarnoy
Chautauqua



Santa Around The Town parade kept tradition alive despite COVID

Dear editor:
Our family would like to thank the NOTL Christmas parade committee for keeping the Christmas spirit alive amid the COVID-19 pandemic and in a way that kept us safe from the virus that large crowds could easily spread.

Santa Around The Town stopped at my sister's rural driveway on Concession 2 and we, with our granddaughter and extended family, were able, while distanced, to continue to be part of a many decade long tradition to either to be part of the parade or to enjoy it as spectators.

Santa (was that Ward Simpson?) and his elves (town staff) deserve our appreciation for what start-

ed in Glendale as a three-hour tour and ended up in Virgil likely six-plus hours later into the dark.

Santa was atop a wide-open sleigh and was a real champ in the frigid, windy weather that was whipping over the vineyards. Being from the North Pole it must have been easy (not) for him.

Thanks to those who created an app that made it much easier for us, the more timid icewine veteran spectators, to arrive at the end of the driveway just a few minutes ahead of Santa's arrival.

Merry Christmas to all and to all please stay safe, Cheers!

Jamie and
Connie Slingerland
Rural NOTL

Old rifle range is a better solution to Ryerson Park traffic woes than Niagara Shores

Dear editor:
Using Niagara Shores Park to solve Ryerson Park's traffic problems seems like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.

It also seems totally unnecessary when another square peg that would make a perfect fit is available less than 100 metres away from Ryerson Park. That square peg is what used to be called the "rifle range."

This roughly 25 hectares of open grassland recently

purged of noxious substances and dangerous objects is similar to Ryerson Park in that it has access to Lake Ontario's beach and offers an identical view of the sunsets.

It is superior because of the amount of open space available and its distance from human habitation.

It will be a much more interesting place for visitors because it has Two Mile Creek and Carolinian forest on its flanks and is easily

traversed along an old military road.

The location also has additional attractions like the Americans landed there in 1813, Secord home-steaded there in the early 19th century and prehistoric people fished there.

It is also easily doable; the town simply has to obtain a memorandum of understanding with Parks Canada to convert the area into a recreation park.

Unlike Niagara Shores

Park, the erosion problem is being taken care of by the Department of National Defense. Also, unlike Niagara Shores, the ecological integrity of the area will not be threatened if the town uses it as a recreation park similar to its other recreation parks.

It has ample space for parking and public washrooms can easily be connected to the town's infrastructure. Access from Lakeshore Road is controllable and a

parking fee will take care of operating expenses.

Niagara Shores Park, on the other hand, is a fragile ecological jewel with one of the richest ecosystems in southern Ontario.

Parks Canada's new action plan has committed to conserving and protecting Niagara Shores' ecological integrity and has already begun to act toward that end by denying motorized vehicle access.

Research on the native

butternut trees and recognition that interference with shoreline erosion will jeopardize the bank swallow colony show just how seriously Parks Canada is committed.

This convinces me Parks Canada is much more likely to approve a request to use the old rifle range rather than Niagara Shores as a solution to Ryerson Park's recent user problems.

Ryder Payne
NOTL



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GermanChristmas.ca

Submitted
The Lake Report

GermanChristmas.ca is an online shop created in lieu of the beloved tradition of outdoor Christmas markets. What normally would be a stall selling Christmas ornaments, is now an online shop.

All of our products are handmade in Bavaria, Germany, by Inge Glas. For over 400 years the family-run workshop has used traditional techniques to produce beautiful glass products.

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to add a touch of old-world charm to your tree, the unique Inge Glas ornaments are just the thing. We offer free express delivery to Niagara-on-the-Lake residents.

Ronald Boaks Collectibles

Submitted
The Lake Report

Ronald Boaks Collectibles showcases and sells paintings, prints, still life photographs and sculptures. Artist Ronald Boaks has been exhibiting in Canada and the United States since 1976.

Although predominantly abstract, the work often references nature, using balance, colour and harmony to create pieces that are compelling and pleasurable.

The paintings are primarily acrylic on canvas, sculptures consist of unique combinations of found objects and the archival still life photographs combine abstract painting with vari-



Ronald Boaks' art gallery. SUPPLIED

ous objets d'art.

There are a wide variety of sizes and price points to choose from. Niagara Region residents receive a 25 per cent discount off the gallery price. Delivery and installation are included. Gift certificates are available.

Ronald Boaks Collectibles

is located at 1823 Niagara Stone Rd., near East and West Line in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Call 905-351-9424 for an appointment, or simply come to the red brick house for a personal viewing. Check out the website at ronaldboaks.com.

Pandaya Gallery

Submitted
The Lake Report

Pandaya Gallery at 91 Queen St. is a must-see Niagara-on-the-Lake destination, offering one of a kind jewelry, unique artifacts, textiles, furniture and carvings from around the world.

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fit everyone's interest and budget. Our store is open all year from Monday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please visit our store in person or online at pandayagallery.ca

Sweets & Swirls Café

Submitted
The Lake Report

Hello friends! Wow, what a year.

And, through it all, our community has stayed strong, thought local and brought an encouraging word to neighbours and the businesses that have been working through the changes to safely operate in an effort to get to "soon."

Sweets & Swirls Café, located at 14 Anderson lane, in the NOTL Community Centre, is one such business. Established in 2014, this family-run operation (Liam, Sophie, Daphne, Boo and Alexis), has witnessed the growth of the use of the centre, the camaraderie of



Erinn, James and the best potato peelers ever! SUPPLIED

the users, and the unfolding of new friendships.

We strive to continue to offer a daily café experience and foresee that our "to go" menu will operate for some time; perhaps permanently. Each week, we will

offer a different menu of items to be enjoyed at home ... and when it is best for you.

All the best. Erinn, James and the best potato peelers ever! Email us at sweetsandswirlscafe@gmail.com.

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Life in the pandemic

Death, disruption and maybe ‘the best Christmas present ever’

EDITOR’S NOTE: *Life since COVID-19 has changed for all of us. We’ve experienced hardships, heartaches and challenges, but also new and sometimes unexpected reasons to be thankful. This new Lake Report series will share some of the stories of NOTL residents as we all reflect on our experience of life in a pandemic.*

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

“It made my head spin,” recalls Jason Bendig, head of wardrobe for the Shaw Festival, recalling the moment in mid-March when everything changed.

One day, he was running the largest wardrobe team he’d had in four years, with 61 people working with purpose and intensity on costumes for “Gypsy,” “Prince Caspian” and “Sherlock Holmes.” Deadlines were looming since two more shows were about to move in.

“We heard some whispers

on that Monday, and by end of day Tuesday we were all at home,” he remembers.

Not sure what to expect, Bendig packed two suitcases with his show binders, or bibles as they’re known, with all the plans and designs for the three shows they were building, so he could continue to work at home.

As time passed, and the reality of the situation was emerging, so too did a demand for PPE, personal protective equipment.

“By early April, requests for PPE were coming in from every direction. We shifted gears, and with Shaw’s blessing, we moved to making two types of medical gowns.”

“My staff were superstars,” Bendig says. “We had two cutters and as many as 35 sewers working on the gowns. Some were going stir crazy and they were all happy to help.”

Bendig’s team made 1,500 gowns for health care workers, some of which went to the Niagara North Health Team.

The focus then shifted to masks and the team made thousands and thousands of masks from mid-May into July.

Throughout all of this, on a personal front, Bendig was being “super diligent about not seeing people, I didn’t even have coffee at a distance. That’s not a luxury we had.”

He was taking extra care to protect his elderly parents, William and Yvonne Bendig, who had been living with him the past two and a half years.

Bendig says his mother’s health was declining and by July she was in hospital. COVID protocols made access very limited.

“It was hard, only one person could visit at the time, so my father did most of the visiting, and I rotated with my brothers for some visits.”

Bendig’s mother remained in the hospital into the fall and died in November.

It’s always hard to lose a loved one and COVID added an extra layer of challenge. But Bendig says the pan-

demical circumstances also “allowed me to be home and be available for my mom.”

“It was a weird, odd blessing to have had this time and the flexibility to be there for her.”

He and his father have busied themselves with projects around the house since her death.

“Christmas will be small and quiet, but the house is looking very festive, decorating has been a distraction for us since my mom’s passing.”

