

The Lake Report

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Hyper-local news for Niagara-on-the-Lake



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Marotta to appeal court decision on Rand Estate heritage designation

Richard Harley
Editor

Benny Marotta and his companies are appealing a Superior Court decision to dismiss an application to quash heritage designation on all four Rand Estate properties, The Lake Report has learned.

The companies, Solmar Development Corp. and Two Sisters Resorts Corp., filed the appeal documents on Wednesday.

The properties in question have been contentious since Marotta revealed plans for a hotel and subdivision. An opposing resident group called Save Our Rand Estate has been very vocal about its stance against the proposed developments, and was awarded party status in the case.

Marotta says now he wants the decision to be made outside of Niagara, in a Toronto court.



A revised site plan for the Rand Estate shows the current estate building beside a proposed new hotel and conference centre. SUPPLIED PHOTO

He says he believes the Superior Court made "several serious errors of law and fact in rejecting our argument that the heritage attributes identified by the Town are impermissibly vague."

Whether or not the appeal will hold, he said "It would be presumptuous to say the least to speculate on the outcome of a proceeding before the province's highest Court."

The initial written judgment by the Superior Court said the matter should be taken to the review board because it's the current

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Council debate grows testy over service delivery review

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

As the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is in the process of examining how it delivers services to residents, some councillors have expressed concerns on how much they should be involved in the project.

Council in December approved hiring Deloitte, a multinational professional services network, for \$197,500 plus taxes, to conduct a service delivery review. The total cost of the project was funded through

a Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing grant.

During a one-hour workshop Monday, Deloitte representatives Tony Hamer, Sarah Ban and Matt Colley explained the scope of the project and answered questions from councillors.

The purpose of the project is to enhance the town's fiscal responsibility, transparency and sustainability, modernize service delivery and improve service levels to allow the municipality to become more efficient, reduce future costs and meet the current and long-term



Coun. Clare Cameron's motion to see a draft report on the town's service delivery was voted down by councillors Monday. A formal decision still has to be made at the council meeting Feb. 24. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA/FILE PHOTO

needs of residents.

Colley and Hamer will lead the project along with the town's senior management team members, while the town's project liaison Bobbie-Jo Talarico and Deloitte's Ban will be responsible for day-to-day project management.

By the end of the project in March, the consultants

will prepare a report with recommendations that will focus on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the town's operations.

The project has six phases and includes analyzing current services, engaging with internal and external partners, identifying key

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Parking on Queen Street has residents and business owners seeking solutions from council. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

No quick fix to parking problem, council says

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A bird feeder put up by a mystery person is now broken at Niagara Shores Park on Lakeshore Road. BRITTANY CARTER

Bird feeders destroyed at Niagara Shores park

Story on Page 3



St. Michael Catholic Elementary School teachers strike Tuesday morning. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

Catholic school teachers return to picket line

Story on Page 8



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Service delivery gets council heated

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gaps and how services can be delivered, presenting opportunities for improvement, estimating costs and making financial projections and preparing a final report.

Once council receives Deloitte's report, any changes could realistically be implemented by 2022, Hamer told councillors.

"Three years is a good starting point. You do have to be looking at a little bit more long term, five or 10 years, but we also live in a world where council itself is on a four-year term," Colley added. "Three years is long enough. You've got to be thinking in those increments in order to get what you need done during your term."

During a committee of the whole planning meeting later that evening, Coun. Clare Cameron made a motion regarding the project.

The first part of the motion was to ask the consultant to facilitate engagement with local business owners, advisory committees, customer experience and technology committee, and members of the public.

The second part was to have Deloitte provide

weekly updates through the councillors' information package.

The third part was to receive a draft report before a final report is submitted to the council.

Cameron said she was concerned they would be left with a final report that councillors and community residents, whom council represents, wouldn't be happy with.

"If there's a gap that might be missed or subject area that's getting missed, I think it's very important that we have that draft in front of us to give that feedback," she said.

Some councillors were divided on the motion, with Lord Mayor Betty Disero saying she wouldn't support seeing a draft beforehand because she wants an "honest, objective" opinion of how the town provides its services.

"I would feel very robbed of my \$200,000 if members of council start to pick and choose which parts of the report they like and what they want to change ... I do not want to have it politically tainted beforehand."

Couns. Gary Burroughs and Wendy Cheropita disagreed, saying councillors



Council debates about the service delivery review have gotten testy. DARIYA BAIGUZHUYEVA/FILE PHOTO

need to see the draft report. Coun. Norm Arsenault supported the lord mayor, saying there's enough expertise among the town's senior management team to run the show and councillors don't need to be involved with the draft report. But he said he would support a motion to see weekly updates.

Coun. Allan Bisback warned councillors to be careful and asked them to trust the consultants.

"You can always be critical later if they don't deliver it," Bisback said. "But don't try and tell them how to do their job every week."

The discussion got a little heated when Cameron said it was unusual to see councillors slugging each other and she was "extremely dismayed" to hear insinuation from the lord mayor that members of the council might "be dishonest."

At that point, Disero said she didn't imply that anyone from council would do that but people might see it as "political background manoeuvring."

"I'm trying to tell you, do not interfere with the report by the professionals because I think it's inappropriate," she said. "I don't want members of council to feel that I'm pointing a finger at them. It is a general rule for council."

Earlier during the workshop, Deloitte's Colley said the firm will be able to attend council meetings to provide updates on the project.

"We are certainly happy to communicate as frequently as council requires," he said. He also noted the consultants could provide a summary of key findings and, based on council's feedback, finalize the draft report.

Two parts of Cameron's motion – to include weekly updates in information report packages and to facilitate engagement – were approved by councillors. The third part, regarding a draft report, was defeated.

The formal decision still has to be made at council's next meeting, on Feb. 24.



Marotta to appeal Superior Court decision on Rand Estate heritage

Continued from Front Page

channel for developers. When asked why he wouldn't let the Conservation Review Board handle the case, Marotta's lawyer Michael Melling said it's because the review board "has no jurisdiction to make a finding of illegality," in an email response to questions.

Last week Marotta told The Lake Report he is interested in working with the town on the hotel design plans for the Rand Estate. When asked if he thinks the appeal might cause a further rift between the town and his companies, Melling said Marotta has made three written settlement proposals

to the town.

"(The proposals) amply demonstrate our clients' desire to work collaboratively with the town and resolve all of the issues. We remain hopeful that this will happen, if the town comes to the table," Melling said.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said council hasn't had an opportunity to speak with the town's legal counsel since the court decision was rendered.

"We'll be doing that soon, and making whatever decisions we need to at that point," Disero said.

"I don't like to prejudge anything, and I don't like to put out a position until I've talked to my lawyers," she said.

Instant flood warnings now available for Niagara residents

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

People who live in Niagara-on-the-Lake can now download a free app on their mobile phone to get instant notifications of flood warnings.

The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority is the first organization in Ontario to adopt the app, called Alertable.

"If we anticipate a flood, current practice has been to email first responders, municipalities, and media, and then rely on media to alert the public," explained Steve Miller, senior manager of water resources for the NPCA.

"With Alertable, we can send that same message directly to residents, who will get the warning instan-

taneously. This is a very exciting new technology."

Warnings will continue to go out through the media, too, he said.

The NPCA had its first opportunity to try out the app on Nov. 27, when there was flooding predicted on Lake Erie because of extremely high winds. The conservation authority used Alertable to "send notification of the magnitude, height of waves, duration of the event, as well as advice for those near the shoreline to drop their storm shutters, use sand bags, and stay away from the shoreline," said Miller.

The system is geographically based, "so we sent the flood warning to people within half a kilometre of the shoreline. It's very targeted," he said.

The ability to target warnings geographically means users only get notifications of dangers that are relevant to them. The app can be downloaded from Google-Play or the App Store, and users can select settings for the locations they want to see notifications for.

Alertable has been widely used in Western Canada for many years. It was created by Public Emergency Alerting Services Inc. and was used to warn people of danger during the 2013 Calgary floods. During the 2016 wildfires in Fort McMurray, some 150,000 people used the mobile app to stay informed and safe, according to Jacob Westfall, chief technology officer for the app's developer.

Environment Canada is the "primary issuer of



A new app is available to let Niagara residents know of potential floods. FILE PHOTO

alerts, for extreme weather such as tornadoes, high winds, heavy rain or snow," said Westfall.

The app has 600,000 users so far, concentrated mainly in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and NWT, he said. There are 10,230 users in Ontario who currently rely on alerts from Environment Canada, and now have ac-

cess to the recent addition of flood warnings from the NPCA, he said.

His company is "in active discussion with other conservation authorities," so flood warnings on the app may soon be available in other parts of the province, said Westfall.

The NPCA typically issues a dozen flood notices

each year, according to Miller. With Alertable, "those notices will be transmitted directly to residents, telling them what's happening and what they should do."

Miller hopes "everyone" will download the app, because "the more notice people have, the better they can respond."



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Town still knows little info about new Rand design: **Disero**

Lord Mayor says more details needed on overall plan before town can comment

Richard Harley
Editor

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has received new design plans for the Rand Estate, but Lord Mayor Betty Disero says more details are needed before she can comment.

Artist renderings of the new look, first revealed in The Lake Report on Jan. 30, don't actually show whether the proposal meet the requirements of a 2011 bylaw governing development on the property, she said.

The issue is further complicated with active legal matters between the town and hotel developer Benny Marotta, owner of Solmar Development Corp. and Two Sisters Resorts Corp.

"It would be wrong for me to comment on the design until all the documents that the planning department needs are submitted," said Disero. "All it is at this point is a picture, and we need to find out more



A photo illustration of a proposed hotel on the Rand Estate. RICHARD HARLEY

information. I have no idea of the number of rooms, I have no idea of the amenity spaces."

"So the planning department, I think are waiting on extra documentation. I don't want to prejudge any discussion that will go on between the planning department and their expertise."

Disero said she isn't fully aware of all the documents that still need to be submitted, but said there would likely have to be a heritage

impact assessment and a comparison between what the current bylaw allows and what the developer is asking for.

"We can say whatever we want about a picture, but there are technical issues that need to be dealt with as well, and the impact on the heritage of the property," Disero said. "It would be wrong for me to comment before I know all the details."

Marotta said in a statement that he's "looking

forward" to working with the town. Disero said she's sure staff will get to a position where they'll talk to the developer, but she declined to say more because of ongoing legal matters.

"I don't want to do anything to undermine the process that we've been put in with respect to this development. I can't all of a sudden go, 'Oh, well, you've got all these appeals in, but let's talk' until I talk to my lawyer."

'Unapproved' bird feeders **destroyed** at park

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Unapproved bird feeders that were installed along Niagara Shores Park near Lakeshore Road have been vandalized and taken down.

The feeders were installed by someone without the knowledge or consent of Parks Canada, which owns and maintains the park, Parks Canada official Brett Levitt said.

