Residents speak out on official plan

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents took the podium to speak their minds about the town’s official plan.

The meeting took place at the NOTL Community Centre on Monday night. The town held two open houses and one public meeting this month to hear the public’s opinion on the official plan. Members of the community now have until March 15 to submit their written comments to council before it goes to the region for approval.

There were a number of top issues brought up at the meeting. Intensification was one of such topics.

Pat Rapone listed a number of benefits the plan would have if it allows intensification. Rapone used the example of a St. Davids’ block between York Road, Concession 5 Road, Warner Road and Tanbark Road. He said the land is scarcely populated, isn’t being farmed and remains underused despite a number of services provided in the area.

He suggested considering including this block within the urban boundary or at least to allow creating one acre of estate lots.

“Allowing development makes the most sense to me and all the area property owners (with whom I expressed my opinion),” he said. “It should make good sense to municipal and regional planners as well.”

On the other hand, Gracia Jones, president of NOTL Conservancy Group, said the town has already met its 15 per cent intensification target. “We feel strongly that on, and that the town must take a strong position that our 15 per cent intensification target for all new dwelling units is the maximum,” she said.

Jones also pointed out any intensification development should be directed towards the areas where it will not impact cultural heritage resources.

Among agriculture issues, John Kirkby said he was “disappointed” in the proposed official plan and suggested it recognizes the impact of enhancing and restoring natural features on specialty crops.

“When the Greenbelt plan was developed, we understood it was to protect the best farmland for crop production,” he said. “We did not know it was to increase unmanaged vegetation that will impact our crops we’re trying to produce.”

Some St. Davids’ residents expressed disappointment at the lack of their inclusion in the plan.

Mike Pearsall from St. Davids Ratepayers Association said the official plan cannot be accepted as is. He listed a number of issues in St. Davids, such as a need for school and swimming pool improvement, and suggested it recognizes the impact of enhancing and restoring natural features on specialty crops.

“Currently residents cannot move freely between the communities without having their own transportation. And an increasing number of senior residents have

Species at risk discussed at meeting

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Species at risk is on a mission to save and manage native species at risk in Niagara National Historic Sites of Canada.

In the afternoon of Feb. 26, Parks Canada hosted a free field visit to NNHS locations, followed by an open house at Navy Hall later in the evening to discuss species at risk at the NNHS.

The goal was to offer hands-on engagement with the community, providing information about the official multi-species action plan, answering questions posed by residents and addressing any raised concerns.

Ken Kingdon, resource conservation manager for Parks Canada, took the lead. Trekking through the Fort George property in the cold, the field visit took the group to two locations where experts brought attention to the invasion of non-native plant species at risk.

The goal was to foster an understanding of the importance of protecting these species and the steps that can be taken to do so.

Continued on Page 2

Horse and driver safe after carriage mishap

Richard Harley
Editor The Lake Report

All parties are doing well after a horse carriage incident in Niagara-on-the-Lake Saturday which saw a carriage driver kicked multiple times and a horse trip and fall.

It all happened in about 15 minutes, says Laura Sentinale, who operates the carriage business with her husband Fred. A shaft broke on the right side of the carriage, causing the horse to veer right around the corner, resulting in the carriage striking a parked vehicle and the horse eventually tripping on the curb and falling to the grass.

“When the shaft broke it pulled to the right, and that’s why the horse turned, because it thought all the pressure was on its right hand side so it wanted to go right,” Sentinale said.

“It was just this crazy alignment of circumstances.”

She isn’t sure how the shaft broke.

“It was really weird. Where it broke it’s steel,” she said. She also noted the carriage company has al-

Continued on Page 2

NOTL council listening to a presentation at the public meeting Monday night. DARIYA BAIGUZHIYEVA
Residents address official plan

Continued from Front Page
deteriorating eyeshot prob-
lems and cannot drive,” said Walker. “We all pay taxes and it seems that these taxes are not used in a uniform way to benefit all equally.”

Walker said the town promised to provide walk-
ing and biking trails, to replace felled trees and to provide benches in and around the village but these plans and promises were never fulfilled. Sidewalks and the community swim-
ming pool also needed upgrading, she added. As the wine industry plays a vital role in NOTL, there were quite a few numbers of wine-related questions addressed to council. Jamie Slingerland, director of viniculture at Pillitteri Estates Winery, said the official plan should require farm wineries to have a minimum of 10 acres and estate wineries to have a minimum of 20 acres. He also said 75 per cent of the land should be planted to have tender fruit or spe-
cially crops of grapes. Debbie Zimmerman, CEO of Grape Growers of Ontario, said “locally grown” wines should be clearly identified as “grown in Ontario.” She also ex-
pressed her support of the requirement of a minimum acreage and said it was important to integrate the natural heritage system with the agricultural system. “The naturalization sites need to be managed as to protect them from becom-
ing reservoirs or harbour sites for noxious weeds, in-
vasive pests and other fauna that might negatively impact on the surrounding proper-
ties,” said Zimmerman.

On the contrary, John Hendricks from Niagara Planning Group said the wine industry and agricult-
ure-related businesses need more flexibility, as they are already “heavily regulated by the province.” “Don’t close doors for de-
velopers,” he said. “Winer-
ies are making more money than farms and we want to be comfortable where we’re going. Farms need to be vi-
able by making money.”