The decor extends to the outside of their Virgil home as well. Bendig explains with evident pride in his voice, “My dad has made seven greenery gnomes. He’s very creative!”

Reflecting on life in this pandemic, Bendig says the hardest thing has been the isolation from other people.

He is optimistic about vaccines and says “the promise of normality coming is the best Christmas present ever. To be able to create again, to interact with people, and to have that sense of camaraderie, that’s the best.”



Jason Bendig, with two of the seven greenery gnomes his father William made. (Don Reynolds)

Happy Holidays!



Warren

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NOTLers' virtual walk to Cambodia raises money for Tabitha Foundation

Yolanda Henry
Special to The Lake Report

During this extreme time of COVID-19, six Niagara-on-the-Lake residents are helping to make a difference for the poorest of the poor in Cambodia – by making their workouts count.

Carol Clarke, Michele Darling, Chris Walker, Donna Lailey, and Mike and Yolanda Henry are part of an effort to raise \$150,000 for the Tabitha Foundation, which works to improve the lives of people in Cambodia.

It has been a difficult year for everyone and Cambodia is no exception.

It's not so much the COVID pandemic that threatens the lives of so many Cambodians, rather it's the economic repercussions.

Families are unable to repay microfinance loans because of the loss of jobs and income.

The current debt load per person is \$3,800 U.S., which is a staggering amount for the majority of people, who earn less than \$200 U.S. per month.

Children are being sold or land and homes are sold or seized. Lives lived precariously are once again being destroyed.

Staff from the Tabitha Foundation are on the ground working with over 6,000 of the poorest families to try to establish new sources of income by growing vegetables, raising animals or starting small businesses.

Through "My Virtual Mission," the team from NOTL has walked over 5,100 kilometres.

The goal is to help the team virtually reach Cambodia from Canada and raise a good deal of money for the Tabitha Foundation by Dec. 31 through a donation to join and support



Carol Clarke, Michele Darling, Chris Walker, Donna Lailey, Mike and Yolanda Henry are raising money for the Tabitha Foundation. SUPPLIED

from friends, family and sponsors.

In total, since the inception of the challenge in August, Tabitha's Team Canada has travelled 12,143 kilometres and has just 1,551 kilometres to go.

Team Canada has a total of 26 participants and donations are also coming from other foundations in the United States, U.K. and Australia. Even the Tabitha staff in Cambodia are participating by walking.

And the partici-

pants, \$2,347 short of the \$150,000 global target, are hoping the giving spirit of NOTLers can help push the team over the top.

The donations will help Tabitha continue to raise families out of poverty by providing wells for clean water, helping build houses and schools, and supporting women through cottage industry income and access to health care.

Donations can be made through Tabitha.ca/donate-now.

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This holiday season needs to be different.

The safest way to celebrate indoors is only with the people who live in your home. People who live alone can get together only with one other home.

Gatherings with friends and extended family can carry an increased risk of getting and spreading COVID-19. Consider celebrating outdoors or virtually with others that are not part of your household.

Know the gathering limits in your area before you choose to entertain with family and friends indoors. Indoor gatherings are not permitted in regions in Grey - Lockdown.

For all gatherings with anyone you do not live with:

- maintain 2 metres physical distance
- wear a face covering
- avoid potlucks or shared utensils
- ensure everyone washes hands regularly, including before and after meals

Self-isolate if you are sick, even if your symptoms are mild and ask guests to stay home if they feel unwell.

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A series of photos inside and out of the McArthur Estate at 210 John St. E. PHOTOS BY RICHARD HARLEY

15,000 lights make up McArthur Estate display

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

What does it take to deck the halls of a former Trisha Romance estate?

About 15,000 lights, some heavy machinery and a lot of people power, for starters. Not to mention a creative eye.

That's the challenge Cameron Cropper and his team face each year

to decorate the McArthur Estate at 210 John St. E. in Niagara-on-the-Lake — the former residence of renowned artist Trisha Romance.

"It's a good team effort. It's pretty large, there's about five, six of us who just go to town as soon as Halloween is over," Cropper said while giving The Lake Report a tour of the estate Friday.

The job requires special lifts to get the decorations high up in the trees around the house.

Cropper said he's been setting up the lights for about five years and it's something he looks forward to.

"I know when it's Christmas time. You know, Nov. 1 the Christmas music comes on and we get right to it."



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Restaurants welcome new 'takeout' alcohol sales

But some question restrictions on eateries when other retailers remain open

Julia Sacco
Special to The Lake Report

For many restaurants and wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the province's plan to make expanded alcohol sales permanent offers a welcome glimmer of hope.

Adam Dodridge, a long-time bartender at Corks Wine Bar & Eatery in Old Town, said he thinks the changes are necessary, COVID-19 or not.

"I think the liquor laws in Ontario have been too uptight for so long and this is a necessary step regardless of the pandemic."

Earlier this year, in the midst of the pandemic, the government temporarily permitted licensed restaurants and bars to sell alcohol as part of takeout or delivery orders. On Dec. 9, that became permanent.

Andrea Kaiser, director of marketing for Reif Estate Winery, said takeout alcohol will help restaurants be more prosperous during COVID-19.

"We're thankful that the restaurants are able to



Chris Rigas, owner of The Old Firehall in St. Davids, thinks allowing takeout alcohol is a "positive move." FILE PHOTO

pivot and find new ways with doing takeout and we know how important it is to modify your business model," Kaiser said.

"We are faced with sort of the same thing at the wineries so we appreciate that they need to do the same."

At Konzelmann Estate Winery, marketing director Andrew Niven also applauded the change.

"We're happy to see government making positive steps in supporting restaurants, a segment that has

been hit hard throughout the last year," said Niven.

"We hope that this is only the first of many steps in the continued support of the industry," he said in an email.

Many consumers seem to be excited about the new changes, with 73 per cent of Ontarians in favour, according to a survey conducted for the Toronto Star.

However, some restaurant owners think the changes simply won't make much of a difference – and aren't

enough.

Joe Marchese, owner of Twisted Vine restaurant in Virgil, said since March the restaurant business has certainly been affected by the pandemic but doesn't see much changing with takeout alcohol.

"I think the government is focused on the wrong businesses. You can go into (department stores) and they can make a living, but you can't go into businesses like mine who are following the rules, very sanitized. Why

do people have a fear of going to a restaurant versus a (store)?" said Marchese.

"I just think people should support local restaurants that are really doing a good job."

While he shares a similar sentiment, Chris Rigas, owner of The Old Firehall restaurant in St. Davids, noted allowing takeout alcohol is a positive move, but it has some drawbacks.

"I think it'll be a net benefit over the long term," but restaurants will have to

"figure out Smart Serve" requirements for selling takeout alcohol and monitoring who is ordering the liquor.

"You don't want to be delivering to a house full of kids. You have to be careful," said Rigas.

"The only thing that I'm worried about is that the province toyed with the idea of allowing the LCBO and Brewers Retail to use third-party apps, like SkipTheDishes and Uber Eats, to deliver liquor and beer and wines," said Rigas, "which will actually hurt restaurants rather than help them."

When patios opened in the summer, Konzelmann's orders increased but "with new dining restrictions in place there has been a noticeable decrease in order volume," Niven said.

November and December are typically strong months as restaurants host Christmas parties and group gatherings, he added.

"With that now gone, we're expecting to see the decrease in ordering continue," he said.



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How to be **happy** during a pandemic

Mike Keenan
Special to The Lake Report

For seniors suffering from the nagging effects of long-term incarceration inflicted upon us like punishment for white-collar criminals such as Conrad Black ...oops, sorry, make that Lord Black of Crossharbour, (we must maintain imagined dignity) pardoned by Donald “bone-spurs” Trump after writing a glowing biography of the president, I have a suggestion to boost your spirits.

No, not single-malt scotch, but that helps. Rather, it’s sports.

I’m pleased that all of the major professional leagues and teams have invented ways to work in a bubble or not to provide us, the viewing public, with much-needed diversion. We should all watch sports because of the way that they celebrate, good cheer spilling from the diamond, rink, court or field into our living rooms.

It’s not only sports’ reckless revelries, but the fashion in which they celebrate that warms the cockles of my heart. To illustrate, I will start at the bottom and



PIXABAY PHOTO

work my way upward to the pinnacle of merriment.