The feeders were not initially removed by the organization, but after being informed about the vandalism, Levitt said a site inspection was conducted and plans were made to remove the remains of the vandalized feeders.

"Parks Canada would like to take this opportunity to inform the public that we take issues such as



A bird feeder put up by a mystery person lies broken at Niagara Shores. BRITTANY CARTER

vandalism very seriously and will continue to explore ways to ensure safety at Niagara Shores Park," a statement from Parks Canada said.

"We would also like to inform the public that the installation of bird feeders and other amenities at Niagara Shores Park or any

other site in Niagara-on-the-Lake requires written permission from Parks Canada."

Levitt said the bird feeders and their method of installation were not approved by Parks Canada and could have a negative impact on the health of the trees.

"The agency is commit-

ted to protecting ecological integrity of our sites while providing high-quality and meaningful experiences to visitors," he said.

Parks Canada encourages anyone interested in conservation restoration at any of its sites to contact pc.niagaraont.pc@canada.ca or call 905-468-6614.

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Contributed by Norm Arsenault:
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Contributed by Patty Garriock
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Editorial

Journalists don't answer to public relations depts

Richard Harley
 The Lake Report

On Tuesday, The Lake Report and, presumably, other media organizations, received the following email from the town's communications department:

*Good morning,
 Just a reminder to please refrain from contacting Lord Mayor Disero and town staff directly with questions, requests for comment, points of clarification, setting up phone interviews, etc. All media inquiries should be directed to me, and I will gladly reach out to the appropriate staff members and respond to your requests as soon as possible. Please note that we will do our very best to respond as promptly as possible; however, adequate time is needed to gather all applicable information.*

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your co-operation ...

While the intent might seem friendly, and even helpful, the reality is, when journalists are seeking information, they aren't doing readers any favours in the ways of getting the truth, if they are to rely solely on communications officers and public relations specialists.

In case that isn't clear: Journalists do not want information that's been fluffed and filtered. We want the truth, in real, human terms.

News doesn't always happen on schedule. When answers are needed, sometimes time is of the essence. The town's communications staff do an excellent job helping the town get its message out. But the more filters that news and information goes through before it reaches readers, the more opportunity there is to manipulate and massage the message. That might be a reason why the PR industry is booming while news media organizations are suffering.

So, The Lake Report will continue

to directly contact politicians and town officials when we feel it is necessary. We won't apologize for this.

If politicians and town staff members do not want to answer questions, we will simply publish that fact if it happens. For instance, one member of council, Stuart McCormack, often refuses to comment to us on issues when we solicit his opinion. It happened again this week on the subject of parking in Old Town, and whenever it does, we simply say that he declined to comment.

Thus far, our Lord Mayor Betty Disero has been extremely helpful and willing to take phone calls from all of our staff members. We feel we've always held true to journalistic principles of fairness, accuracy, and do not play a game of "gotcha" journalism.

When lines of communication remain open and transparent, it results in a clearer picture of any story for both journalists and readers.

editor@niagaranow.com



Let's stop NY company's plan to dump PCBs into Niagara River

Dear editor:
 Residents of NOTL share the Niagara River with residents of the towns of Lewiston and Porter in New York State. I am blessed, every day, to live in a home overlooking our shared river and your beautiful town.

For 18 years, local governments, schools, farmers, environmental groups, residents and our neighboring Tuscarora Nation have worked to end the disposal of PCBs and toxic waste at the CWM Chemical Services, LLC site here.

While operating its landfill, CWM generated treated wastewater containing PCBs, mercury and other contaminants, discharging roughly 20 million gallons each year directly into the Niagara River.

Although CWM (a subsidiary of Waste Management Inc.) reached capacity

and was forced to close in 2015, it has an application pending to locate a massive new landfill here, large enough to accept nearly 100 per cent of all U.S. annual process waste generated.

Restarting a toxic waste landfill operation would also restart the discharge of 20 million gallons of PCB-laden wastewater into the Niagara River each year.

This isn't a "not-in-my-backyard" issue.

U.S. and state agencies all agree there is no need for a new PCB and hazardous waste landfill, because there remain decades of unused capacity available while demand has declined over the past 35 years.

However, these facts did not prohibit CWM from making an application to New York State for a massive new landfill in 2003, an application which is in

New York Report

Toxic Dumping Ground Looks to Spread the Pain



A New York Times article. SUBMITTED

the final stages of decision-making before the state government.

After a four-year hiatus, CWM conducted a one-time discharge of 30 million gallons of residual wastewater into the Niagara River in 2019.

However, because wastewater volumes decline sharply after a landfill closes, CWM is unlikely to discharge to the Niagara River ever again – unless its application is approved.

The parties objecting to this application have engaged experts in differing disciplines to testify in

the final phase of decision-making this year.

The experts for the group, Residents For Responsible Government Inc., rely on private funds and could use your help.

First, may I encourage you heed the call from The Lake Report to donate in support of this valuable news source.

Then, may I ask you visit the website, RRG-WNY.com to consider contributing to the effort to protect our beloved Niagara River.

Thank you.

Amy Witryol
 Lewiston, NY



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OPINION



Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Let's **improve** Canadian competitiveness through tax renewal and updated process

Gary Zalepa
NOTL Regional Councillor

With over seven years working on municipal councils, I have come to the conclusion that Canada's method for funding all levels of government needs major structural change.

Taxation models created almost 100 years ago are no longer serving our needs and are negatively impacting delivery of government services and infrastructure development.

Our current funding model for municipalities, based on property taxes, including a disjointed collection of transfer payments, grants and tax credits, that have devolved into a series of handouts, is impossible to understand, accountable to few, and it's effectiveness is questionable.

The current reality is not sustainable financially nor politically, and is weakening our domestic competitiveness.

It is an accepted truth that municipalities are hubs for modern economic growth and job creation. But ours struggle to fund and deliver priority services. Like world class education, health care, affordable housing, poverty reduction, all essential to attracting quality labour.

These services, along with public infrastructure, roads, water systems and sewers are needed to accommodate population growth and the necessary labour expansion that this country needs. Let's address these challenges and unlock Canada's

economic competitiveness, by fully engaging the municipal powers of economic growth.

Over the last century, government service delivery has evolved with our federation. Societal needs have changed as well. Today's public service offering is sophisticated.

Let's take public health and social services as examples. Deliverables are dictated constitutionally by the province, national standards set by the feds but service is delivered by the municipality.

If that is not disjointed, further, they are funded in combination by federal transfer payments (if available), provincial income and sales taxes, and municipal property taxes (with some exceptions for the City of Toronto).

This reality, a hodgepodge combining grants/handouts is dysfunctional and lacks long-term, strategic thinking. It all leads to improper resource allocation, inconsistent service delivery, and more concerning, a politicization of funding priority services.

For example, a municipality has various capital infrastructure needs, managing hundreds and thousands of public assets from bridges to water plants to various public buildings.

In our history, federal and provincial funding accounted for, in some cases over 75 per cent of the capital costs to construct many of these assets. Fast-forward to today and many of these

assets are past their life expectancy and municipalities are having to fund replacements using property tax revenue, development-related charges, debt and unpredictable federal/provincial grant programs, such as the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund.

(As noted in a Jan. 30 story in The Lake Report, that provincial fund is providing NOTL with more than \$800,000 for infrastructure repairs, part of some \$200 million being distributed to 424 municipalities.)

Property tax revenue, with its artificial, misleading definition of market value, does not follow the natural economic cycle. It does not track with growth or inflation, nor does it spread funding over the broad society.

Property taxes are not appropriate tools to fund municipalities' modern day responsibilities. As an illustration, consider the cost of one ambulance. Costs include vehicle acquisition, maintenance, insurance, fuel, staff, etc. These costs adjust every year through economic cycles. If the revenue to pay for them does not match, very quickly you negatively impact service delivery. Complicate this dilemma further by reducing/removing a provincial grant or federal transfer payments. I think you get the picture.

What can be done?

Adjust tax policy so that specific government services are funded by

assigned tax revenue tools. Achieve enhanced service effectiveness, through stable funding and improved accountability. Eliminate the finger-pointing of the past, where each level of government blames the other, and improve the public value received for taxes paid.

Tax restructuring at all three levels is required to meet that goal. A combination of policy adjustments could include:

- * Minimum tax-free income provincially and federally, set just above the poverty level (Ontario's LIFT Program, as an example).

- * Shift funding from property tax to sales tax for those services deemed most appropriate and create a clear apportionment of revenues between the province and municipalities, with assigned targets and objectives.

- * A federal and provincial income tax change, to a flat rate model, with no deductions.

By developing a sustainable revenue model for the entire federation, one that brings all levels of government into a more constructive/equal relationship, Canada can then best compete on the modern global stage, improving our competitiveness, providing services our citizens require and raising the quality of life collectively for us all.

Gary Zalepa is regional councillor for NOTL and chair of the Region of Niagara budget committee.

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Marotta has made repeated offers to settle dispute

Dear editor:

As one of the lawyers for Two Sisters, Solmar and Benny Marotta, I would like to respond to the claim in Mr. Derek Collins' opinion letter that my clients have "shown no inclination to negotiate an acceptable resolution" (The Lake Report, Jan. 30).

First, Mr. Marotta participated in a long, videotaped meeting with SORE in March of 2018. You can watch it on their website.

Second, I publicly stated at the last Local Planning Appeal Tribunal pre-hearing in NOTL that my clients want to settle this case, and I called upon the town and SORE to come to the table. That has not happened. My clients remain willing and await the same from the town and SORE.

Third, my clients have recently unveiled a revised proposal for the hotel, which has met with overwhelmingly favourable response on social media, but was immediately derided and dismissed by SORE supporters without so much as a chance for dialogue.

And, finally, as will shortly become public knowledge in court filings, my clients have made not one, not two, but three formal written offers to settle.

If any of them had been accepted, the number and cost of legal proceedings would have been dramatically reduced.

Not only were none of them accepted, but none of them was even responded to.

Michael Melling,
Partner, Davies Howe LLP
Toronto

Like parking, pedestrians also a problem in Old Town

Dear editor:

The article by Brittany Carter and Dariya Baiguzhiyeva, ("In depth: Queen Street parking a royal mess"), in the Jan. 30 issue of the excellent Lake Report is long overdue, but any discussion regarding parking in the town should include the other related burning issue of pedestrian traffic management.

The two issues go hand in hand.

Specifically, whilst circling the town looking for a parking spot, I get increasingly frustrated with the number of pedestrians appearing from all sides from between parked cars, not looking, not caring or waving apologetically.

Sooner or later someone is going to be injured or killed and, of course, the motorist will be to blame.

The problem is compounded with delivery trucks parked in the centre of the road, cabs using parking spots at the LCBO as a taxi rank, e-bikes taking up parking spots and the lack of crossing points for pedestrians to safely cross on Queen Street. Plus there's enforcement of jaywalking laws.

Don't get me wrong, I am not in favour of closing off Queen Street.

Rather, sort out this mess by considering solutions such as parking garages and others outlined in the article and, of course, designated crossing points.