One of the last presenters was a lawyer Patrick Little from North, Little, Almas, and Murray LLP of St. Catharines. He was speak-

Continued from Front Page

Local MPP speaks against proposed changes to the provincial healthcare

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Ontario’s Health Minister Christine Elliott introduced legislation Tuesday which will merge 20 health agen-
cies into one.

Six agencies and 14 lo-

eric integration networks, including Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario and some others, will be consolidated into the new Ontario Health agency. These agencies, and others, will be of Ontario’s, said “locally

invasive pests and other fauna that might negatively impact on the surrounding proper-
ties,” said Zimmerman.

The couple that owns the car was checking into the Prince of Wales Hotel at the time of the accident. Ironically, they have been frequent customers of the carriage service over the years, Sentineal said. So on top of offering to pay the damages she gave them free rides for life.

“Life, yeah” she chuckled. “You know what, they were so nice and un-
derstanding. They were just concerned about the horse and the driver. They were real good.”

Firefighters, ambulance and police vehicles all at-
tended the scene.

The carriage driver, Abby Moran, was sent to the hos-
pital for examination after the incident and released later that night with minor injuries.

Moran was unable to speak with the paper before press time, but is doing well, said Sentineal.

The horse, Ethan, was taken to a vet. Sentineal says he is “completely fine.”

Owner of damaged vehicle gets free carriage rides for life

Continued from Front Page

Patrick Little, lawyer for Save Our Rand Estate, addresses council with concerns about the town’s official plan.

DARIYA BAIGUZHIYEVA

ready started to investigate how to make sure it never happens again.

“Whenever you have something happen like this, you’ve got to start at square one and go through every-
thing. We’re just to review everything and do whatever humanly possible that we can do to prevent this from happening again,” she said.

The carriages got checked over every time they’re used, she said, and they go in for regular maintenance.

“Sort of just like mainte-
nance on a car,” she said.

She’s just happy nobody was hurt.

“The horse is fine,” Sen-
tineal said, noting he’s seen a vet since to be sure.

In the rare cases when a horse falls to the ground, she said the carriage com-
p any pool also make sure the horse

Continued on Page 3

committed to the public’s healthcare system. She also said the government had consulted with the public before drafting the bill.

Wayne Gates who is an MPP for the riding of Ni-
agara Falls, also including Fort Erie and Niagara-on-
the-Lake, spoke against the legislation.

“Mr. Fed, this message is directly from the constitu-
ents who tasked me to be their voice in this Legislata-
ture. We say no to health care privatization,” said Gates at the Legislature on Feb. 21.

Gates belied he believes healthcare services need to be publicly funded and properly managed.

“I think Canadians feel I do,” Gates told The Wall.

“I think if I called on elected members and Liberal, NDP and the Greens were honest with themselves, most of them would say, ‘I want to keep my healthcare publicly funded and publicly deliv-
ered. I believe they feel that way.”

“If healthcare services are privatized, single parents and those who have the least financial stability could be the most affected, he said.

Money should be re-in-
vested in mental health and preventive care as well as go towards research, proper staffing and reduc-
ing wait lines.

“Every private dollar that goes into healthcare means that it’s fewer dollars that go to frontline workers and staff,” said Gates.

Gates posted a video on Facebook on Feb. 5 asking what residents think about the government’s potential plans to privatize the health-
care system. The video has over 353,000 views and thousands of comments.

“That means that people are interested, not only in Ontario but right across the country,” said Gates. “We had people from the United States commenting, saying what kind of disaster it is”

When asked how the pos-
ible regional amalgamation

Page 2
February 28, 2019

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tutes – Pizza, wings, burgers, beer, wine and chips

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Field visit offers hands-on education about Parks Canada’s multi-species action plan

Continued from Front Page

species that are endangering native plants.

He said the field visit was an opportunity to show some people who aren’t familiar with the land.

Plans to remove non-native and hybrid trees were mentioned, followed by replantation of native trees.

Carpooling in Parks Canada vehicles, the visit took the group to the Battlefields of Fort George National Historical Site, referred to as the Lakeshore Property, located between St. Catharines and NOTL along Lake Ontario. It consists of buildings, an open field named The Commons, and a Carolinian forest, part of Oak Grove.

Fort George National Historical Site sits next to Butler’s Barracks, with a similar habitat making up the other half of The Commons and Oak Grove.

During the visit, Kingdon focused on the Butternut tree and the Eastern Flowering Dogwood tree, among others. He said these species are native to the area, holding local cultural and historical significances.

As an area rich in history, he said it’s important to maintain the trees and species native to the location, some pre-dating the war of 1812.

Until recently, Kingdon said Parks Canada weren’t concerned with management of the area because of its national historical site classification. The multi-species action plan brought the importance of managing the endangered species in the area to light.

“We’re obligated to manage these species,” he said, adding that would like to see the part of the location maintained as an open forest, or an oak savannah with 25 to 35 per cent canopy cover. He attributed part of the overgrowth of invasive species to a lack of fire on the site. His goal is to get fire on the landscape within the next five years.