First, basketball. Where else can you watch guys 6 foot 8 tall jump for joy after sinking a three-point shot or jamming the ball through the net for a forceful dunk? Maybe African Maasai hunters get as excited when they kill a lion, but we are not usually privy to that. Basketball allows big men to act like little boys.

Next, hockey. To celebrate anything on the ice is not easy to begin with, but goal scorers enact a signature move, sometimes parodying a duck or a chicken and then skate by the bench for glove-to-glove congrats with teammates. In the old days when I played hockey, we tussled one’s hair, but helmets have ended that ritual. We are stuck with the fleeting leather embrace.

Moving up in Maslow’s hierarchy of happiness, we next encounter football players, who exhibit a variety of unique moves after scoring a touchdown in the opponent’s end zone. (Wouldn’t “The End Zone” make a great title for a Stephen King novel?)

First, we have tight ends and flankers who make a catch and offer ho-hum spikes of the ball as if they are saying, “I’m good. What did you expect?”

But then there are running backs, who work harder, smashing through multiple tacklers, following blockers to the promised land. When they arrive, they produce choreography worthy of the National Ballet.

And they involve their teammates, especially those big bruiser linemen who weigh in at 300 pounds or more but can outrun a horse for 40 yards. You witness impressive moves that you can relate to your grandchildren if you can get them momentarily off of their social media.

We arrive at the pinnacle of sports happiness, baseball. In baseball, you

get congratulated for pretty much everything you do, even when you fly out or ground out as long as you advance a runner.

The batter trots back to the dugout, head held high and he receives high-fives from everyone – the players, six coaches, two trainers, the batboy, a cop and the janitor – everybody!

A home run is grounds for joyous pandemonium. All of the runners on base and the batter in the on-deck circle wait patiently for the hitter to navigate the bases to give him a warm welcome home, and they parade the batter over to the dugout where it’s a repetition of the fly-out procedure, except more animated, as players move through various greeting rituals that make family reunion participants jealous.

Now, wouldn’t it be wonderful if municipal councils established dugouts throughout towns such that a plumber might get high-fives from a group of pleased citizens or a doctor or ... you get the picture. We would all feel needed and content.

I suppose that’s why many attend church. Imagine the results if, after confession, telling your sins to the priest, you emerged to receive from parishioners the same sort reception that Vladimir Guerrero gets when he belts a homer. Wow. I think attendance would perk up and we might see more young people for a change.

Yes, I have purposely omitted soccer. What’s the point of sliding on your knees and tearing off your jersey? It did get interesting when a young and robust female American soccer player did it in the Olympics, but don’t forget, the original Greek athletes competed in the nude!

*Mike Keenan belongs to the NOTL Writers’ Circle. Follow his podcasts: The Retirement Coach: <http://theretirementcoach.libsyn.com/> and Travel: <http://whattravelwriterssay.libsyn.com/>. His book, *Don’t Ever Quit: a Journal of Coping with Crisis & Nourishing Spirit*, is available in print & electronic format at Amazon.*



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Marnie Cluckie: Getting to

A small-town native with big public sector experience

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Marnie Cluckie says she'll be doing "a lot of listening" during her first 100 days as Niagara-on-the-Lake's chief administrator.

The mother of two has had a long career working in municipal and regional government, but this will be her first time as a CAO.

Right now, she's getting into the swing of things, meeting and getting to know her new colleagues and town issues.

Barely a week into the job, she has met with Lord Mayor Betty Disero and will have meetings with all councillors. She also has met virtually with many of the town staff.

"And then I've been doing a lot of reading and had a lot of briefings on what we have on the go," Cluckie said during a Monday phone interview with The Lake Report.

"But it's also important that you get to understand the unique culture that you're in and the unique challenges that you're faced with. So that's what I'm striving to do right now."

She said there are lots of reasons she chose to apply for the position in Niagara-on-the-Lake. A small-town girl herself (in the Haldimand-Norfolk area), she said the job provides "the opportunity to make some meaningful change."

"But also, I mean, NOTL is fantastic. It's got a huge amount of heritage. It's beautiful, it's vibrant, it's got super-friendly people as well. And it's built on this strong foundation, but you see the community really leveraging opportunities to advance itself," she said.

"So it's really, in some ways, a dream job for me, because it's got all of those components that make for a fantastic community."

Cluckie spent three years with the Region of Niagara Region and says NOTL is a place her family would travel for visits, "because of all it has to offer."

Starting the job during a pandemic is "unusual," she said — there have been negatives, like not being able to walk around and meet everyone to build rapport, but she says it's also given her a sense of the team she's working with, seeing how they respond in an emergency.

"You can tell when a team is strong by how they react to those bad situations. And this council and this community and the staff here really pulled together. So, in that way, it's been insightful for me."

She said the plan is to meet everyone virtually and stay connected through videos and emails.

Cluckie, who started out in construction, has had a series of progressively more senior roles over the past several years. She says NOTL isn't just a step-



NOTL's new CAO Marnie Cluckie, right, with customer service rep Marilena Basilone

ping stone to a higher role.

"I hope to be here for quite some time because it has all of those components that I think I can thrive in and that I'm passionate about."

NOTL's CAO position has been sort of like teaching defence against the dark arts at Hogwarts, with new CAOs coming in and leaving after only a brief time.

But Cluckie said it's the kind of job she's cut out for.

"I've worked in the public sector for over 15 years now. I'd say the real driver for that is because I want to make a difference in community," she said.

"And in local government, you're uniquely positioned to create that kind of change. I love the small towns. I grew up in a small town and I've pretty much always lived in a small town."

Cluckie lives in Port Dover, but she said she plans to relocate to Niagara in the summer, after her kids (16 and 12) finish the school year.

Also in her first 100 days, she plans to "set the vision" for staff moving forward and align staff to council's strategic plan.

"What I'm talking about is a vision

for the internal organization and how we align to that, and how we establish our priorities so that we can be successful. Because if everything's a priority, nothing is a priority," she said.

"So it's really important to focus your energies, especially right now during COVID, when everyone is so stretched. We have to be laser-focused on what we want to achieve ... so that we can be dedicated to the most pressing items."

"Of course, things will always come up and you have to be adaptable still. But if you're focusing on things, then you can achieve them. And then you can begin to focus on more things, right? It's like a rolling snowball, you get better and better at it if you really focus initially."

Some of those priorities will be the tourism, transportation and irrigation master plans.

"All of those will need to be achieved. There's more work to do on heritage designation of buildings. There's definitely continuing to create a sustainable budget, which is always a difficult one. And there's the asset management plan. And that's just to name a few," she said.

In her first six months, she plans to



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know NOTL's new CAO

ance plans to stick with the town for 'a long time'



is getting to know town staff after officially starting her new role Dec. 9. SUPPLIED

start to achieve that vision by setting "key performance indicators so we can measure our success, focusing which priorities we're going to work on, and then aligning the budget and the resources to it so we can achieve it."

“Perhaps most importantly, I really want to inspire and motivate my team to bring out the best in them, because everyone brings unique skill sets to the table.”

MARNIE CLUCKIE
CAO, TOWN OF NOTL

“And then longer term, monitoring our successes, achieving some of those longer-term items, like some of the strategies that we have in place, and course-correcting when we need to.”

Cluckie comes with a wealth of experience in construction, having been director of construction, energy and facilities management for Niagara Region and most recently wearing multiple

hats in Halton, including chief building officer for Halton Community Housing Corp. She said she's been involved with "countless" facility and construction projects.

When she worked for Niagara Region, the construction of a new courthouse in Welland was under her portfolio, as were the new police headquarters and 1 District police building in St. Catharines.

She's been involved in "all kinds of things, a whole bunch of recreational centres in Hamilton, Tim Hortons Field, city halls, so lots and lots of background in that."

She started out getting a degree in architecture.

"I worked as an architectural designer. So it's really, really important to me to maintain unique heritage elements and build on that strong foundation. That's one of the draws for me as well at Niagara-on-the-Lake is that heritage district and all those beautiful buildings."

She said she plans to be a champion for preserving the town's heritage and its "identity in general."

As for her management style, she said

she's "very collaborative."

"I like there to be a vision in place, so we're all working together toward common goals. I like to lead by example," she said.