Peter Warrack
NOTL

Support for town in law suit by developer

Dear editor:

As a resident and taxpayer of Niagara-on-the-Lake, I am represented in all municipal matters by the elected town council. In response to your Jan. 23 article, "Hummel sues town for \$500,000 over development freeze in Old Town," I would like to express my viewpoint with respect to the claim by Rainer Hummel against town council.

While I have no expertise on the subject of municipal affairs or the complexities of the interim control bylaw, I do have a personal opinion on several issues contained in the report.

To begin with, the present town council, on being elected, inherited many issues that previous councils had failed to act on. One very important one was, of course, a means of governing development in the interests of the residents before those of the developer.

Faced immediately with the appearance of rapid and uncontrolled development, and challenged by the controversial Randwood development as envisioned by Solmar Development Corp., it is obvious that council required time to gain an understanding and control of a complex situation.

Regardless of all of the legal arguments and technical issues involved, I support the town council in its decision to enact the interim bylaw. To even suggest that this was done for fun reaches the height of silliness.

Mr. Hummel claims that the bylaw is illegal and that simple argument alone provides him with the opportunity to launch a lawsuit for \$500,000.

It will be noted, obviously, that this money comes, not from the pockets of council, but from the resident taxpayer and means that there is that much less that can be spent on other needed local services.

This disturbs me greatly and I am sure that others feel much the same. Of course, this is of no apparent concern to Mr. Hummel and his self-interests.

He acknowledges that municipalities are given the right to enact the interim control bylaw from the province and this presumably gives them the final right to determine its duration regardless of any previous undertakings allegedly given to him, but he argues without explanation that in this case it is without proper jurisdiction and is for an improper purpose.

The remaining comments contained in the article appear to me to be either irrelevant to his specific claim or are typical and common self-serving complaints made in the interests of the developer and offer no proof that council has acted wrongfully.

Finally, as Mr. Hummel himself has recorded elsewhere: Rules (in other words laws) are for the obedience of fools and the guidance of wise men. (Brickhill). What an interesting comment coming from him.

Derek Collins
NOTL

Excellent story on Old Town parking mess

Dear editor:

In your latest edition dated Jan. 30, an excellent article written by Brittany Carter and Dariya Baiguzhiyeva ("In depth: Queen Street parking a royal mess") speaks volumes about the broad-based concerns of our local residents.

This is supported by local business interests such as Peter Earle of Halley's Fashion for Men, whose position I totally support.

We are forever being encouraged to shop locally and support our local merchants, yet, as pointed out, we are discouraged by numerous restrictions which conflict with well-intended support efforts.

For example, and in concert with the parking time issue addressed in the article, I broached the following with Lord Mayor Betty Disero during the budgeting review process:

* All senior citizen residents should be issued free parking stickers.

* Increase the free parking times for all residents from one hour to four hours.

Clearly the current one-hour period is insufficient and does not afford the opportunity to visit the post office, do some shopping or have a coffee, etc.

To my knowledge, council ignored this proposal. All seniors, mostly on fixed incomes, received was increased taxes.

In conclusion, the majority of residents have no sway at town hall – only the self-interested tourism industry, hotel and B&B types.

Which begs the question as we focus more and more on tourist dollars: Where is the saturation point regarding parking etc.? Can we look forward to parking meters outside every home in residential areas?

Samuel Young
NOTL

Criticism was aimed solely at U.S. pensions, not U.K.

Dear editor:

In my letter published in your Jan. 30, edition addressing UK indexed pensions, I incorrectly inferred that I was being critical of ALL spousal apportioned payments. This was totally unintentional.

Clearly, I intended to criticize U.S. spousal pensions only. They fought a war to rid themselves of the British and were rewarded with indexed pensions.

My apologies.

Samuel Young
NOTL

The Lake Report welcomes your letters to the editor. Please, write early and often. Letters ideally should be under 400 words long. Occasionally, longer letters may be published. All letters may be edited for conciseness, accuracy, libel and defamation. Please include your full name, street address and a daytime telephone number so that authorship can be authenticated. Only names and general addresses (eg. Virgil, St. Davids, NOTL) will be published. Send your letters to editor@niagaranow.com or drop them by our office at 724 Mississauga St., NOTL.

The Lake Report



Pauline Reimer Gibson
Audiologist

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NOTL's Old Winos release **first album** Friday

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

After eight years of providing regular live entertainment to locals and visitors at the Old Winery Restaurant, the Old Winos band is releasing its first studio album.

Formed in 2012, the band is comprised of a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident and songwriter Steve Goldberger, a longtime drummer Dave Norris and veteran guitarist Mike Glatt.

The trio performs at the Old Winery every Friday night, with different guests joining them on stage every week.

Now, the band decided to come together to record and compile some of its regularly played tunes into an album called "The Old Winos and Friends."

Goldberger described the album as a blend of folk, rock and country genres.

"It's a reminder of what we do. If you're into country music or folk music, I think (people) will like it," he said.



Niagara-on-the-Lake resident and songwriter Steve Goldberger in his studio in Old Town. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

Featuring Andrew Aldridge and Chris Altman, the band will perform some of the album's tracks at Old Winery Restaurant on Niagara Stone Road starting at 9 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 7.

Of the 11 songs, two are originals. The first track, "Weekends With The Local Fringe," was composed by Goldberger, while the second track "Hallelujah" was written by Goldberger's friend Katherine Wheatley. The rest are

covers of songwriters such as Steve Earle, Bob Dylan, John Hiatt, Rodney Crowell, Johnny Cash, and others.

Creating the album took about a year. The trio did three recording sessions at Goldberger's studio in Old Town before laying down bed tracks (a song's foundation consisting of drums, bass and rhythmic instruments) and inviting some of the regular guests from all across the country to provide vocals or play an

instrument.

"It was more of a collaborative effort, which I really enjoyed. Everybody's more involved with an arrangement and how we do it," Goldberger said.

This will be his 10th independently released album.

"That's rewarding, having it done after a year and a half of working on it," he told The Lake Report.

The album can be purchased through stevegoldberger.com.

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Even more letters

Marine unit thanks NOTL for its help

Dear editor:

Too often, this space is devoted to letters complaining about one arm or another of government, lamenting some perceived injustice. This isn't one of those letters.

I am writing to express the sincere gratitude of the members of South Shore Search And Rescue for the efforts of a number of local governments that have come to our aid after last year's flooding of our facilities on the shores of Lake Ontario.

We extend our thanks to the Niagara Region for offering us winter storage for our fast-response rescue boat.

We are similarly grateful to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for a warm and dry space to preserve, sort and store the equipment and supplies needed to keep two rescue boats in service. And to the Town of Lincoln for the offer of a longer-term home for our small boat and all of our supplies.

We would also like to acknowledge councilors Randy Vaine and John Dunstall of the Town of Grimsby and Sarah Sweeney, director of parks, recreation and culture for the town, for their efforts on our behalf.

As volunteers saving lives on the water, we depend on the support of the communities we serve. We continue to be grateful for that support.

Doug Mephram
Deputy unit leader

Grimsby Auxiliary Marine Rescue Unit (GAMRU)
South Shore Search And Rescue

At 94, Mabel is still a force in duplicate bridge

Dear editor:

NOTL's Mabel Hunter celebrated her 94th birthday in January with the Thursday night duplicate bridge club.

All of our bridge players have a great deal of respect for Mabel as she plays bridge competitively and continues to be a daunting opponent.

Mabel is one of the founding members, and the only surviving member, of the Thursday night duplicate bridge club which started ca. 1975 with four couples.

They were: Harry and Helen Dawson, Gordon and Mildred MacMillan, Al and Vera Derbyshire, and Eddie and Mabel Hunter.

The group of eight first started by meeting in each other's homes but then, as others wanted to join them, they moved to the Legion where it cost \$10 to rent space for the night to play.

When Harry Dawson was on council, he wangled it so they could play for free at the NOTL Community Centre, so they moved there. When the new community centre opened in 2011, the club moved to the Simpson Room.

Mabel's husband died in 1994 and since then, Mabel has played regularly with Barb MacGowan. The club continues to flourish and grow with Pat Braun running it as director.

Usually, about 40 or more people come out to play on Thursday nights. The cost of membership is only \$10 a year, with a fee of \$2 a night to play, one of the best bargains in town for a fun-filled evening with friendly people.

If you place in the top two or three that night, you get to



Mabel Hunter (right) turned 95 in January. SUPPLIED

play for free the next time. Just because Mabel is 94, doesn't mean she has lost any skill at the game.

At the Jan. 23 game, she placed second. She's still sharp as a tack and don't think you can get away with anything when you compete against her.

Watch out ... don't be surprised when you find out that she cleverly led away from her King! Tricked again!

She can outwit the best of them!

Marlene Walther
NOTL

NOTL: SPECIAL WINTER EDITION

The Lake Report's winter magazine highlights some of the best places and things to do in NOTL.

You can pick up a physical copy at all restaurants, hotels and businesses or you can visit our office at 496 Mississauga St. in Old Town.

NOTL'S CHOICE AWARDS

You took the time to nominate your favourites, now it's time to vote on the best businesses, organizations and individual professionals in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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Old Town parking a problem, councillors agree, but there's no quick and easy fix, so far

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors say they're open to discussing parking concerns raised by local business owners, employees and tourists but the issue isn't likely to be resolved anytime soon.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said she doesn't think offering free parking in a low season would make a big difference and she doesn't want to lose parking revenue if the impact of that decision would be "minimum."

"People want to be right on Queen Street and I don't think if we stop charging for parking, it's going to encourage tourists to come," she said.

The town is looking at different possibilities, said Coun. Wendy Cheropita, noting town councillors are aware of the issue and it will be addressed.

She isn't a big fan of adding more parking but would prefer to see the town try more innovative solutions, like shuttling people in from other areas such as Virgil,

where there is more available land.

"To take valuable, expensive land like we have in Old Town and turn it into a parking lot that would not be my first choice," she said. "When you're taking a beautiful landscape and beautiful properties and think about turning that into a parking lot, you have to think, 'Is that the best use of that land?'"

Instead, perhaps such valuable land could be used to accommodate senior residents or used as a transitional care complex, she said.

The idea of having more "tucked-in" parking, which would not be as visible, sounded reasonable, Cheropita added, but she couldn't think of any areas where it would be possible.

People's stories and anecdotes about their parking experience need to be backed up by factual data, said Coun. Clare Cameron.

"If something is going to change with parking in the downtown area, I want to make sure that council is doing it in a proactive way rather than a reactive way,"

she said in a phone interview.

"People may feel there's no parking available. Sometimes what it really means is there's no available parking immediately in front of the place they're trying to get to. And that's a different issue."

She said she is interested in exploring a shuttle service option as well as using more ridesharing services such as Uber, and encouraged any concerned residents to make a presentation to council.