In an email response, Kingdon said, “Fire is used to maintain grasslands and savannah by burning the young trees that are beginning to spread into the meadows. Fire is very good at killing young trees (it is often less successful on large trees), yet it rejuvenates the grasslands as the ash produces fertilizer for new growth (ash from a fire is rich in nutrients). As well, grass is adapted to burn, meaning that occasional fires do not harm it.”

The importance of garnering the support of the residents was stressed by Kingdon.

“We need to be confident that we have the community’s support while also managing for the right reasons.”

Supporting Parks Canada’s action plan and assisting in the explanation were Corey Burant, ecologist for Niagara Parks Commission; Jarmo Jalava, general expert; Paul O’Hara, expert on many things including White Wood Aster and Butternut; Gary Allen, Parks Canada Species at Risk specialist; BRITTANY CARTER.

Terry MacTaggart said she often hikes in the area in the warmer weather and was interested to hear about the different species native to the region.

Gary Mackay also went to see the location and learn about the species. He said he doesn’t necessarily agree with the plans to tear down existing trees to plant new ones, adding that reforestation is unsightly and doesn’t allow for organic growth. He said he will return in the summer for walks through the path though.

Christine Earl said she hadn’t yet formed a full opinion of the plans for the area, but she said, “you can’t be too pure,” adding that there needs to be room for adaptation.

At the end of the visit, Sarah Quinlan Cutler, external relations manager for Parks Canada, asked the group if they felt the plans made sense.

In response, a resident said communication is extremely important, adding that it could become a big problem unless the plans and reasons behind them are outlined in a transparent way. She said constant education is necessary.

“Iamarino and Joanna Rees, also in attendance. Mark Lamarino and Joanna Rees, town planners, said they went along for the field visit just to gain an understanding, without a specific plan in mind.

Some of the residents said they signed up out of curiosity and to learn more about the area.

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“Butter: Gary Allen, Parks Canada Species at Risk specialist; BRITTANY CARTER.

Continued from Page 2

could affect the health-care services. Gates said people will have to wait to see what the government is going to do.

“Who knows, maybe they won’t amalgamate. I know the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake want to keep (the town) as Niagara-on-the-Lake and keep its uniqueness,” he said. “Let’s not try and guess what they’re going to do. I do know that the residents of every community in Niagara and every resident of Ontario deserve to have a publicly funded and delivered healthcare system that works for them.”

Gates said it isn’t the first time the government tries to privatize the healthcare system.

“That is what can and should be done here in Niagara-on-the-Lake,” Harvey said.

NOTL town staff were also in attendance. Mark Lamarino and Joanna Rees, town planners, said they went along for the field visit just to gain an understanding, without a specific plan in mind.

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“None of this stuff is new but for my entire adult life, whenever it came to healthcare, I’ve been very clear. We’re not the United States of America. I don’t want to see people going bankrupt in this country because of healthcare costs.”
All of this could have been avoided

What is your first response to the picture to the right of the story?

“Oh, looks good ... this might look great on the Rainbow Estate,” perhaps?

I can only speak for my self, but I firmly believe that “the fight” over the proposed Randwood Development could have been almost entirely avoided had the resi dents and Mr. Marotta been on the same page in regards to the definition of what constitutes a development that is good for both Niagara-on-the-Lake and Mr. Marotta’s business.

I leave those completely opposed to any change out of this debate.

There are many smaller builders in NOTL who are rarely spoken about, if at all, with the degree of frustration and nastiness that Mr. Marotta’s developments provoke.

Why aren’t the folks in NOTL appreciative and accepting of someone who has the resources to make a very positive contribution to this beautiful town; someone who would most likely be welcomed by many other communities? I think the answer lies on the front page of The Lake Report (Feb 21) with a simple picture of the proposed development. Personally, I can’t get past this drawing. I believe that Mr. Marotta’s definition of “five-star” and “signature” and “legacy” and the proposed builds to attract “young” people and “attracting people with money” are not the same as the resident’s of NOTL definition or need of the same.

If the first image proposed by Mr. Marotta had incorporated historical colours, old brick patterns and stone, real wrought iron, and any other materials and building styles which define a more stately, historical approach to this particular property/ development, I would have been the first person to shake Mr. Marotta’s hand and sincerely thank him for his contributions to our town, as we do with many other busi ness people who make such a positive impact in NOTL.

I could be completely wrong in my thinking, but pictures are worth a thou sand words ... change the building and scale and feel of the development to reflect what residents enjoy most about living here so much (it is certainly not because of an over-abundance of tour ists and stucco) and maybe the hostility towards this endeavour could have been dissipated.

Carolyn Bernacci

Re: Stop spending bad money

While I accept that Editor Richard Harley had every right to express the views of his publication in the editorial published in the same edition of the paper, I strongly disagree with them. Virtually everyone I spoke to when I was a candidate in the 2018 NOTL municipal election campaign was concerned about future develop ment in town, and supported protecting NOTL’s unique natural and cultural heritage. Without exception, candi dates seeking election to town council said they would act on both those concerns.

NOTL Council is not, in my view, “spending bad money” to initiate legal actions intended to preserve the heritage buildings and landscapes of the Randwood estate, it is taking action to achieve something voters elected it to do – and has my full support.

Terry Davis

The Lake Report

Editorial: Clearing the air on NOTL vs. Marotta

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Last week’s editorial about the legal battles between the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and developer Benny Marotta touched a nerve.