"And I think people will say that I don't just talk the talk, I walk the walk. So I'm going to say what we're going to do and then I'm going to deliver on that with others," she said.

"And perhaps most importantly, I really want to inspire and motivate my team to bring out the best in them, because everyone brings unique skill sets to the table. So the best thing I think I can do is to help other people to shine in their roles."

Cluckie has worked in "male-dominated arenas" for most of her career and said she's a firm believer in equality.

"Gender equality, but just equality in general," she said. "I have a background in construction and energy facilities and government, where you'll often see it very male-dominated in the management area."

"I've been really fortunate to have been championed by and inspired by some really incredible women in management. So for me, it's important that I make space for other women as well. And that I help to mentor and coach them in their careers."

She added it's not just gender-based diversity she'd like to see.

"I think diversity in general is a really positive thing because it brings different perspectives. I like that there's also the opportunity to work with a multi-generational workforce, and with people of different backgrounds, because it offers all kinds of perspective. So, I hope to just encourage in general, diversity."

In her family life, she said she's a gymnast mom for her 12-year-old daughter, who is also a young entrepreneur, having been named Young Entrepreneur of the Year in Norfolk this year. Her son, 16, is a budding journalist who writes for Young and Free Press. "So they're very active in the community and busy, busy kids."

Interestingly, as Cluckie takes the reins in the hometown of the Shaw Festival, she notes she once had a leading role in a Binbrook Little Theatre production.

"The play that they were doing at the time, and this was many years ago, it was called 'Sirens.' I had the role of Rosa Adelle (Abrams)," she said, adding she hasn't acted in years. Her hobbies now are kayaking, hiking and being out in nature.

She said she hopes to be a lasting CAO.

"I want to be here for a long time. I'm passionate about small communities. I'm thrilled with what Niagara-on-the-Lake has to offer. I'm committed to being here."

RIDDLE ME THIS

I can be cracked, I can be made. I can be told, I can be played. What am I?

Last week: I am the beginning of the end, and the end of time and space. I am essential to creation, and I surround every place. What am I?

Answer: The letter "e"

Answered first by: Jason Baker

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Kathy Neufeld, Susan Hamilton, Julia Klassen, Howard Jones, Katie Reimer, James Hernder, Pam Dowling, Linda McD, Sheila Meloche, Wade Durling, James Langendoen, Kevin Etherington, Kristen Bastien, Sylvia Wiens, Debbie Ivson, Margie Enns, Elaine Landray, Dave Corbett

Email answers, with your name, to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to win a prize. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

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Chamber **Cancels** Icewine Village Festival due to rising COVID cases

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's annual Icewine Village festival has been cancelled. And you probably know why (COVID). The NOTL Chamber of

Commerce, which operates the event and had planned to do a COVID-safe "contactless" festival this year, made the decision to cancel it due to rising COVID cases, in the best interest of the community's health and safety.

"The safety and health of residents, visitors, and staff are paramount. In the best interest of the community and due to the increase in COVID cases, the downtown Icewine Village will be cancelled," said chamber president Eduardo Lafforgue.

"We hoped to make a safe version of the event, but it was decided to look for other options."

He said anyone looking to take in an icewine experience in 2021 should look for the Icewine Trail at Niagara-on-the-Lake

wineries.

The Village is expected to return to downtown in 2022.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero thanked the chamber for making the decision to cancel the event.

"While Niagara-on-the-

Lake is a proud host of the Icewine Village, we know this is the best decision in light of ongoing restrictions within the second wave. The health and safety of our residents is of the utmost importance," she said.

NOTL wins **prestigious award** for heritage preservation

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has been awarded the 2020 Prince of Wales Prize for its sustained commitment to heritage conservation over time.

As the winner of the National Trust for Canada's most prestigious prize, Niagara-on-the-Lake is being celebrated for its exemplary and effective revitalization practices and demonstrated results in bringing heritage to life.

"We are thrilled to receive the National Trust's 2020 Prince of Wales Prize," said Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

"It takes a large number of volunteers and public sup-



FILE PHOTO/RICHARD HARLEY

port to be able to maintain and celebrate Niagara-on-the-Lake's extraordinary heritage. On behalf of town council, staff and the passionate community members for whom we are forever grateful, I feel privileged to accept this great honour."

In keeping with Prince Charles' commitment to architecture, the environment and inner-city re-

newal, the Prince of Wales agreed to lend his title to the creation of the National Trust's Prince of Wales Prize in 1999.

The prize is awarded annually, recognizing communities and their local governments for the successful heritage stewardship of a town, city, rural region, First Nations reserve or community.

Niagara Foundation names NOTL residents as winners of 2020 **Living Landmark Award**

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

This year during a global pandemic, all residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake are being honoured with the Niagara Foundation's Living Landmark Award.

Typically the award recognizes one person's achievements in preservation of heritage and cultural landscape, someone whom the foundation believes has made an outstanding contribution to the quality of life in NOTL.

In this unusual year, the foundation board, led by president Michael Howe, decided it would be most appropriate to recognize "the resilient and co-operative spirit of all citizens of



FILE PHOTO/RICHARD HARLEY

Niagara-on-the-Lake who strive to live in unity as one unique community."

In normal years recipients are hosted at an annual dinner at Navy Hall in November. This year due to the pandemic there will be no dinner, but instead the foun-

datation is congratulating all citizens of the town.

Last year's winner was Gracia Janes.

There are three silver maples and a plaque dedicated to past winners, located in the Commons along the southern pathway.



Wishing you and your family a very happy and safe holiday season!



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Former Olympian Elaine Tanner spreads message of kindness during holiday season

Julia Sacco
Special to The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Elaine Tanner is extending her book's message of kindness, friendship and love by donating the book to area schools, hospitals, day cares and more.

Tanner, a swimming medallist at the 1968 Summer Olympics and a member of the Order of Canada, self-published her children's book "Monkey Guy and the Cosmic Fairy" with the help of husband John Watt in 2015.

And has spent the past five years working to spread its message of kindness.

"We decided that it wasn't an enterprise that we wanted to get into monetarily. We decided that the message was far greater than anything we put into it value wise, as far as money is concerned, so we ended up basically donating them to all kinds of different organizations," said Tanner.

"Locally, we gave to Crossroads Public School



Left: Elaine Tanner swims in the 1968 Summer Olympics. Right: Elaine Tanner. SUPPLIED



here, two boxes and two boxes went to the firehall here, a box went to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre so they distributed that and then there was an emergency services that two boxes went to for Niagara-on-the-Lake."

This year, more than ever, Tanner said she believes people can learn the lessons from her book of enjoying simplicity and caring for others.

"I honestly hope that this COVID is going to make people actually stop and pause and instead of run-

ning off to the malls and thinking that they have to buy stuff, to really enjoy the simple joys of life and to re-evaluate what is important," said Tanner.

This message of compassion hidden in a magical tale of a "little monkey and the love he has for his being named Louis" is timeless and impactful regardless of the reader's age.

"There was a lovely lady who picked up a book here and she emailed me this morning and she said that she wanted to give a donation to the Santa Claus Fund

in the Toronto Star because John and I do that each year," said Tanner.

These small acts of kindness and generosity are what Tanner finds most rewarding from those who read her book.

"It's the simplest little thing that you do," she said.

"It doesn't have to be a big thing, just a small thing and pass it on. If we get all these little rocks that you throw into a lake and we ripple out, that ripple will affect more and more people, so that's my wish with the book."



Sandra Iafrate's studio. SUPPLIED

Artist Sandra Iafrate opens studio to public

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake artist Sandra Iafrate is inviting people to come visit her home art studio until Dec. 23.

She said the event is "one-of-a-kind, one-at-a-time" with masks required.

The open house will allow people to see the gallery of her new original paintings and some print work, plus some hand-made artisan items, she said.

Some other locals artists are featured as well.

"This year, I have these wonderful artisans, Chris Hartman and Robbie Schmidt from A Third Space Pottery Studio in St. Catharines, Colleen Hubert of Gracelette Textiles, Robyn Kennedy, Goldsmith and Custom Jewelry of Rubyblue Jewelry and Wilma Olive-Mills, chocolatier.