"If a heritage, historical feel is something that draws people to Niagara-on-the-Lake, the town doesn't look very historic when it's full of cars," Cameron said. "In order to maintain that positive experience for the people that visit and give them an appealing experience, we need to get the right balance."

Couns. Allan Bisback, John Wiens and Norm Arsenault suggested having a parking area, somewhere near downtown, where Old Town employees can park their vehicles without taking up spaces on Queen Street or



Mary Ellen Nugent, employee of Plushios says there needs to be a better option for employee parking during street closures. BRITTANY CARTER

on side streets.

Bisback also proposed having a shuttle service that would bring visitors into town and help relieve the congestion.

Wiens said he is a strong believer in "peripheral parking" and while having underground parking would be "outstanding," he said it would be too expensive to make it work.

Bisback echoed Disero's comments, saying he wasn't sure if free parking would "stimulate the business downtown" and that increasing parking rates isn't a solution for him but creating more spaces is one way to tackle the issue.

Council has also asked town staff to look at adding more metered parking spots at Wellington Street across from the old hospital, he said.

"That's more of a congestion issue rather than a parking issue," Bisback said.

"The real issue isn't how we resolve the parking. I think the real issue is what we want to be from a tourist point of view, what kinds of people we want to attract to this town and how we build the infrastructure to do that."

While an idea of a parking garage was OK to him, there is a shortage of land in town, Arsenault said, noting Parks Canada won't give up land near Fort George or where the Upper Canada Lodge is located. There isn't much land available in downtown either, he added.

"Parks Canada doesn't give away land, it's as simple as that. You may be able to lease some land but they're not going to give it to you for a parking lot," he said.

"There is no real short-

term solution."

Chamber vice-chair Andrew Niven said the organization is committed to working on a solution that will work for local residents and businesses.

"Niagara-on-the-Lake has always done it's best when working together and it will only succeed if we are innovative, positive in our communications, open-minded and of course willing to do the work together," Niven said in an email response.

Parking has always been a challenge, said Coun. Gary Burroughs, who said he wasn't in favour of creating more parking lots in Old Town and he wants to see where council stands in its deliberations at the moment before commenting any further.

Coun. Stuart McCormack declined to comment.

Virgil Catholic teachers join second provincewide strike

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Teachers from St. Michael Catholic Elementary School in Virgil were back on the picket line Tuesday morning to strike against provincial government cuts to education after no deal was reached between the province and the union.

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association was holding its second provincewide strike, with one-day walkouts in Niagara and across Ontario. No future dates have been set yet for when both parties will return to a bargaining table.

"We remain available to meet at the negotiating

table at any time, to engage in good-faith bargaining, and reach a deal that provides stability for our students and keeps them in class," Education Minister Stephen Lecce said in a statement Monday.

Some of the concerns expressed by the Catholic teachers' union include increased average class sizes, elimination of the Local Priorities Fund and mandatory e-learning. Teachers are also asking for more support for special needs students and a commitment to the full-day kindergarten program.

As Catholic teachers walked off the job at different locations across Niagara, St. Michael

school teachers picketed for two hours at Notre Dame Elementary School in Niagara Falls, along with teachers from Mary Ward Catholic Elementary and St. Patrick Catholic schools.

St. Michael's French teacher Carolann Battersby said parents and students were supportive of them and understanding that teachers are striking for the benefit of students.

"I'm hopeful the government will see how the changes will be detrimental to students and that (the government) will change their mind and reverse the cuts," Battersby told The Lake Report.

"We know these cuts will



St. Michael Catholic Elementary School teachers strike Tuesday morning. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

have a devastating effect on all our students in the long term. Either we stop them now or our students get hurt by it."

Niagara bargaining unit president Marie Balanowski said the response from the community has been positive, although there was an incident when

one picketing teacher was bumped by a maroon Dodge Caravan.

Niagara Regional Police spokesperson Const. Philip Gavin confirmed the police received a call at 10:55 a.m. Tuesday regarding the incident.

"Nothing further has been done at this point at

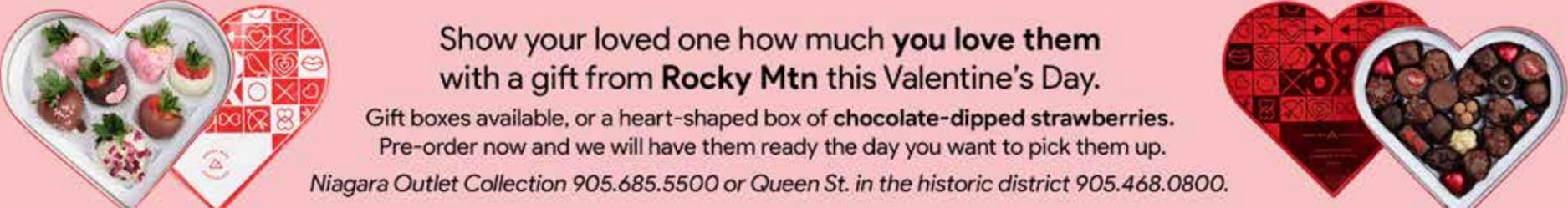
the complainant's request," Gavin said in an email to The Lake Report.

Meanwhile, public elementary school teachers across Niagara, including Crossroads Public School and St. Davids Public School, plan to stage their own walkout on Feb. 6 and 7.

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Ed Hare fixes a remote control toy car for 3-year-old Sam Heffernan during the library Repair Cafe on Saturday.
JESSICA MAXWELL

Toys, coats, corkscrews, lamps fixed at library **Repair Cafe**

Richard Harley
Editor

Children's toys, cork remover presses, coats, cassette players, toaster ovens — you name it, they fix it once a month at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.

The second-ever Repair Cafe was a hit Saturday, with people bringing in items for the fixin' almost an hour before the event was even supposed to have started, said library associate Sylvia Eady.

Volunteer fixer Tony Carriere said one item that came in was an old cork remover press that a couple didn't want to part with.

"It was a big one. It was actually quite neat looking, I'm pretty sure I got it fixed," he said.

Jim Campbell, another volunteer who offered his skills, was there to repair "whipper-snippers," he said, though nobody had showed up with one by noon.

Campbell said he developed most of his repair knowledge by owning a cottage up north for 30 years.

"I learned a lot up there



Library associate Sylvia Eady helps stitch up a jacket. JESSICA MAXWELL

doing electrical, plumbing, the whole bit," he said. "I do my own (electrical) at home in the basement."

He said most things he sees coming through are lamps that need the bulb fitting fixed.

"It's what we call diagnostics 101," volunteer Ed Hare said. "You just check things like the power."

He said earlier somebody brought in a toaster,

but they realized it wasn't broken, they just hadn't plugged it in.

"In that case, plugging it in worked," he said.

Another item for the fixing was a remote control toy car that had a bad battery.

"So once we went and tested every single battery, we found one that was a dud and put a new battery in (and it worked)."

He said another woman came in with a lamp that had been in her family for a while, and they were able to fix it for her.

"It was a keepsake for her ... I guess it had been in her family for a bit," he said. "Those are the happy stories."

Other times the problem is fixed with a little cleaning. "Sometimes it's just dirt," Hare said.

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9	10	11	12
Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Love Songs from The Great American Songbook - 4 p.m. - St. Mark's Church JazzyOke Singalong Sundays - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Club 55	Committee of the Whole General - 6 p.m. - Council Chambers Babies and Books - 11 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library	Coffee with Lord Mayor - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - Unite Room, Holiday Inn Express Municipal Heritage - 6:30 p.m. - Council Chambers Tumble Tots - 9 a.m. - NOTL Public Library	Yoga with Melaina Tree - 9 a.m. - NOTL Centre Wine and Words : 7:30 p.m. - The Hare Black History Month 2 p.m. - RiverBrink Art Museum Communities in Bloom - Council Chambers NOTL Toastmasters - Niagara College Danforth Campus STEAM Story Time : 11 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library
16	17	18	19
Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Writers' Circle - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	Family Day - - NOTL Public Library Closed Niagara Ice Dogs Meet and Skate - 10 a.m. - Fort George Skating Rink Flag raising - Virgil Women's Institute - 10:30 a.m. - Town Hall	Agricultural Committee - 10 a.m. - Council Chambers Tumble Tots - 9 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Beginners Guide to Zero Waste: Laundry - 6 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	NOTL Toastmasters - Niagara College Danforth Campus STEAM Story Time: Explorers - 11 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Chess Club - 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Black History Month 2 p.m. - RiverBrink Art Museum

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Report CALENDAR

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	6	7	8
	<p>Grinder Pump Committee - 9 a.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Homeschooler Drop In - 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Fire in the Bowl: Clare's Chili Cook off - 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Clare's Harley Davidson Niagara</p> <p>Harry Potter Book Night - 5:30 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Royal Oak February Fun Camp - 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. - Royal Oak School</p>	<p>Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. -</p> <p>Royal Oak February Fun Camp - 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. - Royal Oak School</p> <p>Movie: Harriet - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>A Brand New Winter Murder Mystery - 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Fort George</p>	<p>Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.</p> <p>Reading the Rainbow Storytime - 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Shaw Festival Film Series: The Grizzlies - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre</p>
12	13	14	15
<p>from Salt to Community</p> <p>Amra Zafar - Wine Co.</p> <p>h film series - rt Museum</p> <p>oom - 2 p.m. -</p> <p>- 7 p.m. - el J Patterson</p> <p>Dinosaurs - 11 NOTL Public</p>	<p>Homeschooler Drop in - 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.</p> <p>Film: Journey to Justice - 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Museum</p> <p>Light Up Heart Cards - 10 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>PA Day Film: Toy Story 4 - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>PA Day Fun at the Rink - 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. - Fort George Skating Rink</p> <p>Coffee with Curator - 11 a.m. - RiverBrink Art Museum</p>	<p>Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.</p> <p>Shaw Festival Film Series: Jojo Rabbit (to be confirmed) - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre</p> <p>Colours to Dye For Lecture by Sandra Lawrence - 10 a.m. - NOTL Museum</p>
19	20	21	22
<p>- 7 p.m. - el J Patterson</p> <p>Arctic to 11:45 a.m. -</p> <p>- NOTL Public</p> <p>h film series - rt Museum</p>	<p>Customer Experience and Technology Committee - 4 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Flag raising - Kinsmen Club - 1 p.m. - Town Hall</p> <p>Homeschooler Drop in - 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>Yoga with Jenny - 10 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. -</p> <p>Double Film: Remember Africille and Black Mother, Black Daughter - 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Museum</p> <p>Forty Creek Whisky Tasting at Navy Hall - 7 p.m. - Navy Hall</p>	<p>Flag raising - World Think Day - 10 a.m. - Town Hall</p> <p>Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. -</p> <p>Shaw Festival Film Series: Once Upon a Time in ... Hollywood - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre</p> <p>Babarinde Williams Drums et al - 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>

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Hometown Traveller

Volcano's eruption disrupted visit to Manila

Sharon Frayne
NOTL Writers' Circle

Some still call it the greatest fight in the history of boxing. Muhammad Ali called it the "Thrilla in Manila" when he defeated Joe Frazier for the world heavyweight boxing title in 1975.