To be clear, there is no suggestion by this paper that caving in to every potential legal battle is the right thing to do. It is, however, foolish to spend thousands of taxpayer dollars to fight what looks like a losing cause.

If there’s something we don’t know about why the municipality strongly feels it will win the series of legal battles with Solmar and Two Sisters which he ahead, the paper welcomes the information. We did not see such evidence in the town’s court submissions.

We are not legal experts but we have read all the town’s submis sions and found the municipality’s arguments weak, the affidavits from professionals full of qualifiers and maybe. And in almost every exhibit presented in the town’s affidavits alleging Marotta destroyed heri tage attributes, the same attributes are listed for all four properties.

Perhaps the court will see that as significant, but our reading of the documents, and the counter argu ments Marotta filed with the court, led us to believe that the town’s case is on thin ice.

Hence the editorial opinion expressed last week.

Like most of the community, we don’t want to see random, unneces sary development, nor do we want to see heritage attributes lost. That is wrong. What we question is the wisdom of pursuing what, based on the evidence we have seen, seems to be a weak case.

More letters

TLR is my paper

In my opinion, The Lake Report is the best local newspaper. During the council election, it was the first paper I looked for to find out about the candidates and the issues. The reporting was unbiased and informa tive. I continue to look forward to receiving my copy of the paper for an analysis of the current local issues in Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Niagara region. The news paper is also very easy to read due to the font choice, layout and white space.

I am not the only resident who feels this way. Anyone I have spoken to about your paper nods their head in whole-hearted agreement.

Keep up the good work!

Mary Varacalli

Thanks to good samaritans

An older gentleman took a tumble in Virgil two weeks ago near Gailes Gas Bar. After falling and being unable to get up, three young men came by and helped him up and made sure he was safe. The man’s family, who asked not to be identified, would like to thank the three young men who helped him.

“He didn’t want his name or any other information put in just a shout out to the good samaritans,” said a family member who contacted the paper.

The Lake Report also commends the young men.

February 28, 2019

Page 4
Re: Possible region amalgamation

As we debate Town vs. Region and which is best I thought the following letter to the editor of The Niagara Advance, published October 19, 2002, might be appropri- ate. I was the author.

When we first moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake from Toronto we fell in love with the history and ambiance of the lovely town. Being a cynic however I could see that this little town in the Colonies could not and would not survive the influx of newcomers. The fact that every $1 paid in real estate taxes we have a lord mayor and eight councillors to manage 18 cents!

The other 82 cents are managed by regional coun- cil on which we have two representatives! Not quite fair representation? Since we came to town, schools and hospitals have been closed ... again by boards on which NOTL has been under-represented.

Now we have the prov- ince studying local regional governance. Better late than never. The reality is that for all the untold millions of tax dollars that we, the citizens of NOTL, send to Niagara Region, Queen’s Park and Ottawa, little is returned.

I would suggest it is time to secede from the disasters that surround us and declare NOTL, a City State at last, govern ourselves in all areas of endeavour. Constant news reports confirm the mismanagement of the upper levels of govern- ment and waste, corrup- tion, pork barrelling and the like appear to be the norm. We, in NOTL could field a military at least equal to that of Ottawa. Our navy would be jet propelled, and our airport would have working aircraft and heli- copters!

Our economy would con- tinue to generate the wealth for the Town to prosper and the money now expended on the salaries of the MP, MPP, Regional Councillors, etc., ... would swell the coffers of Newark Neigh- bours and Red Roof Retreat, and realty taxes could be reduced and there would be no sales or income taxes. All tax money now flushed down the river to the region, Queen’s Park and Ottawa would remain in Town to be spent far more wisely for the benefit of NOTLers.

The governing body would be close and would be held accountable and we would impose a two-term limit with no termination al- lowances, indexed pensions or other perks. Council- lor’s jobs would be a mark of community service, not a profession. It is time that the mouse nailed!

It is likely that our move to secede may just set a nation-wide trend for others who are equally disheart- ened by the lack of leadership in an over-governed and inefficient nation.

Accordingly I propose the NOTL secede from the region, Ontario and Canada but retain its place as part of the British commonwealth flying proudly the Union Jack and singing heartily God Save the Queen.

Bill Cochrane Sr.

Re: Town will pay a ‘fortune’ in legal fees

Dear Editor,

Contrary to Mr. Marotta’s framing of the election as a SORE event, in fact a record number of voters in Niagara-on-the-Lake (and for that matter across the Niagara Region) showed up and voiced their displeasure with the bullying tactics of the developers and their enablers in the municipal and regional govern- ments by voting in a new regime.

It may cost a few dollars in legal fees at the Regional level to protect the public purse from the Caslin, D’angelo fiasco lawsuits, but better to stand up for what is right than simply give in and pay out those extortionate claims. Similarly it cost a few dollars to reclaim the NPCA from the cabal so clearly exposed by the provincial auditor’s report. I’m hoping the new board at the NPCA will spend a few more dollars on legal fees and try to recover the money wasted by the previous one.

Here in NOTL we elected a lord mayor and council committed to finally regaining control of our future through passing a new Official Plan and reigning in the bullying tactics of some developers.