Anyone wishing to stop by can book a time online at www.sandraiafrate.com or give her a text or call at 289-696-2789 or drop by the gallery located at 368 Gate St.

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It has been our privilege to both serve and be a part of this wonderful community. Our heartfelt thanks go out to all the great people we've had the opportunity to work with this year.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

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Left: Eric VanNoort and his mother Sharon. Right: Eric has 49 staples in his head after his brain surgery last week. SUPPLIED PHOTOS

VanNoort healing up after brain surgery for epilepsy

Continued from Front Page

neurosurgeon, Dr. Taufik Valiante.

“And he’s a super, super solid guy,” said VanNoort.

Before the surgery at Toronto Western Hospital, VanNoort presented Valiante with a cheque for more than \$13,000 to go toward epilepsy research. Valiante is part of a foundation called Neuromodulation Research Fund which researches the disease.

The money was raised through a fundraising campaign by his mother Sharon VanNoort.

Eric said he was awake for a lot of the surgery — though, with heavy pain medication he remembers very little of it.

“The weird thing is remembering specific noises, like medical tools, like obviously hearing them talk. I remember seeing the anesthesiologist, who was basically there making sure that I was pain-free.”

The surgery was painless, minus feeling a bit of pressure when they started to open up his skull.

“They told me from the beginning that once they start touching the brain, I wouldn’t even feel it,” he says. “I didn’t feel anything.”

“The only feeling I guess I can kind of remember is the way that they cut

it open. They cut it on a curve, then they open it like a flap. And then they cut the skull out. I remember the pressure between probably my skin and everything that they had covering across my face.”

VanNoort’s previous brain surgery, last February, was to find out if he was a candidate for the craniotomy. He was in the hospital for more than a month, from Feb. 7 to March 8.

“That was an awful time. I tell you that right now ... just because I was there so long.”

His craniotomy was exactly 10 months later.

“So this last time was for monitoring. So they had 14 electrodes, they had seven in each side. And I was basically just there. They slowly took me off my medications and I was waiting to have a seizure. So the electrodes that were in my head would monitor my brain activity and record the brain activity.”

“I had to go in by myself. Because of COVID, nobody was able to come in with me. It was weird walking in there by myself to go in there for a craniotomy.”

As for how he felt heading into surgery, VanNoort had one word: ready.

“When I first talked to people about the surgery in the first place, I wasn’t

at all interested in doing it. But I remember I talked to my neurosurgeon, and when I spoke to him he asked me, ‘What changed your mind about the surgery?’ And I remember I said to him, ‘Well, if it could possibly help, I’m ready to do anything.’ I just want my life back and everything. I want to drive again.”

What helps him stay positive, he said, is the support of his family and friends, and “looking towards an end game” when he may be seizure-free.

He said the surgery is pretty safe, with small chance of a stroke or hemorrhaging, but what concerned him more was the possibility of having a seizure during the surgery, which he said doctors told him has happened before.

“That’s why they have an anesthesiologist there. And obviously, there was probably eight or nine doctors, nurses,” he says.

Since he’s been home he said he’s received lots of support from friends, though he’s laying low and taking it easy.

Right now, the “entire right side of my face is swollen. I’m not really feeling 110 per cent, so I’m not really seeing a lot of people.”

He said it will be four to eight weeks until he’s healed. “Probably longer,”



Happy Holidays!

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all of my clients, friends and neighbours here in NOTL a very happy and healthy holiday season. Whether you are able to celebrate in person or remotely with those closest to you, may you cherish every moment and count every blessing while staying safe.

Let's all look forward to a new year filled with hope and good health!



Cheryl Munce
Sales Advisor, NOTL
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he said, as he has 49 staples in his head.

“Thankfully I have a good family, that’s for sure. Because if I wasn’t with the family I do have, I would be on the streets or dead probably,” he said.

One struggle he’s faced is being denied disability benefits twice, even though he isn’t working due to the debilitating seizures and surgeries, not to mention the possibility of having a seizure while at work.

“There are a few (seizures) that I had at work so I felt I started to become like almost a liability in the workplace ... next thing I’m gonna have a seizure and pour coffee on guests or something like that.”

He said he’s still unable to go on disability.

“And when I spoke to my family doctor about that, right away he said ‘get a lawyer.’”

He sings praises of the doctors and nurses that have worked on him. “To-

ronto Western has to be one of the greatest hospitals out there,” he said.

Despite his struggles, VanNoort is in good spirits.

“You’ve kind of got to look at it in a positive manner and laugh at yourself, too, sometimes.”

If all goes well over the next year, VanNoort said he wants to get a Toyota Fore-runner — a change from his green Camaro.

“I love driving. I had my fancy sports car, with the Hot Wheels symbols on it. I’m a really big kid.”

“I got in a lot of trouble in that car. But that’s OK. Got in a lot of trouble, had to pay a lot of money for stupid stuff I did.”

Sharon VanNoort said she’s proud of her son and is happy to have him back home safe.

“Right now I am so happy to have him home. It surprises me — well, I shouldn’t say I’m surprised — I think I have one of the strongest young men that I

know,” she said.

She said it was particularly hard not to be able to be by his side when he went to surgery.

“Getting that phone call at four o’clock that everything went great was pretty awesome. They said neurologically everything went really well and he could move his extremities, he was talking,” she said.

“Once we heard that it was a huge relief.”

She said she’s taken some time off work to stay home with Eric while he recovers.

“You couldn’t ask for anything better. We just have to wait now and see if it worked. The whole community has been with us, with prayers, vibes, whatever, good energy. We’ve been getting it, so this has got to have worked.”

“My husband and I are going to save up now. We’re going to start saving for him for a car.”



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St. Davids, Queenston fire stations to be consolidated

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Once the St. Davids and Queenston fire stations reach their end-of-life, the two will be consolidated into one station.

Council approved the consolidation Monday night at its committee of the whole meeting, as well as direct-

ing fire Chief Nick Ruller to "limit future investment into the affected fire stations to repairs/replacement of critical components only, and improvements related to health and safety."

The report estimated the stations would reach their end of life by 2030.

Ruller also was asked to report back to council once a

suitable property for the future consolidated fire station has been identified and to provide a report on the feasibility of expanding the current St. Davids facility to accommodate the consolidation.

Ruller will work with the director of corporate services to develop a funding strategy for the future consolidated fire station.



Queenston fire hall. FILE

Developer Benny Marotta seeks \$1M in damages from town

Continued from Front Page

the best engineering solution. Judging by the town's actions, that didn't matter," Marotta said.

The town approved the use of the lot for a commercial plaza on Sept. 17, 2018, while the subdivision itself had been draft approved on April 10, 2017.

"At some point between draft and final approval of the subdivision, the town merged the strip with the larger condominium block, and allowed the strip to remain in private hands without regard to our servicing needs. This was in complete disregard of best servicing practices and is shocking

given the municipality's obligation to act in the public interest," Marotta said.

His company alleges the town also approved a road into the subdivision that is 15 metres wide, contrary to the town's urban street design policy which requires a minimum width of at least 18 metres.

"While we were not notified of the merger of the narrow strip when it was happening, we had actually asked the town not to compromise the strip and interfere with our servicing. We were ignored. The town's actions created significant servicing issues that could have been avoided."

Marotta said the owner

of the subdivision has now agreed that the narrow strip will be separated from the condo block and conveyed to the town, "meaning that best practices servicing, which is in everybody's best interest, the public interest, can now be done."

"This is all we pursued right from the start," Marotta said.

However, despite the agreement with the private subdivision owner, Marotta said he will seek damages from the town for delaying his project.

"Even with the planned conveyance, the fact remains that we have incurred damages as a result of the delay caused by the town's

actions. As of now, the lawsuit is based on a claim of negligence. If we later determine that the town's actions were intentional, our lawyers will amend the law suit accordingly," Marotta said.

"It's unfortunate that we have had to take such costly and draconian steps to facilitate a properly serviced development in the town. Had the town acted properly in the first place, none of this would have been necessary. We hope that this lawsuit will bring home to the town that it cannot treat people this way."

The town did not respond to questions about the lawsuit before press time.