I remember how people around the world huddled in front of their TV sets to watch the drama and brutality of that powerful encounter in Manila. All else I knew about the capital city of the Philippines was that it was a steamy, impoverished, overcrowded city and that now, my oldest son lives there.

Matthew met my husband Bill French and I at the airport with a smile, a bouquet of orchids and an agenda that would keep us on the run. Historic sites, museums, vibrant markets, specialty shops, churches, parks, jeeps, motorcycle sidecars, ferries, snorkelling, jungle hikes, Indigenous villages, exotic resorts ... we'd hardly have time to breathe, but we'd do it all. The grand finale was a plan to hike a nearby lake and volcano.

On a crowded plaza outside a Catholic church, we watched tarot readers, candle sellers and amulet dealers work their trade. Matthew bought us agimats — triangular-shaped amulets, "for protection from evil forces," he said.

To prepare for our hike, we had dinner at the spooky Filipino Agimat Foraging Restaurant and Bar in "Party Town" to set the mood. To the sound of pounding congos, masked servers chanted and carried in our specialty cocktails. Flaming, red hot, and steaming — unlike anything I'd ever seen in NOTL.

"Wow!" The exotic spectacle overwhelmed me. "They look like erupting volcanoes!"

I did my best with the food — Balut (Duck's Eggs) and Pork Crackling, Pigs Ears Terrine, Ox Tongue ...



A Jan. 13 story in the Manila Times newspaper documented the eruption of the Taal volcano. SUPPLIED/ SHARON FRAYNE

When I closed my eyes and swallowed more magical drink, everything went down easier.

Afterward, we stepped out into the hot, darkened street to head back to our Airbnb. Odd. Something was falling on me! Was it raining? Why was it black?

Bryan, our Filipino friend and guide, stared open-mouthed at the big TV screen in the open bar behind us. Wide-eyed, he interpreted the terse Tagalog newscast.

The Taal Volcano had erupted. Behind us, jagged flashes of lightning ripped the southern sky. People on the street rushed by, umbrellas raised to shield themselves from the ash fall. We donned face masks.

Frightened and clutching our agimats, we grabbed a taxi home. Nothing in our intensive pre-trip planning had prepared us for this. We were on the ropes and watched helplessly as the TV pounded us with terrifying images.

Over the next few days, air flights were cancelled, schools were closed and a large zone was evacuated as poisonous fumes and ash

destroyed homes, livestock and farms. The surrounding lake disappeared, over 700 earthquakes occurred and large-scale damage was inflicted. Police blockaded the displaced communities.

Our planned hike up the volcano was knocked out and for many, it destroyed a way of life.

We scanned the papers from home and abroad, aware that our location and situation was one of the top world news items. Other stories became trivial in comparison with the devastation in the capital area of the Philippines. Our special restaurant, the Filipino Agimat Bar, started a drive for humanitarian relief.

Like a cocky prize fighter, the restless volcano simmered and steamed, daily threatening to inflict more violence.

Spellbound, we watched from our safe corners a distance away. Once again a heavyweight power captured world attention. Despite our protective charms, no human magic could negate the heavyweight power of nature to create a new, and terrible ... thriller in Manila.

People from Niagara-on-the-Lake travel to some of the most interesting places on Earth and we'd like to hear about your vacations.

So, if you have ever wanted to be a travel writer, here is your chance. Send us a travelogue story about your vacation, along with some photos.

It's impossible to include everything, but stories ideally should be 250 to 600 words and focus on a unique, quirky or particularly interesting aspect of your trip. It can be about a vacation you have just taken, one you're on now (lucky you!), or a holiday you took a few years ago.

Sometimes, just a picture is worth a thousand words. So, if you aren't able to write a story about your trip, send us two or three snapshots from your holiday and we will try to publish some of them.

In all cases, smartphone photos are perfectly acceptable. Just make sure each digital image you send us is around 1 to 2 MB in size. Include destination information and the names (from left) of everyone in each photo. And tell us who took the photo, if possible.

As a bonus, bring along a copy of *The Lake Report* and include it in your photo!

Send your stories and photos to editor@niagaranow.com and be sure to write TRAVEL in the subject line.

Happy trails.

Major earthquake gave us a scare



Terry MacDonald and Alex Vujcuf on the beach on Grand Cayman Island. Last week's earthquake shook things up but no one was hurt. SUPPLIED

Terry MacDonald
Special to The Lake Report

This will be a holiday to remember.

On Tuesday, Jan. 28, on an otherwise peaceful, sunny day here on Grand Cayman Island, the earth literally moved. Big time.

Just after 2 p.m., the ground shook like crazy, buildings and palm trees swayed, two feet of water splashed out of the pools and all over the deck and lawns, and raw sewage shot out of the sewers.

Alex Vuicuf and I can now take "experiencing an earthquake" off our bucket list.

We were vacationing

in the Caymans with my daughter, son-in-law and two grandkids. We all got quite a scare, but everyone is fine.

But, thankfully, in all areas that felt the tremors, no major injuries were reported and damage was minimal.

Various news reports say it hit here at 7.1, 7.3 or 7.7 on the Richter scale. Take your pick: It was memorable.

The Associated Press reported the epicentre was only about 200 kilometres from our location, slightly northwest of Jamaica.

The tremors were felt from Mexico to Florida and the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center initially warned that the quake could

generate waves up to a metre higher than normal in the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Jamaica, Honduras, Mexico and Belize.

Luckily, no waves of consequence materialized, though there were plenty of rumbling aftershocks.

I lived in Vancouver for a decade and there were lots of little shakes during that time.

This one was quite exciting, actually. But since no one got hurt, there was no damage, it will be something to tell the grandkids about.

Actually, our grandson Clayton experienced it. He's in Grade 1 and couldn't wait to tell his friends about it.

RiverBrink exhibit used **bees** as central metaphor

Jessica Maxwell
 The Lake Report

For Charmaine Lurch, hosting an art show in Niagara-on-the-Lake was the perfect reminder of just why she does what she does.

The Toronto-based artist, with Jamaican roots, says a big focus of her art is to shine a light on the relationships between humans and the environment, with some emphasis on the struggles of migrant workers.

Lurch's exhibit titled "Compounding Vision" was on display at RiverBrink Art Museum for the month of January, with a mix of painting, photography and wire sculptures.

She was asked to bring some of this installation to RiverBrink "because of the proximity to the river, the idea of the migrant seasonal farm workers and also enslaved black people who came across the border," she said.

"Having grown up and always coming to the Niagara region, you pass the workers in the field," Lurch said in an interview.

"It was really nice to come and think about me passing them and how that has now become a part of my work. To bring attention



Charmaine Lurch stands in front of her wire and wool wrapped sculptures of bees at RiverBrink. JESSICA MAXWELL

to them, not just as workers for our food production, but as real people with lives and how they move and what they mean to us past the means of production."

The main features of the exhibition were wire sculptures of bees and pollen wrapped with wire and wool. Lurch said her sculptures work as a metaphor for migration, movement

and pollination, with bees as the central metaphor.

"Bees are critical to our survival, but they are often invisible to us," she said.

"Also invisible are the people who migrate across borders and boundaries, such as those who provide the seasonal labour required for pruning and picking on local farms."

The sculptures were cre-

ated in the image of bee species that are native to Ontario.

Making all the structures takes many hours, she said. With hundreds of wires, it's a lot of work to wrap even one inch of the sculptures, which stand a couple of feet high. She involves a community of workers, including family and friends, who come in

to help with the work.

This process also represents an integral component in the creation of the bees and pollen sculptures, Lurch said, which carries on to human life as well, where communities rely on vast networks of individuals.

"So then, you think about who is doing the means of production, who's planting

our work. So that's a community of people planting the work and that's how it becomes layered."

By using wire as a medium, Lurch said she is able to access and think about the "invisible and the hyper visible."

"The hyper visibility of people picking or black people, people of colour and also being visible. For me, a lot of this work happens in the spaces, right in the in-between that you can't see. It's still always there," Lurch said.

Bringing attention to the meeting place of rich history that is Niagara was a large part of why "Compounding Vision" was brought to exhibit by Lurch.

If visitors could take anything away from her work, Lurch asked that people take more time to stop and notice.

"The people that moved into the area, the people that continue to move in the area and how we move differently. Whether it's the pickers and the planters or the kind of migrants that are coming across the border or the tourists. It is actually a meeting place and all of those things come together in this area," she said.

RiverBrink art class offers **watercolour** fun for all

Richard Harley
 Editor

RiverBrink Art Studio hosted its second Portraits in Watercolour course on Saturday, giving NOTL residents a chance to hone their painting skills.

Instructor Peter Malaguti is teaching portraiture and went through various watercolour techniques, such as using water to lift colours off the page, and basic proportion, all of which will be used for students to create a portrait of their own in the final two of six classes.

Nancy Bongard, a member of RiverBrink

in Queenston, was one of the students. She said Malaguti is "very generous with his talents."

"And you can't say that about most teachers," she said.

Malaguti spent more than 35 years working in advertising as an illustrator, graphic designer, layout artist, art director and creative director, as well as designing repair and maintenance manuals for the aerospace industry.

"I'm pretty fluent in a variety of painting media and am at the stage where I want to share all my knowledge with students who want to absorb it and improve their own paint-

ings," Malaguti said.

"I want the students to be able to manipulate this medium, watercolour, in a portrait. A lot of students have painted in oils or acrylics and think watercolour is difficult. I want to give them the fundamentals, five basic techniques, which they will use in virtually every watercolour painting they'll do."

He said part of the goal is to show students how easy it really is to use watercolour, and to help people discover the "little kid in them" at the same time.

"Now, to be sure, this is a skill and it'll take prac-



Nancy Bongard practices using water to lighten the paint. RICHARD HARLEY

tice, as does any skill, but once they 'get it,' they'll realize the fun aspect and will just play. Splash around, make a mess, make mistakes, have fun,"

he said. "I hope I'm distilling a complex process into a simple procedure that eliminates the 'mystery' of this medium. And I'm

really enjoying teaching."

Anyone interested in taking the course can find details about upcoming classes by emailing manager@riverbrink.org.

NOTL: SPECIAL WINTER EDITION

The Lake Report's winter magazine highlights some of the best places and things to do in NOTL.

You can pick up a physical copy at all restaurants, hotels and businesses or you can visit our office at 496 Mississagua St. in Old Town.