Even if it costs “a fortune” it will be worth every penny to control our own destiny and approve approp- riate development sensitive to our heritage culture that meets the needs of the citizenry and not just the greed of some wealthy developers. I for one would be happy to donate to support the town should it decide it needed to establish some form of Legal Defense Fund, and say from the example I have lived with there are hun- dreds who would support such a fund. Your editorial suggests we should simply roll over in the face of the legal bullying tactics and let Mr. Marotta have his way. Did you ever stop to think that maybe it will be Mr. Marotta on the hook for “a fortune” in legal fees when he loses?

Bob Bader

Re: Town will pay a ‘fortune’ in legal fees

Dear Editor,

The front-page headline and the editorial in your Feb. 21 issue are outrageous.

TOWN WILL PAY ‘A FORTUNE’ IN LEGAL FEES, your headline states boldly. Has The Lake Report already decided the outcome?

Your editorial is entitled: Stop spending bad money. You say “If a hotel at Randwood isn’t going to cause the apocalypse, we might as well let it happen.”

Benny Marotta’s sentiments exactly! Mr. Marotta must be very pleased with your paper. It seems safe to say that most residents and, probably, Town Council are not. That a fledgling new paper in town would take sides against the residents and town makes one wonder where you’re coming from. Why isn’t the paper on the side of the residents and town, against Benny Marotta?

Now, about Mr. Marotta. It’s not unusual for a developer to be at odds with existing zoning and the wishes of residents. What’s unusual in this case is that this is the historic Old Town of Niagara-on-the- Lake, that Marotta is he appreciates its history and charm; and that he and his family have taken up residence here to be a part of it. Yet Marotta has bought up much of the vacant land in town and is intent on ring it with high-density residential construction and a hotel that are out-of-character with the Old Town and everything residents and visitors cherish — whether we like it or not. “It’s a business,” he’s quoted as saying. If residents and Town Council continue to object, he’s going to make us pay for it in legal fees. With this plan and attitude, Marotta is becoming persona non grata in the community of which he wishes to be a part.

Is that the “legacy” he wishes to create for his fam- ily and their Two Sisters Winery here?

David Cottle

Have an opinion you want heard?

Send a letter to the editor to editor@niagararow.com
Lord Mayor’s Column: 2019 budget

Lord Mayor Betty Disero

It has been 10 weeks since Council began discussing the budget, and on Monday Feb. 11, the 2019 Operating and Capital budgets were officially approved.

I would like to thank the public, staff, and my colleagues, all of whom worked very hard to find possible reductions to the budget. A very special thank you to the Town’s finance department, led by Kyle Freeborn.

This is the Town’s portion of the tax increase, which works out to just under one per cent or 0.92 per cent relative to your 2019 tax bill.

So how did we get here? Council first looked at revenue sources, then evaluated reserves, and lastly determined controllable and uncontrollable expenses. A breakdown of the approved budget will be available on the Town’s website on Feb. 28, 2019.

It is important to remember this is only the Town’s portion, the Region still has to set education rates. Council faced several difficult decisions when looking at the budget. There was an obligation made by the previous Council (which I supported) to increase staff retention measures compounded with the increase of utility costs which brought the proposed Town budget to 1.3 per cent.

The biggest savings came from reducing the Town’s contribution to capital projects and reserves. Infrastructure maintenance, such as road and sidewalk repairs, is funded predominantly by the tax levy. When the Town builds something new, ongoing maintenance costs must always be considered. While the Town gets funding from other levels of government, or development charges, to create parks or subdivisions, the ongoing maintenance expenses come from taxes.

The original proposal was to transfer $2.47 million from the Operating account to the Capital account. Council reduced it to $2.02 million. This by no means makes the budget sustainable, but it is a start. Over the next couple of years, we will have to build back the contribution to the Capital account or we will start to see less construction repairs.

Now, we must look to the future. Some questions have to be answered. Do we build up the reserves so we don’t have to transfer so much money from the Operating budget? How do we build in $1.1 million that is required annually to maintain existing facilities? The focus for this year’s budget was human resources; the next couple budgets have to be about infrastructure maintenance and protecting our reserves.

I am happy to report that Council approved an Audit Committee. Over the next year a group of Councilors will work with staff to review and make changes to the budget process.

The group’s focus will be discussed fully at their first meeting. I look forward to an efficient budget process for the 2020 budget.

It is going to be a very busy year and an extremely busy term of Council. I am confident that in collaboration with the public and staff, Council members are up to the task.

If you have questions, concerns, or want to voice your opinion, I encourage you to reach out to myself or any of my fellow Council members. We are more than happy to speak with you about any subject because your input is valuable to our work.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero, RICHARD HARLEY

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s heritage needs protection, not flawed ideas

David Israelson

The Lake Report’s editorial on Jan. 28, 2019, “Stop Spending Bad Money,” dealing with Niagara-on-the-Lake’s heritage designation is one of the most disappointing pieces of opinion writing I have read.

The argument seems to go like this: Developer wants to build something that many number of residents do not want and believe will damage their town.

The town attaches historical significance to the property and the developer is mounting a legal challenge.

Simply because the developer is challenging this, the town should, as you put it, “back down,” because fighting this costs money. The developer will also “sue” for court costs.