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Obituaries

William Humphries



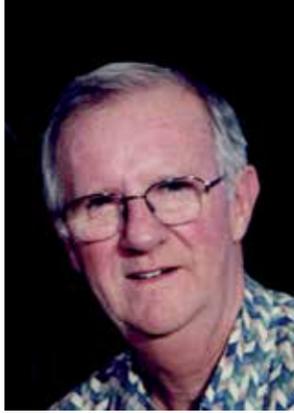
**WILLIAM BRIAN
GEOFFREY HUMPHRIES**
September 13, 1943 –
December 9, 2020

Quietly at Toronto. Predeceased by his beloved wife of 24 years, Renata Leigh (McCarthy) Humphries (2018). He was interred in the family plot on December 14, 2020 at Toronto's Park Lawn Cemetery .

Educated at Upper Canada College where he was the captain of the championship cricket team and where he made many lasting

friendships. He then attended Trinity College at the University of Toronto, 6T6, where he formed other lasting friendships which took him to become a supporter of the Gardiner Museum, the Shaw Festival, the Canadian Opera Company, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum, Craft Ontario, the Jackman Institute of Child Studies, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Library, St. Mark's Anglican Church and the Niagara Historical Society and Museum, as it once was, and many other cultural, educational and charitable organizations. A true gentle man who, following a career at Canada Packers (now Maple Leaf Foods), devoted the remaining decades of his life to a second career as a most significant and instrumental supporter of multiple indigenous causes. He was the founder of Ignite the Spirit of Education (Ottawa) and a supporter of the Wabuno Centre for excellence in Aboriginal Health. His energy made him an exhausting person to be near but he was inexhaustible in his endeavours on behalf of education for, the correcting of injustice for and advocating reconciliation for and on behalf of First Nations people. May he rest in peace.

Donald Laird



It is with great sadness that the family of Donald Robert Laird announces his sudden passing at home on the 28th of November in his 85th year.

Predeceased by his son Andrew.

Don will forever be missed by Emma Shelia, his beloved wife of 61 years. Also sadly missed

by his children Alison (Scott) and Nicholas (Jay) and his grandchildren, Andrew (Sara), Steven (Meghan), Andrew, Amanda, Ross, Katie (Matt), Alex (Jess), Emma (Dan) and Jen (Gerard).

Don was born and educated in Scotland and earned his C.A. degree from the Edinburgh Institute of Accountancy. He will also be sadly missed by his sister Diana, family, cousins and friends in Scotland.

Cremation has taken place and interment will be a private family service in the Spring.

*An Honest Man Here lies at rest
The friend of man, the friend of truth
The friend of age, and guide of youth
Few hearts like his with virtue warmed
Few heads with knowledge so informed
If there's another world, he lives in bliss
If there is none, he made the best of this.*

- Robert Burns



The Pumphouse is looking for a mystery artist who is spreading Christmas cheer. SUPPLIED

'Mystery Monet' sought

Continued from Front Page

curiosity of nearby residents, including Pumphouse board chair Lise Andreana. "I was enjoying my walk when I came across not just one but a series of Christmas-themed artwork hanging on the lamp posts. What a lovely gesture to give to the community at a time when we need it most," Andreana said in a message to The Lake Report. "I was pleasantly sur-

prised by this impromptu art show that brought a smile to my face."

The Pumphouse is encouraging the artist(s) to reveal his or her identity, and is offering up a complimentary family membership to the arts centre as a reward for promoting art in the community.

If the mystery painter is reading this, the Niagara Pumphouse can be reached at office@niagarapumphouse.ca or 905-468-5455.

During the holiday season more than ever, our thoughts turn gratefully to family and friends who fill our hearts and homes with the spirit of love, laughter and good cheer.

Wishing you peace, love, and joy this Holiday Season.

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- 11. Sift (5)
- 12. Italian little one (7)
- 13. Covered with water (5)
- 14. Thin fogs (5)
- 17. One or the other (6)
- 18. Receiving device (6)
- 19. Gemstone (4)
- 20. Separated (6)
- 22. Vast (6)
- 25. Inspires dread (4)
- 26. Best (6)
- 29. Swordsman (6)
- 31. Forest god (5)
- 34. River horse (Abbr.) (5)
- 35. Doctors (7)
- 36. Obscure road (5)
- 37. Chocolate ingredient (5)
- 38. Place in order (7)
- 39. Pertaining to the kidneys (5)

Down

- 1. Unsustainable boom (6)
- 2. Curved sword (8)
- 3. Long-haired cat breed (8)
- 4. Derby venue (5)
- 5. Consumers (5)
- 6. Make happy (6)
- 7. Adventurous expedition (6)
- 8. Universal in extent (8)
- 15. Irreverence (7)
- 16. Baby powder (4)
- 20. Prediction (8)
- 21. Individual facts (4)
- 23. Capsize (8)
- 24. Tubular pasta (8)
- 27. Themes (6)
- 28. Line on a weather map (6)
- 30. Dared (6)
- 32. West Welsh seaside resort (5)
- 33. Saudi Arabian currency (5)

Crossword Puzzle

Last issue's answers


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Ross' Ravings: Horse and carriage go together like ...

Carriage drivers will donate a portion of revenue to Newark Neighbours from Dec. 21 to 29

Ross Robinson
Special to The Lake Report



Dannie and Jason Jamieson from Oakville got engaged last December in the Just Christmas shop on Queen Street. For a COVID-19 getaway this winter, they returned to NOTL for a spa weekend and a horse-and-carriage ride. ROSS ROBINSON

Who are we to argue with famous crooners like Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Dinah Shore? The theme song of "Married ... with Children" reminded that a carriage needed a horse to pull it. Listen to some of the simple lyrics:

*Love and marriage, love and marriage,
They go together like a horse and carriage...
This, I tell ya brother,
You can't have one without the other.*

Read the lyrics again. Yes, from years ago, and naturally our thinking has changed ... Let's try to understand the thoughts of others.

During COVID-19, I have had some interesting conversations with people in the NOTL horse-and-carriage business. Horses have been instrumental in the development of our modern societ-

ies. Each horse provided one horsepower. Now, one muscle car can have a macho 425 horsepower engine. Or am I wrong?

Well-trained horses helped us win the First World War and lumberjacks needed them to operate lumber camps. Canal horses pulled ships through our Welland Canal. How about building our railroads, and the Budweiser Clydesdales delivering the King of Beers? Royal Weddings in London?

Not without spectacular open carriages, pulled by highly trained, handsome horses.

Our RCMP Musical Ride! I have seen it four times and each time my heart swells more.

But I digress. Stay with me. I am providing context for this meaningful local story.

The horses pulling carriages in our town never dreamed about winning the Queen's Plate or the Kentucky Derby. They are not thoroughbreds, not lean and

fast, not bred to race.

Our clip-cloppers have been domesticated for thousands of years. They are bred, not a wild breed. Today, draft horses are in less demand, as tractors have taken over on the farms. Time marches on.

These gentle giants are strong and willing to work. Ben, my favourite NOTL horse, is 16 now, "working part-time in his retirement job."

Before this gig, he laboured as a plough horse on a Mennonite family farm. Now, Ben lives on five acres of yummy land, in a herd of six other horses. He is a leader, patient, kind and firm. Happy, well-fed, good vet service when needed, and a dry place to sleep and relax.

These draft horses need to work to stay healthy. Pulling a carriage is easy work for them. The carriage horses in NOTL are respected and loved.

To earn their keep, they help to make beautiful memories for visitors to our historic village. Why do so many people love a horse drawn carriage ride? It is slow, quiet and calming. An iconic link with the history of NOTL, where thousands of horses were readied for overseas service in faraway wars.

The carriage Ben pulls is driven by Ronda Lincoln and was creatively decorated for Christmas by Emily Mays. She owns the classy and unique shop called Spade and Sparrow on King Street, next to Balzac's. A determined entrepreneur, with a mostly local clientele.

Now, in keeping with the spirit of giving, even during these challenging times, NOTLers have a win/win/win opportunity to enjoy a wonderful outdoor activity. From Dec. 21, the winter solstice, until Dec. 29, two of our friendly horse-and-

carriage drivers will continue to "give back."

Ronda Lincoln and Don Herron are offering to raise funds for Newark Neighbours. So, between Dec. 21 and 29, enjoy a ride on Ronda's or Don's carriages. They will donate \$15 per ride to Newark Neighbours.