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You took the time to nominate your favourites, now it's time to vote on the best businesses, organizations and individual professionals in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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GAMES



Have some fun

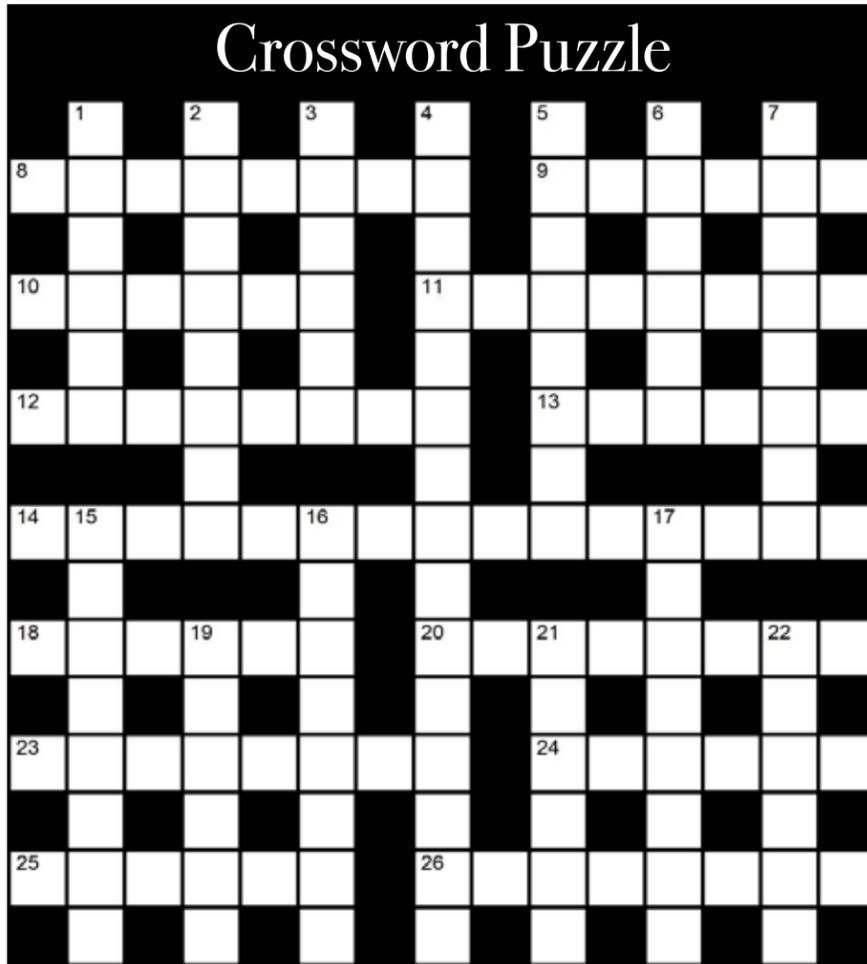
The Lake Report is looking for puzzle makers who would like to help develop this page. We are seeking both standard and cryptic crossword writers. editor@niagaranow.com

Across

- 8. Smallest state down under (8)
- 9. You can't get out this way (2,4)
- 10. Sultanate in Borneo (6)
- 11. Kind of ale (3,5)
- 12. Switch positions (2,3,3)
- 13. Victorious WWII force at Midway (1,1,4)
- 14. Broad appeal (7,8)
- 18. Knight cap? (6)
- 20. Or go West, badly weakened (3,5)
- 23. Old Scratch (3,5)
- 24. Hanseatic port on the Weser (6)
- 25. They are acquired on marriage (2-4)
- 26. Author of "The Rivals" (8)

Down

- 1. Sterile (6)
- 2. Lofty place (8)
- 3. Dark blue powder (6)
- 4. An enlarger (10,5)
- 5. Coach (8)
- 6. Impulse transmitter (6)
- 7. Delivery professionals (8)
- 15. Type of seal (8)
- 16. Efforts to change society (8)
- 17. Appeared with Nyasaland on stamps, once (8)
- 19. Dividing line in a triangle (6)
- 21. Turn these to gain an advantage (6)
- 22. Oscillate (3-3)



Last issue's answers



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



The Lake Report

NOTL readers *love* The Lake Report and we *love* our readers. With the winter season upon us and printing/distribution/staff costs at an all-time high, we need a little *love* to keep the news and top-quality journalism coming to every home in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

We realize this is a big ask and we don't make it lightly. **We need your help.**



What The Lake Report brings to your community

- Current, factual and non-partisan news for Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, delivered free to every home
- Dozens of important, exclusive NOTL news stories that you will not read in any other community publication
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- We ask the tough questions that need to be asked and explore complex issues that need to be addressed
- Support for countless NOTL charities and organizations
- A way for NOTL residents to stay informed about upcoming events and happenings
- An outlet to voice your opinions about matters that affect your town, your life
- In-depth feature stories about Niagara-on-the-Lake history, arts, sports, recreation and the people who live in our community
- Provides local jobs for local residents
- A special, unique paper for our special, unique town and community
- Resident discount program that helps businesses and residents
- Glossy, professional visitor guide magazines that support the NOTL business community and tell the world about all the great things our town has to offer

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Your donation helps to ensure that real, relevant community news continues to flourish in Niagara-on-the-Lake and that we can deliver it to every NOTL home every week. Email transfers with password Donation can be sent to editor@niagaranow.com. Cheques payable to The Lake Report can be mailed to the NOTL Post Office, L0S1J0, PO Box 724, or dropped at our office at John and Mississauga street in Old Town.

Dr. Brown: Concussion examined in latest Infohealth presentation

Despite progress, there are still many questions and worries after athletes 'see stars'



Dr. William Brown
Special to The Lake Report

I played football in high school and remember once "seeing stars" and feeling momentarily stunned after tackling the ball carrier head-on.

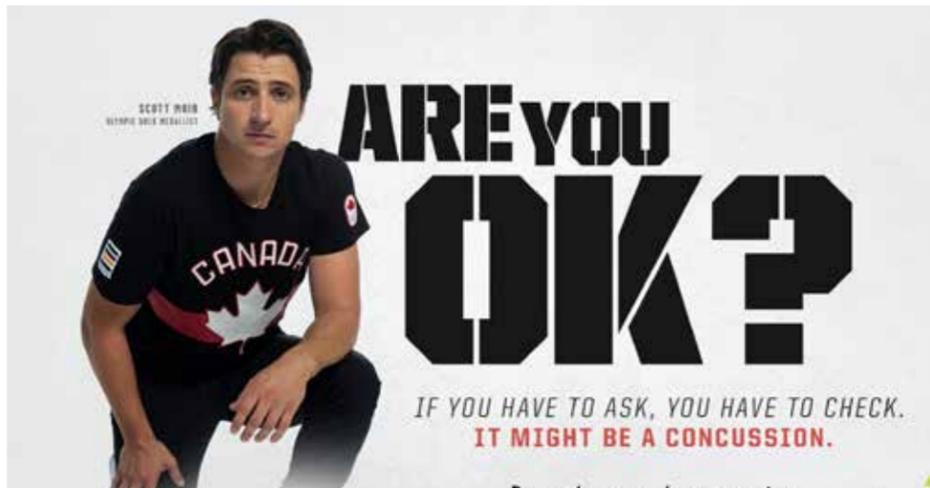
The sensations lasted only a few moments, but there were other players who were unable to remember much, if anything, for the rest of a game despite continuing to play after taking a bad hit.

To us it was all a big joke to talk about in the locker room following the game.

Half a century ago, no one knew much about concussions or even the anatomical and physiological basis of consciousness – certainly not the players, the coaches, the parents, family physicians and most specialists, except for a few neurosurgeons, and then only for serious head injuries associated with hemorrhage into the brain or between the surface of the brain and inner lining of the skull or other potentially serious and occasionally lethal injuries.

Except for the latter, no one paid any attention to the long-term consequences of repeated concussions in football or any other sport for that matter, except for boxing.

A report in the American Journal of Medicine in 1928 first identified an association in boxers, especially those boxers with a history of repeated knock-outs, and the later progressive development of parkinsonian features and dementia to which the term "Dementia Pugilistica" or "Punch-Drunk Syndrome" became attached, examples of which I saw in my neurology training days in Toronto and later



More work is needed to understand and treat concussions. SUPPLIED

as consultant neurologist in Boston. That was then.

Much changed with the discovery that some professional football players in the American and National football leagues, following their retirement, went on to develop a unique form of dementia given the name of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE). Its clinical symptoms occasionally began toward the end of their playing career, or more commonly sometime thereafter, but in any case, well before the usual later clinical onset of Alzheimer's disease.

Autopsy studies of some affected players revealed deposits of an abnormal protein – phosphorylated tau – in the bases of the infolded regions of the brain's cortex, together with a bevy of less specific degenerative and inflammatory changes.

Later studies revealed similar changes, albeit accompanied with more inflammatory changes, in the brains of much younger athletes, some in their teenage years with a history of multiple concussions. All of which understandably alarmed the parents of young athletes participating in contact sports – not just American football.

Recently a former colleague of mine in Boston, Allan Ropper, a world expert on traumatic brain injuries and concussion, summarized the chain of events that lead to CTE.

It begins usually with

a history of several concussions, "which leads to inflammation or protein misfolding, aggregation of tau protein that leads to degeneration of neurons and supporting elements, and later the emergence of behavioural and cognitive disturbances years after exposure to play."

Indeed a study, published in April this year in the New England Journal of Medicine, in which the brains of 26 former NFL players and 31 controls were examined using an imaging tool for tau, revealed elevated tau levels bilaterally in the posterior frontal and medial temporal lobes and, in one instance, the left parietal lobe in some of the former players but not in the controls.

There was, however, no correlation between the deposits of tau and the players' scores on neuropsychological tests. In the accompanying editorial Ropper made the comment that, "As with Alzheimer's disease, the CTE field is in a phase of fumbling with circumstantial evidence for a connection between tau deposition and a clinical syndrome."

By Alzheimer's disease he was probably referring to the lack of solid evidence that deposits of beta amyloid, or for that matter tau, play a significant role in the cause of the Alzheimer's disease based on a trail of negative studies of different drugs designed to deplete

beta amyloid stores (which they did for the most part), yet failed to change the course of the clinical manifestations of the disease in patients with early Alzheimer's disease.

For now, despite the worries of players and families, as well as their coaches, there's little consensus about what types and frequency of concussions to worry about, how best to protect players by changing the rules and enforcing those rules in contact sports to minimize the frequency and severity of concussions, changing the design of protective gear for players and guidelines for mandatory rest periods following concussions.

That's a lot to be uncertain about. And we haven't even talked about athletes, who following a single or several concussions, go on to develop distressing cognitive and behavioural symptoms that may last many months following the injury.

To hear more about all these issues, come to the next Infohealth session on Feb. 12 at 2 p.m., led by Hannah Synder, a medical student for whom I am acting as a mentor. Hannah did an excellent job early in 2019 with her comprehensive review of stroke.

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the Infohealth series held on the second Wednesday of each month at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.



Cutline. BRITTANY CARTER

Kindergarten open house gives parents information

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Three-year-old Emme Johnson is eager to "find anything pink" when she starts school this September, while her twin brother Owen is most excited for the library and gym, their mother Erika Johnson said while the family toured St. Davids Public School Thursday morning.