There are many reasons why this argument is patently poorly thought out. Here is how this “reasoning” — and I use this term irone-

ically in this case — would work in other situations: A man comes to your door and says that he owns your house and you must get out. He does not own your house but says he will get a lawyer, will take you to court and demand court costs. By the Lake Report’s reasoning, it could cost a lot to disagree, so you should leave.

The Leafs are scheduled to play Tampa. Tampa is higher in the standings and might win. By the Lake Report’s reasoning, the Leafs should forfet the game rather than take to the ice.

The editorial is based on a number of faulty or misleading premises. Let’s start with the issue of court costs. It sounds like the Lake Report is unaware that court costs are always awarded in any civil case, either to one side, the other, or a combination of both. Typically the losing party pays. No one “sues” for costs.

After a hearing, either party might ask the tribunal that hears the case to vary the standard cost award, but there must be exceptional circumstances. A town defending a rich developer’s challenge to a democratically-decided heritage designation would not be exceptional. It is what elected councils are expected to do by the voters who put them there. Next, let’s take the premise that our town’s legal battles “don’t bear much prospect of victory.” On what is this based? That the other side has hired lawyers? The Lake Report does not appear to understand the nature of administrative law decisions and the considerations that go into them. Again, by this reasoning, we should never take anyone to court for any transgression, because they might show up with a lawyer.

Third, the Lake Report says that “it’s looking very much like municipal elections won’t be the same next time around anyway.” Who says so? The Lake Report already published a previ-

ous — and also deeply flawed — analysis of possible amalgamation in this region. I did not find a single reliable source mentioned in that article. The writer has confirmed that the story is based on “number of sources who wouldn’t go on the record, combined with intuition and common sense.”

This is not common sense. It is innuendo. Some- times we have to disagree, so they might show up with a lawyer.

The Lake Report also says that “it’s a safe bet other developers are impacted by the town’s actions too.” Says who? Even if the others are affected, judging by the turnout at numerous community meetings and protests, and the municipal election results, most residents might think it’s a good thing if the rich heritage of Niagara-on-the-Lake is protected, rather than chopp-

ed down by developers.

It also doesn’t make sense to decry as “politi-

cal” a decision by elected officials to carry out their legal obligations to act in the interest of the people they serve. Indeed, Council might be liable were they not to defend a decision which a developer is attacking a council decision, in what appears to be a frivolous administrative challenge based entirely on the developer’s self-interest.

It is disappointing to see a publication with such promise as the Lake Report be sullied by such pointless and ill-informed material. I hope we are not seeing a pattern.

Because really, we can do better.

Editor’s note: David Israelson is a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident and member of the Town’s Urban Design Committee.
Crossroads Public School Me2We Club are champions of social justice

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Students and community members fighting for social justice were recognized at Crossroads Public School’s rising stars assembly on Feb. 27. Acknowledging students of the Me2We Club, Michele Zoccoli, teacher, announced the success of three recent programs to raise money for various organizations and causes. Zoccoli said the Me2We Club, which is made up of grade seven and eight students, has been pushing to collect donations and raise awareness for their efforts, on both a local and a global scale.

Pastor Jeff Martens of Cornerstone Community Church, spoke about the global initiative through the aid provided to Burundi, a small country in Africa south of Rwanda. Martens said the church has been supporting the Batwah people of Burundi for more than 10 years and the partnership with Crossroads Public School began three years ago. With the help of the school and the Me2We Club, $2400 was raised over the Christmas drive, doubling the initial goal of $1200.

This year, the money was raised to provide solar lamps for the students of Karubi Harvest School. Martens said 385 students received solar lamps, allowing them to live productive lives, even when the sun sets. The Batwah people are among the poorest and unhappiest in the world with little to no electricity, Martens said. With support from Crossroads, he said, “We are extremely grateful for all of your hard work.”

The battery drive and pop tab campaigns are ongoing. Students are encouraged to continue to bring them in throughout the year.

Michele Zoccoli and Charlotte Broughton of the Me2We Club at Crossroads. BRITTANY CARTER

Cathy Wickabrod during youth dances, Broughton said she wanted to help to collect tabs for the Ronald McDonald House. Zoccoli said Broughton had a “strong passion for the pop tab campaign.” “It’s thanks to Charlotte’s leadership and passion that we started this campaign,” Zoccoli said. Through the campaign, 95,000 pop tabs were collected, weighing 100.5 lbs.

Wickabrod said that if not for the youth dances at the Lion’s Club and Broughton’s desire to do more, the partnership wouldn’t exist. Wickabrod acknowledged Broughton and thanked the students. “We are extremely grateful for all of your hard work.”

The battery drive and pop tab campaigns are ongoing. Students are encouraged to continue to bring them in throughout the year.

The Lake Report

The Lake Report strongly encourages readers to support the local businesses that advertise with us.

When ordering, we ask you to remember the businesses you can use to support your local print and independent. When you’re looking for a service or product, check the paper and try someone local first.

There are a variety of great businesses to choose from – don’t forget to mention you saw them in the paper! The Lake Report would also like to acknowledge and thank those who have made financial contributions to the paper, whether through our donation button online or by mailing us a cheque.

The paper encourages all residents to support the paper through a “voluntary subscription” annually.

For those interested in supporting us, we suggest $1 per issue, per household, at $2 issues per year. That’s only $2 per month! Most people spend on pizza and wings.