Let Ronda explain why she enjoys driving a carriage in NOTL. "I love meeting people and I love animals. This job combines the two and it gives the horses a meaningful purpose. Some children are seeing a horse for the first time, and learning a bit about the history of transportation. Often an anniversary, in one case 71 years! So special."

So, NOTLers, I have said my piece. Times change. Thanks for reading this story. Merry Covidy Christmas.

Bring your COVID-19 bubble buddies and enjoy a physically distanced, win/win/win horse-and-carriage ride.

Dr. Brown: The science of exercise and effective workouts

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the Infohealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library. Dr. William Brown Special to The Lake Report



PIXABAY PHOTO

In the 1980s through to the early 2000s, Harvard, Tufts and Boston universities developed an exercise program designed for women whose ages ranged from their 20s to their 90s.

The investigators wanted to know whether a modest strength-training program using simple in-home devices, including a few free weights, could significantly increase the women's strength and reduce the risk of fractures. Both goals were achieved, even for those in their 80s and 90s.

One of the principal investigators – Miriam Nelson – went on to write several popular books based on the findings of the study, of which my favourite was her first book, "Strong Women Stay Young." Unfortunately, the investigators ignored the role

the brain plays in exercise.

I learned to downhill ski in my late 20s and remember my shaky beginnings – first master the snowplow and shortly thereafter, stem turns.

What was obvious then, was how quickly most skiers learned within a few days to make their first tentative parallel turns, even if it took much longer to make those turns look and feel effortless under all conditions and different slopes.

Those visible and felt changes were all about the brain learning how to co-ordinate the activities of muscles throughout the trunk and limbs, to make what was at first a conscious, effortful challenge into something

experienced skiers are barely aware of, except for the pleasure of swishing down slopes and carving turns that beginners marvel at.

Experimental studies of the brain in rhesus monkeys when they learned new motor tasks revealed what you might expect.

Brain activity related to learning a new task was at the outset poorly focused and co-ordinated and tended to involve large areas of the brain.

And persistent repetition of the same task was associated with increasingly better focused and co-ordinated neural activity within the neocortex as the brain learned to carry out the assigned job more efficiently and fine-tune its activity in response to feedback from cues within the brain, muscles and elsewhere.

In one study the relative contributions of the brain and muscles to learning a new motor task was assessed. The earliest changes were expressed in how the brain controlled the muscles involved in the task – not in the muscles. The latter changes

took several weeks to develop.

The earliest increases in the force with which voluntary muscle contractions were carried out were the result of the brain making adjustments in how the muscles were activated by the brain, by changing the firing rates and activity patterns of motor nerve cells in the neocortex and spinal cord and recruiting synergistic muscles to the task.

These and other studies of voluntary motor tasks illustrate the primacy of the brain in any motor activity, whether running, biking, playing tennis, swimming or strength-training. The muscles are important, of course, and often change their metabolic and contractile properties in response to training – but those changes are secondary to the underlying activity patterns governed by the brain.

Three points about any exercise program are important.

First, choose programs that involve as many major muscle groups as possible, such as the trunk and limbs at the same time, because those programs

provide the best training buck for time spent.

Second, find a time and whatever programs you adopt – and stick to both.

Third, if you intend to use exercise as a tool for improving your cardiopulmonary fitness, you need to periodically increase the intensity of the exercise to a level that safely, but significantly, increases your heart rate.

Runners accomplish this by picking up their pace at intervals – so-called interval training. The same periodic increases in effort should be adopted with road or stationary bikes, elliptical trainers or for that matter, strength-training.

The importance of intensity is illustrated by the effectiveness of short, intense training sessions. One popular example of which is the seven-minute workout training program, which involves 12 separate exercises, each designed to train different muscle groups carried out for 20 seconds and followed by a 10-second rest period before moving on to the next exercise in the series.

These short, but intense,

training programs work because each exercise is carried out at a high intensity – more than enough to get the heart and respiratory rates up in the aerobic range.

Finally, while cross-country skiing may exemplify the principle of engaging as many muscle groups with as little impact on joints as possible, it's hardly a practical solution here in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Excellent indoor equivalents include elliptical trainers and, to a lesser extent, treadmills and stationary bikes. But whatever you choose, you need to remember to pick up the pace at intervals if you want to achieve those heart-lung benefits.

Finally, sometimes it helps to enlist the advice of a fitness trainer, especially if you are not familiar with the pros and cons of different training devices and how to get the best out of each while avoiding injuries.

You might want to check out that book by Miriam Nelson and have a look at the seven-minute workout.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for a very fit 2021.

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Randwood: Contributions of the Dunington-Grubbs

This story is one in a series about the history of the Rand Estate, about 35 acres of land lying behind the stone wall on John and Charlotte streets, along the Heritage Trail and whose eastern boundary is a hedge between the properties at 176 and 210 John St.

Elizabeth Masson
Special to The Lake Report

George Rand II (1891-1942) followed in his father's footsteps and became a banker.

He began working at the Marine Trust Co. in 1916. After a number of mergers, by 1929, it had become the Marine Midland Corporation with branches across New York state and Rand serving as president.

In 1922, he married Isabel Williams. They had three children: George III, Isabel and Calvin. The elder Rands were frequently seen in town in their Pierce-Arrow cars (which were manufactured in Buffalo); Mrs. Rand's caramel-coloured car had her initials engraved on it. Older residents of town also remember the Rands for their lavish fireworks display on the Fourth of July.

Shortly after George Rand's wedding, his sister Isabel married Col. Henry Sheets. Rand's wedding present to them was a house built at the former Rowanwood location near the corner of John and Charlotte streets.

This white frame house was built in the Colonial Revival style, an architectural style which had become popular following the Philadelphia Centennial exhibition in 1876 although the greatest number of houses in that style were built in the 1910-30 period. While it was primarily based on the symmetrical Georgian style, it was often mixed with various other English house styles.

The Sheets House has a large front verandah whose roof serves as a balcony; both are surrounded by Chippendale-style railings.



The front walkway at Randwood shows some of the Dunington-Grubbs' work, including the small pond with statue. ELIZABETH MASSON PHOTO

A loggia on one side of the house is balanced by a conservatory on the other, maintaining its symmetrical appearance. Three dormer windows have been placed in the roof. The main rooms in the interior all have classical fireplaces and the dining room is decorated with well-preserved wallpaper depicting a garden scene.

It is not known precisely when the foremost landscape architecture firm in Ontario, the husband-wife team Dunington-Grubb, were hired to work on Randwood but it is likely to have been in 1919, shortly before George Rand I's death.

The earliest of the sketches or blueprints pertaining to Randwood in the Dunington-Grubb Collection at the University of Guelph archives is dated 1928. But there are many undated documents which, as shown in photos of the grounds, had been built well before 1928.

Lorrie Dunington (1877-1945), after studying garden design for two years at a horticultural college in England, decided she wanted to be a landscape architect, a profession for which there was no formal training at the time.

However, she gained

the necessary knowledge through private lessons and technical courses, eventually opening an office in London. It was very successful.

In 1910, she met another landscape architect named Howard Grubb. They married the next year and decided to combine their last names, being known as Lorrie and Howard Dunington-Grubb.

The Dunington-Grubbs moved to Toronto in 1911 and immediately became busy with commissions for new homes there. Two years later, they founded Sheridan Nurseries [https://sheridannurseries.com/about/company-history/outside Oakville](https://sheridannurseries.com/about/company-history/outside-Oakville) on 100 acres of land. By 1926, it had grown to 250 acres and had a wide range of trees and perennials.

They were known for incorporating the work of well-known sculptors into their garden designs. Eventually, the Dunington-Grubbs were to design many acclaimed gardens in the Toronto-Niagara area, including the one at the Old Mill Tea Room, those at the entrance to McMaster University, the Rainbow Bridge Gardens and Oakes Garden Theatre in Niagara Falls, as well as the grounds at Park-

wood in Oshawa, home to Samuel McLaughlin, the founder of General Motors Canada.

The work at Randwood includes the magnificent central axis which leads from the main wrought-iron gate on John Street to the front door of the house.

A long, cut-stone path leads to a small set of stairs that descend to an oval pond in the centre of which is a small statue, about a metre high. The statue is that of a girl sitting on a stone pillar facing the house.