The District School Board of Niagara held one-day Kickstart Kindergarten Open Houses across Niagara to introduce students to new school environments before they begin junior kindergarten in the fall.

Parents officially registered their children for the new school year with school administration before touring the school and meeting current students and teachers.

The Lake Report was welcomed into both St. Davids and Crossroads Public Schools to speak with hopeful students and families during their visit.

Though many kids were initially shy in the new setting, they warmed up after being greeted and shown around by kindergartners and teachers.

Lincoln Thwaites, 3, will join his older sister Issie at Crossroads in the fall. As he jumped from different play areas and activity stations during his visit, his mother Jenn Thwaites said he is "a little nervous, but pretty excited," for the new year.

"He's really excited for the bus," she added.

St. Davids principal Tracey Leemet said enrollment has increased steadily over the last several years.

Pulling students from the Niagara on the Green

neighbourhood, she said the school has also seen a rise in diversity of the student population in that time.

"Many of the international students of Niagara College who have kids and live in that neighbourhood, those families come here," she said.

And though many of those new students are not native English speakers, she said it's "incredible" how quick they can pick up the language while immersed in kindergarten.

A representative from the school board said it's too early for numbers on how many new students will enroll this fall as that is tracked at the end of October.

But the number of junior kindergarten students increased for both Crossroads and St. Davids Public Schools in previous years.

In 2018 Crossroads had 37 students enrolled in junior kindergarten and St. Davids had 32.

In 2019, enrollment increased for both, with 44 at Crossroads and 39 at St. Davids.

Both schools each have three combined junior and senior kindergarten classes.

Each kindergarten classroom with 16 or more students has an "educator team," which the ministry of education's website says includes a teacher and an early childhood educator.

"These educators have complementary skills that create a learning environment to support the unique needs of each child," the website states.

Currently, St. Davids three kindergarten classes has 30, 29, and 15 students and Crossroads has 26 students in each of the three classes.



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The Lake Report's winter magazine highlights some of the best places and things to do in NOTL.

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Lobster bisque. COLLIN GOODINE

COOKING WITH COLLIN

Save shells for Icewine Lobster Bisque

Collin Goodine
Special to The Lake Report

The other night I had the privilege to dine with some very good friends and enjoy an array of Niagara's finest wines and spirits. The dinner was a well-prepared meal with flavours of creole, Cajun and the east coast. It reminded me a little bit of being in Nova Scotia, enjoying the beautiful meals my family would prepare while outside in the backyard husking corn, shucking oysters, having a lobster bake or enjoying freshly dug clams. Amazingly simple and full of natural flavour.

At the end of the meal the large amount of shells were about to end up in the compost bin along with the other scraps when I realized that this meal did not have to end there. I decided I would make my friends lobster bisque as a thank you for the hospitality and wonderful meal. So here is a classic soup using up the shells of your next lobster dinner.

Directions:

For stock: Clean and roughly cut carrots and onions and place onto a baking pan with parchment paper underneath. Add the lobster shells and roast at 375 degrees for 35 minutes.

In a large thick-bottomed pot, place the peppercorns, bayleaf, cardamom and lemons. Add the roasted ingredients to the pot and cover with 12 to 16 litres of water. Add salt and old bay spice. Simmer for 2 hours.

Strain the liquid into another pot and boil/reduce until the liquid is half of what it was. This will be your fortified lobster stock. At this point it can be frozen and saved until ready to make the soup.

When ready to make the soup, dice the celery and onion and sauté in a little butter or oil until soft and somewhat caramelized. Toss in the chopped tomatoes. Add the tomato paste and garlic, cooking and almost charring the tomato paste.

Deglaze with the icewine, stirring to remove anything from the pot's bottom. Add the stock, clam juice and cream, reserving a litre of stock for when making the soup. Simmer on low.

Add the rice, lemon juice and continue to cook until rice is done. The soup should have a thicker consistency. At this point you can turn off the soup.

Add the tarragon and thyme.

Ladle the soup contents into a Vitamix or high-powered blender and puree on high until very smooth.

Strain through a very fine strainer as a precaution, but if you do not have one that is OK. It should be very smooth. Continue until all the soup is pureed, adjust seasoning.

If there is any lobster left over, or you managed to reserve some, you can chop it and add to the finished product.

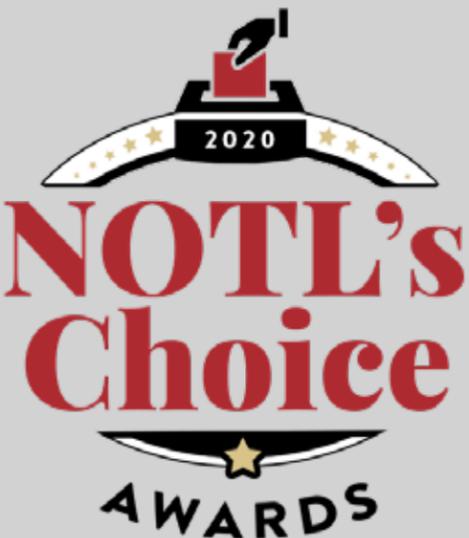
Icewine Lobster Bisque

Ingredients for stock:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 4 carrots | 1 tsp cardamom seeds |
| 2 large onions | 2 lemons, cut in half |
| Leftover shells of 4 1-1/2 lb lobsters | 16 litres of water |
| 1 tsp black peppercorns | Pinch of salt |
| 4 bay leaves | 2 tbsp old bay spice |

Ingredients for soup:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 3 stalks celery | 1 cup clam juice |
| 1 onion | 2 cups 35% cream |
| 4 tomatoes | 1/2 cup parboiled rice |
| 2 cans (156 ml each) tomato paste | Juice of 2 lemons |
| 1 tbsp garlic puree | 2 sprigs tarragon |
| 1 cup icewine | 1/2 tsp chopped thyme |
| 8 litres reduced lobster stock | Salt and pepper to taste |
| | Any lobster meat retained from the shells (optional) |



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Vote at: www.lakereport.ca



Jaclyn Willms and Danielle Lepp exercise. STAY FIT NOTL

Four workouts to keep you going

Jaclyn Willms
Special to The Lake Report

Get out your small loop bands, booty bands or resistance bands and get sweaty with us at home, at the gym or while you're travelling!

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2. Glute Matrix
3. Single Arm Bent Over Row
4. Plank walk

For videos on how to perform these stretches correctly visit @niagarafit on instagram.

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EXPLORING PHOTOS

WITH JIM SMITH



Ross Hunter

Ross Hunter was a mechanic at the BA (British American) service station on Queen Street, as seen in this picture. Today, the Shaw Cafe is on the site of the garage at the corner of Queen and Victoria streets. Many times when I was a boy I took my flat tire bicycle tube to the station where Ross Hunter would put a patch on it for me. I was allowed to go in the garage and watch Mr. Hunter patch the tube. It cost me 25 cents. Many will remember Mr. Hunter as a leader to the Virgil Scouts for many years. As Virgil did not have a scout lodge, the meetings were held downstairs in the Virgil Public School.

SUPPLIED PHOTO/JIM SMITH



Looking for a way to contribute?

Are you looking to give back to the Niagara-on-the-Lake community?

The Lake Report is looking for extra help with advertising sales, and we're hoping there are volunteers out there who would spend some time helping us out. Volunteering with NOTL's favourite newspaper is a fantastic way to give back to your community. The paper, which is delivered free to every home in NOTL, support countless local charities and initiatives and informs readers about truly important issues you won't find covered in any other local publication.

If you're interested, give Rob Lamond a call at 905-246-4671, or send an email to roblamond@niagaranow.com

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Did you know?

The Lake Report's printer sources 100 per cent of its paper fibre from industry leading paper mills, which use quick-growth, sustainable, renewable plots of land, rather than clear-cutting forests.

The ink is also vegetable-based.



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ARCHITEXT

Prepping for a team

Brian Marshall
Featured



Assemble the team, starting with the general contractor.
SUPPLIED

A wise man once told me that the best result is always generated through the combined effort of a cohesive, talented team. Time and again, this statement has proven itself valid on projects spanning my career and, I suggest, the same would be true for your renovation.

So, how does one assemble a team that will deliver your project on time and on budget while fulfilling your objectives?

I'd recommend that in most cases it should begin with research into general contractors.

While this may seem like putting the "build-cart" be-

fore the "design-horse," the reality is that most well-established contractors have a long-track record of working with a variety of designers and architects hence their experience can form an invaluable resource in the selection process of design professionals.

Step one is to compile a long-list of potential contractors who have worked, or are, working locally. Keep in mind that if a contractor is successful in a relatively small market like Niagara-on-the-Lake, customer satisfaction tends to be a

significant factor.

While at this stage the internet can play a role in your research, a drive around town (not just Old Town) to note the contractors associated with current renovations can be equally productive. Asking friends and neighbours who they have used in the past is another source of names for this list, but just keep in mind to separate comments about the quality of the work (which matters) from remarks based on personality (which may or may not have relevance to your selection process).

Next, vet this list through the Better Business Bureau ratings and the "Consumer Beware List" maintained by Ontario's ministry of government and consumer services.

Now, it's time to meet with the remaining contractors. Be very sure to explain to these folks that the purpose of the meeting is to select a short-list of contractors who will be given an opportunity to quote on a project.

Your primary takeaways from each meeting should be: (1) their track record of success in renovations similar to yours; (2) three references from similar renos representing completions in the last year, 3 to 5 years ago, and 6 to 10 years ago, respectively; (3) current lead-time on starting projects; (4) compatibility with your methods and approach; and (5) suggestions for architect(s) and/or designer(s).

Next week, we'll look at short-listing contractors and preparing for quotation.



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Queen St. thrived in **Roaring '20s**



Denise Ascenzo
Exclusive/The Lake Report

One hundred years ago, a new decade greeted the world: the Roaring '20s. Everyone agreed this decade would be better than the last.

The First World War was over, men had returned home and peace of the 1920s was expected to be a time of advancement and achievement. The old town of Niagara (now NOTL) was not going to be left behind.

The horse and buggy was still the most popular mode of transportation in town. In fact, most roads would not have been very accommodating for the new car, the Model T.

The River Road (Niagara Parkway) was furrowed, potholed and very muddy during the spring and summer season. Niagara Stone Road (Hwy. 55) had only been paved partway to St. Catharines. And actually, the very name of this road came from farmers clearing their fields and donating the rocks and stones to the building of the road.

There were few tractors working the fields. Instead, you would see teams of horses pulling ploughs followed by the farmer, who worked the land.

The town had three livery stables: Greens on King Street where the Grill on King is now located, May's which was located near the present-day post office and the third at Ricardo and Melville streets called Sherlock's.

Among the three livery stables there were more than 30 horses for hire.

May's livery also had the most modern of conveyances – a Chevrolet touring car for hire but only when weather permitted.

It was also in the early '20s when the Adam Beck Power Canal was being constructed. This canal ran from Chippawa to just south of Queenston, where the new generating plant was under construction.