Larger donations are also greatly appreciated. For transparency, donations of more than $1,000 will be published in the paper (with a big thank you) and donors will receive an exclusive limited edition Lake Report mug, as well as a copy of the first edition of the paper signed by staff (limited to 20 special mugs)!

To support The Lake Report, mail cheques to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Post Office, 60130, P.O. Box 724. Please make cheques payable to Niagara News Ltd. and note it as a donation.

Thank you.

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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The TD Niagara Jazz Festival is shining a light on the talented women of jazz through Live, Learn, Jazz – Women of the Hour. During the festival’s media launch on Feb. 25 at the Henry of Pelham Winery, Juliet Dunn, executive director and artistic producer, along with Peter Shea, co-creator and artistic consultant, announced the 2019 line-up for the upcoming season.

Adding new events to the roster and expanding existing programs, Dunn said she is excited and eager for the season ahead. Volunteers passed hors d’oeuvres donated by Oscar Turchi from Savoia Hors D’Oeuvres and Gourmet Emporium, one of the official catering partners. An assortment of performers, volunteers, media and enthusiastic supporters of Dunn and Shea’s endeavor to infuse jazz into the region spent the afternoon listening to specifics of the upcoming line-up.

Updates to the festival were made possible in part by funding from the City of St. Catharines Cultural Services, who were in attendance. The Live, Learn, Jazz series kicks off on March 8, aptly coinciding with International Women’s Day, each evening showcasing strong female leads. Four of the headlining performers to take part in the series are Faith D. Amour, Melissa Marie Shriner, Stacie McGregor and Emmanuel.

After the kick-off performance on International Women’s Day, each evening boasts a unique theme: Ellington at the Exchange on March 21; Trumpet, Tunes and Tummys on April 4; Tap, Tapas and Taps on May 2; Voices in the Vines on June 6 and Sax in the Vineyard on July 4.

Dunn said, apart from the Live, Learn, Jazz series, one of the most thrilling additions to the festival is the July 20 event, Niagara’s Summer Mardi Gras. The event will include jazz and they will come.

“I always envisioned that this area could be the New Orleans of the North. That’s kind of where the idea came from,” Dunn said. “I love the music of New Orleans, and they will come.”

The music scene is heavy on female performers, Dunn said, adding it’s especially evident in jazz. She said the genre is about 95 per cent male-dominated.

“Why it’s really important to highlight the females in jazz. I don’t think I’ve ever been so excited about one of our projects.”

“Mardi Gras onto the name holds the potential to grow into something similar. Featuring New Orleans-style music, the event will usher the Mardi Gras spirit into Niagara, offering a variety of experiences; dancing, music, beads, a parade, Creole food, Cajun culture and more,” Dunn said.

He added that the region holds the potential to grow into something similar. "It’s a hard pill to swallow for some, adding that there’s less interest in a straight-up jazz festival – tagging Mardi Gras onto the name garners a more enthusiastic response.

"Our unofficial tagline now is don’t tell them it’s jazz and they will come.’’

Shea added that jazz is like medicine, “You need it, but you’ve got to sugar-coat it sometimes.”

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Women of the Hour
Women in jazz will dominate this year’s Live, Learn, Jazz Series

BRITTANY CARTER

Faith D. Amour and Melissa Marie Shriner at the TD Niagara Jazz Festival media launch. BRITTANY CARTER

For the headlining women attended the media launch, showing their support and excitement for the festival. Faith D. Amour, Melissa Marie Shriner and Khea Emmanuel were recognized by Dunn and Shea as just a few of the outstanding performers to take part in the series. Stacie McGregor was included, as she skillfully provided ambiance and a short performance on the keys.

The monthly concerts, each with a fun, lighthearted name, feature a variety of jazz styles integrating vocalists, tap-dancers and musicians.

The music scene is heavy in male performers, Dunn said, adding it’s especially evident in jazz. She said the genre is about 95 per cent male-dominated.

“Why it’s really important to highlight the females in jazz. I don’t think I’ve ever been so excited about one of our projects.”
Reif Estate Winery and Newark Neighbours team up for March food drive

Marion Ollerhead, left, and Hilary Bellis. DARIYA BAIGUZHIYEVA

Reif Winery and Newark Neighbours are coming together to help those in need by organizing a new “Taste for Hunger” food drive.

Throughout the whole month of March, members of the community can stop by the winery with a non-perishable food donation and get a free tasting of three wines.

“We’re always thinking about giving back to the community,” said Andrea Kaiser, a director of marketing at Reif Winery.

“Being around for 30 years as a winery, we look for ways to provide local support. And we always look for ways to drive traffic and get visitors to come to visit us in the winter times.”

People can bring any type of non-expired and non-perishable foods. Items like canned meats, chocolate, canned vegetables and fruits, solar potato mixes, canned pineapples and peaches are also welcome.

The donations will be collected in special barrels. Depending on how much is collected and how successful the drive is, Newark Neighbours will pick up donations every week, said Kaiser.

Newark Neighbours, that’s been operating for 45 years, is the only food bank and thrift store in Niagara-on-the-Lake. They provide food and clothes for people in need and also organize special dinners during Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

“March is the month before Easter and in the wine industry, it’s a quieter month,” said Hilary Bellis, chair of Newark Neighbours. “So, it was good to bring awareness to our locals.”