One Mile Creek, which meanders across the Rand Estate grounds and eventually empties into Lake Ontario, appears to flow through the pond although it is actually diverted slightly below it.

The central walkway, after being interrupted by the pond, then ascends some stairs and ends at the porch in front of Randwood.

Many of the Dunington-Grubbs' designs were situated behind the house. The swimming pool, 20 feet wide and 60 feet long, was the first one to be built in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Next to it, was placed a pool pavilion with a shingled roof, held up by pillars.

Nearby, a small white building in the shape of a Greek temple was situated; it is sometimes referred to as a tea house and at other times as a bathhouse.

According to an article in a "Canadian Homes and Gardens" magazine in 1930, a pergola covered with pink rambling roses served as the entrance to the garden area composed of miniature flower beds.

A list of perennials that the Dunington-Grubbs used in their gardens is voluminous including yarrow, anemone, alyssum, bellflower, bleeding heart, candytuft, maltese cross, iris, phlox, and many others.

Two other structures whose design is not attributed to the Dunington-Grubbs were built near the swimming pool when George Rand II owned Randwood.

The guest house was damaged by a fire in the 1970s; it is now a storey-and-a-half stucco building with an irregular roof design. Next door to it is a two-storey stucco garage; the upper story has accommodation, which the chauffeur could have used.

The wooden doors on the ground level through which automobiles would have entered have dia-

mond-shaped windows.

Not far from the garage is a building known as the Coach House. Likely constructed by the Dicksons in the Gothic Revival style, it has a steep gable roof with decorative trim attached. The door and windows are surmounted by elliptical arches.

Because of George Rand II's interest in farming, a second barn was built in 1936. One storey high and U-shaped in design, it is similar to the other outbuildings on the Rand Estate in that it is made of stucco and has diamond-paned windows.

It was placed on the southern edge of the estate, not far from the wall along the railroad tracks.

George Rand II died in 1942 at the age of 51; his wife Isabel continued to spend summers at Randwood until her death in 1950. Their three children, George Rand III, Isabel and Calvin inherited Randwood..

Elizabeth (Betsy) Masson has been a research volunteer at the Niagara-on-the-lake Museum for more than 15 years.

More Niagara's History Unveiled articles about the past of Niagara-on-the-Lake are available at: www.niagaranow.com



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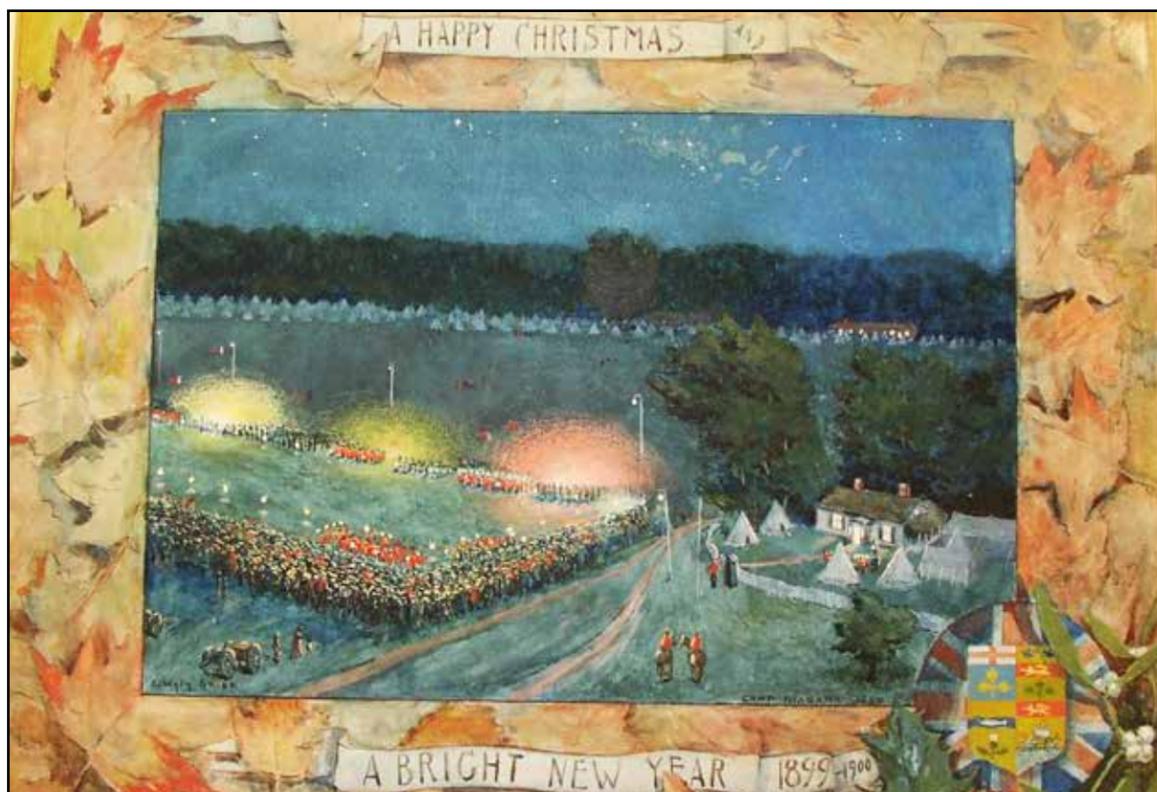
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EXPLORING PHOTOS
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Christmas in NOTL

This watercolour shows Niagara Camp on the Commons in 1899. The detailed work depicts a celebration within the camp with bright lights and soldiers in formation for the Christmas holidays. The painting was created by Sir Edmund Wily Grier, who was a Canadian portrait painter. Merry Christmas from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum!

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This year has been difficult for all of us, some more than others. Instead of giving an extra gift to you with purchase of a giftcard, we're giving that little extra to all the food insecure families in Niagara-On-The-Lake thru the Newark Neighbours food bank by sending each family a holiday feast.

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Contact editor@niagaranow.com

ARCHITEXT

The details matter

Brian Marshall
Columnist



Candle in the window. BRIAN MARSHALL

At the risk of making an understatement, I've got to say that it has been quite a year.

Despite all the COVID crazy, it's actually been a landmark for NOTL heritage.

As many of you might be aware, after languishing derelict for more than 50 years the Breakenridge house at 240 Centre St. is being rescued courtesy of a new owner who has committed to saving what is likely the oldest unaltered two-storey cubic form Regency house in Canada.

Completed in 1823, it was the third and last of the houses built in what was

then the town of Niagara for local barrister John Breakenridge (remarkably all of which have survived).

While his 1816 Loyalist Georgian and 1819 Neo-classical were classics of their respective architectural styles, the 1823 Regency house was meant to be his crowning glory, stating that he had "arrived" as a member of the town's gentry.

While the individual who designed this home is lost to time, he was a master of his craft and the 1823 Breakenridge house is purely and simply a gem.

Understand that for a Regency building to achieve aesthetic excellence, the

scale, balance, proportions and order must be precisely correct. There are no decorative details that can be used to obscure a mistake and, on this house, none were needed.

While delayed by COVID, work on the house began in September. Our first priority was to stabilize the structure. Quite simply, in the opinion of the experts from Masonry Restoration Canada, the house was months away from collapse.

It took three months of solid work to correct the damage that 54 years of neglect and shoddy 20th-century interventions had caused. Sections of the wall

literally fell apart when addressed and every single lintel (including the massive limestone lintel above the front door) needed to be reset. Challenges aside, it has been done (follow the whole story at: www.heirloomhomeguide.ca/rare-unique-storied).

A week ago the first of the new historic reproduction windows was installed and, for the first time since 1966, sunlight graced the home's interior.

Filtered through restoration glass that creates minimal distortion from within but presents mouth-blown qualities from the street, the windows establish a decorative element that the original designer would surely have embraced.

So, for the first time in decades, the 1823 Breakenridge House has candles in the windows for Christmas. This to wish you a safe harbour, a welcome home and a blessing to you and yours as this year turns to the next.



The Museum will be closed for the holidays from December 18 to January.

Happy Holidays!

43 Castlereagh Street | 904.468.3912 | nhsm.ca





WISHING YOU

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

AND A SAFE AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR

FROM ALL OF US AT

The
Lake Report