Many men from the town were transported by bus from Sherlock's livery to the construction sites. These men became known as "canal carpenters" as they were largely responsible for building the huge forms for the concrete to be poured during construction. It was noted that if a man owned a hammer and was still breathing he could be assured of a job on the power canal.

Groceries were delivered by horse and wagon to residents in town and to the farms scattered around the community.

And unlike today, most groceries were put on credit with the accounts being settled once a year, right after the harvest season was finished. If the harvest was not particularly profitable, during the winter months many farmers cut and hauled ice to the ice house to be stored for the next summer.

The largest store was run by the McClellan Brothers (Fred and Will) who, besides the local trade, also had the summer trade. These summer accounts were most often the wealthy American businessmen and their families who spent their summers in town. Those accounts were settled monthly. Smaller grocery store owners were Richard Allen, Thomas and James Bishop, William Ryan and Minnie Howse.

Just like today, property taxes also had to be paid. Those who could not pay in cash instead hauled gravel from the lake



The Royal George Theatre on Queen Street. RICHARD HARLEY

and river shorelines and dumped it into the pot holes of the roads that needed the most repairs.

These same men, with their teams of horses, could also be seen ploughing the Commons (King and John streets) to plant hay and then they would harvest the hay in the fall.

For many years during the summer months the town's young people worked in the orchards picking fruit or in the Queens Royal Hotel as bell hops, dining room waiters, parlour maids and kitchen help.

Some lucky young lads even got jobs as caddies for the privileged few who golfed on the town's two golf courses, while others worked the docks where boat rentals were handled.

Other employment at this

time was the laundry business for the hotel. Many families in Irish Town (King and Paffard area) took in laundry to supplement the family income. Where the Pillar and Post Hotel is now was located one of the area's largest canneries and basket factory. Summer was a busy time for all.

When winter came there was very little in the way of jobs or entertainment. There were the fortunate few who had a radio but for most families the church provided their social life, with Sunday services held morning and evening, Sunday school for the children and family gatherings in the afternoons.

Occasional birthday celebrations, skating on the ice rink in Simcoe Park, or watching a pickup hockey

game also broke the monotony of winter.

During the First World War, Mrs. M. N. Norris built the Kitchener Theatre on Queen Street to entertain the soldiers who were training in Niagara Camp.

Mrs. Norris had great ambitions to provide live entertainment and vaudeville was introduced to the town. After the war, with Niagara Camp now closed, revenue declined greatly.

In 1925, George Reid bought the theatre and introduced moving pictures. There was a projectionist and his assistant, and three people who provided piano accompaniment for these new silent movies. From vaudeville to silent movies to the "talkies," the theatre continued to be a source of entertainment for the town. It was in 1980 that the

movie theatre became the Royal George Theatre for the Shaw Festival.

Queen Street was a thriving commercial venue in the 1920s with dry goods stores, men's and ladies shops, grocery stores, a hardware store, apothecary, bank and a few restaurants. The street itself was paved, sidewalks and curbs were added. The old town of Niagara (NOTL) was in full recovery from the First World War.

The 1920s looked very positive and rosy for the town. Little did people realize what was in store for them at the close of this decade.

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



COMMUNITY



We invite you to submit photos and stories for consideration in this section. Send your submissions to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to be featured.

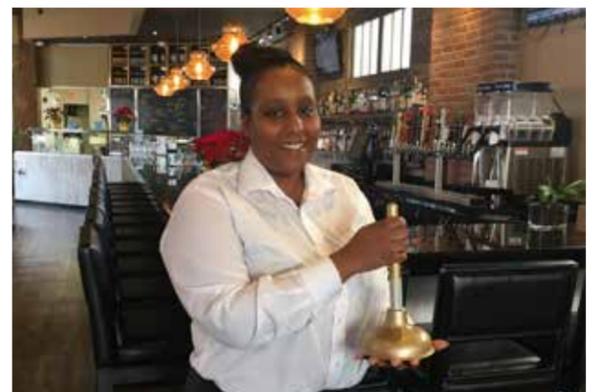
The sun is coming back.



THE GOLDEN PLUNGER

With Betty and Jane

The Epicurean



Shiraz Nouri accepts the Golden Plunger on behalf of The Epicurean. THE GOLDEN PLUNGER

The Plunger girls stopped by The Epicurean Restaurant in the heart of NOTL for a bite of lunch and a peek at their "Privy" facilities. We couldn't resist the "at your door parking" space that happened to be available and calling our name. This eatery boasts a modern "cafe vibe" at lunch, and Mediterranean fine dining at dinner. The very friendly staff pointed the way to the restrooms which were a continuation of that "uptown feel." The barn board laminate flooring offset the modern metal mirror and a large white porcelain sink. The individual stalls were convenient and private making our visit very comfortable. The Epicurean scored 3.5/5 Plungers

It isn't every day one turns 100

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Gertrude (Trudy) Waldie reached a major milestone last week. Waldie's 100th birthday was celebrated over the course of five days, and included celebrations at Upper Canada Lodge, where Waldie lives, as well as at the Irish Harp and at Betty's Restaurant in Niagara Falls. Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates also stopped by to congratulate Waldie last Sunday. [Read the full story at www.niagaranow.com](http://www.niagaranow.com). DARIYA BAIGUZHUYEVA

NOTL DART LEAGUE

Each week, dart teams face off at local restaurants and pubs. Find scores here weekly, exclusive to The Lake Report.

Jini	148
Guzzlers	130
Shavians	120
Guys	113
Airs	105
SandTrap	97
Legends	87
Dartbags	74



Tarot of the week

Lisa Tache/Special

DATE: Feb. 6, 2020
Rest, relaxation, meditation, contemplation, recuperation. The Four of Swords is about quieting the mind. It tells you

that rest is required before you take on anything else. It's time to recharge your energy so you are able and ready to move forward. Take time out. Restore your energy and heal the body and the mind. Now is not the time to make decisions. The Four of Swords wants you to stay silent and inactive. Build up your mental strength by clearing your mind. The Four of Swords suggests the need for seclusion. When you are alone it creates greater inner strength and confidence. Now is the time you must retreat from pain, conflict and distractions. Rid yourself from stress and anxiety. Look inward, ground yourself and re-charge. This is a perfect time to re-assess your priorities.

ASK YOURSELF THIS

How can I quiet my mind from all these thoughts?

3.5/5 Golden Plungers



RIDDLE ME THIS

I fit in with others like me, but I don't talk. I create pictures, but I can't see. What am I?

Last Week: I am white when I am dirty, and black when I am clean. What am I?

Answer: A blackboard/chalkboard

Answered first by: Megan Vanderlee

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Kathy Neufeld, Lynne Stewart, Quinn Tiller, Denise Janzen, Margie Enns, Gaye Norrad, Julia Klassen, Gary Davis, Wesley Turner, Lida Kowal, Britiney Turasz, Sheila Meloche, Win Laar, Howard Jones, Mark Hollemans, Pam Dowling, Anne Litke, Alicia Armstrong

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to win a prize.



NOTL: SPECIAL WINTER EDITION

The Lake Report's winter magazine highlights some of the best places and things to do in NOTL.

You can pick up a physical copy at all restaurants, hotels and businesses or you can visit our office at 496 Mississagua St. in Old Town.



NOTL'S CHOICE AWARDS

You took the time to nominate your favourites, now it's time to vote on the best businesses, organizations and individual professionals in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

To vote, go to LakeReport.ca



PRESS PASS PROGRAM

The Lake Report Press Pass Program gets local residents discounts at a long list of businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Valid for local residents only.

To sign up, visit our office for a card at 496 Mississagua St. in Old Town.



FEATURED LOCAL STORY



Ross Smith, in his makeshift studio, surrounded by his most recent creative endeavour, abstract art. TIM TAYLOR

Ross Smith: A lifetime of creativity and design

Tim Taylor
The Lake Report

For almost 70 years, Ross Smith has been drawing things.

Smith's creative journey has included industrial drafting, lighting design, advertising and now, after retiring to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2004, he has turned his hand to abstract art.

At 85, Smith has a distinguished air, a kind of debonair feel, smartly dressed, sporting a full head of silvery hair and goatee.

Smith's new townhome is testament to a lifetime of creativity, showcasing his and others' artworks, including a large collection of Inuit carvings (he once had a financial interest in a gallery).

Born an only child in 1934, in his grandmother's house in east Toronto, his father was a meter repairman for Consumers' Gas.

Smith didn't finish high school. At the age of 16, a school buddy said: "Hey, I'm going to get a job in the drafting department at General Electric. Do you want to come along?"

"So, I did and we both got hired."

That was the start of a lifetime of design and creativity.

"I was creative," says Smith, who describes himself as self-educated. "When I went into drafting it was a way to get drawing. I would have loved to go to what is now OCAD (Ontario College of Art and Design), but my parents couldn't afford to send me."

"I worked during the day as an apprentice draftsman and went to school at night. At 21, I was, and probably still am, the youngest company design draftsman ever."

After 10 years with GE, Smith moved on to a major lighting company, designing such things as the interior lighting for the new GO train system. When that company was sold, he saw an opportunity to break away and set up his lifelong dream — an advertising agency.

"I always wanted to be in advertising, so it was not as dramatic a shift as it might seem."

Smith was 38 when he struck out on his own, focusing largely on industrial business-to-business advertising, printing and

promotion. He owned the agency for 30 years, employing as many as 10 staff. His clients came from across Canada and the eastern United States.

During his agency years, he also kept his hand in lighting design. "I designed and manufactured the lamp standards at the CNE (Canadian National Exhibition)."

Smith sold his advertising business in 2004. He and his wife, who has since passed away, decided they wanted to get out of Brampton.

"We looked around Ontario," Smith remembers of his move to NOTL. "We went east to Belleville. We went north to Muskoka. We went west as far as Leamington. But we just thought this was the nicest."

As a youngster he used to come over from Toronto on the Cayuga (a steamship that sailed from Toronto to Niagara from 1907 to 1955), so he knew the town.

"I remember taking dates on the Cayuga, for a picnic in Niagara. It was great. She was trapped with me for four hours," he smiles.

Smith is proud of his new career.

As he tours his current artwork, in his unfinished studio, he pauses at each canvas, as if to remember the inspiration for the work. Much of Smith's current art is geometric, highly designed.

But you can see from his collection, he's been through more spirited periods, even one that

focused on the colourful faces of cows.

Smith has two daughters and four grandchildren.

His Toronto daughter is a professional artist, earning a degree from OCAD, now selling her work across North America for thousands of dollars. "I made sure she went to art school — the one I couldn't afford."

Why abstract art? "Not everyone likes abstract art. But it pleases me. It makes me feel good."

Smith has had one showing of his work but is searching for more opportunities.

And all this creativity has to fit between his four weekly golf games at the town's historic course.

Maybe 85 really is the new 60.

2.65% GIC

30 Months, or the option
to cash out at 18 months.

Because life happens.

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