Usually, once Christmas is over, the number of donations to the food bank tends to go down. “That’s why this partnership with the winery at this time of year is helpful because it will start to fill up our shelves again,” said Bellis. “People forget about giving to us the rest of the year.”

“Our shelves at the moment are pretty good, most of them I have stocked,” said Marion Ollerhead, a food bank manager. “And as Hilary said, summertime hits and the donations go down quite considerably.”

However, there are certain people who donate on a regular basis which is “lovely,” added Bellis. “Every little bit helps.”

“We have donated wine for their volunteer appreciation dinners,” said Kaiser.

“When I got to thinking about the idea of a food drive, it just naturally occurred to me to give Hillary a call. We do a lot of donations all across Ontario but we obviously try and stay focused close to home.”

Kaiser said she’s been thinking about organizing a food drive for over a year so working with Newark Neighbours seemed like a “natural partnership.”

Klaus Reif, president and CEO of Reif Estate Winery, told The Lake Report that if the food drive is successful and they get enough support, they will make it an annual event.

NOTL Hydro encourages customers to go green

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro wants customers to switch to e-billing and drop paper mail entirely on utility bills to save trees — in more ways than one.

To encourage its customers to switch to electronic billing, the company has pledged to donate $10 for every change to the NOTL Hydro website.

The program was refreshed in the past to encourage customers to make the switch which included prize giveaways. Mosher said he thinks this promotion will be efficient and timely for the town.

“Each campaign we get a number of enrolments. This one specifically we wanted to target the tree fund. It’s more efficient and it’s more environmental.”

Customers can make the switch online by logging into their account through the NOTL Hydro website. Direct donations to the tree fund can be made by visiting the NOTL.org.
READ THE LAKE REPORT WEEKLY

COMMUNITY FAVOURITES:
Legion Fish Fry every Thursday!
Duplicate Bridge at the Community Centre, Tuesdays and Fridays at 1 p.m.
## LOCAL CALENDAR

### Feb. 28 - Mar. 16

**Tuesday**
- **28**
  - 2019 Fabulous! - Day 1
  - Signature Kitchens of NOTL
- **28**
  - Bridge Seniors Casual Drop-in: Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Seniors Fitness: Healthy Safe & Strong - 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. / 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - Niagara Regional Native Centre: Community Social - 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre

**Wednesday**
- **28**
  - Babies and Books - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - Seniors Fitness: Healthy Safe & Strong - 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - Cribbage for Seniors - 1 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre

**Thursday**
- **28**
  - International Women’s Day Live Learn Jazz Series: “Women of the Hour” Part 1 - Surprise Pop up Location in NOTL
  - Yoga with Jenny - 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - Seated Laughter Fitness: Laugh Yourself Healthier - 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Shaw Festival Annual Meeting - 2:30 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre Lobby
  - St. Davids and District Lions Club: Friday Fish Fry - 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. - St. Davids and District Lions Club

**Friday**
- **1**
  - World Day of Prayer: Eucumenical Service - 1:30 p.m. - St. Vincent de Paul Church
  - Punphouse Instructors’ Exhibition - 11 a.m. - Niagara Punphouse Arts Centre
  - Seated Laughter Fitness: Laugh Yourself Healthier - 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
  - Shaw Festival Annual Meeting - 2:30 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre Lobby
  - St. Davids and District Lions Club: Friday Fish Fry - 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. - St. Davids and District Lions Club

**Saturday**
- **2**
  - St. John’s Babysitting Course - 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library
  - Skating and a DJ - 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. - Wayne Gretzky Estates Winery & Distillery
  - NOTL Home, Garden & Craft Show - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Crossroads Public School
  - Chorus Niagara: King David - 7:30 p.m. - Partridge Hall, First Ontario PAC

**Sunday**
- **28**
  - Sunday Service @ 10:30 a.m.
  - Check us out at: www.graceunitedchurch.com

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**Lake Report**

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**TOTALLY LOCAL**

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**New page**
Local group inspires mutual support and conversation

Wanderers Wednesdays at the Sandtrap. The core Wanderers group (from near left, around the table): Russ Phipps, Leslie Mann, Otto Lowas, Warren Fraser, Tony Read, David Waller, Keith Whitmee, Rick Preece, Rich Gallant and Keith Grimble. TIM TAYLOR

Tim Taylor
The Lake Report

Count them — almost 1,000 Wednesday evenings together, since the Wanderers first gathered at a local pub some 21 years ago. At first, the Wanderers just wanted some “guy” time. Their wives were spending the evening at Newcomers, an organization created to welcome new Niagara residents to the community.

The Niagara Newcomers is entirely female. So, newly-arrived male newcomers, Tony Read and Keith Whitmee, just wanted to wile away a few hours chatting and getting to know each other, in their wives’ absence. Each week they tried a new watering hole. Hence the name: Wanderers. It wasn’t long before they began accumulating recruits to their Wednesday evening sojourns. Today the email list totals over 45 names, plus 30 or so spouses.

The core activity is the Wednesday night get-together at a designated pub. There have been many different pubs over the years, but for almost a year, the Wanderers have frequented the Sandtrap Pub & Grill. “We gather for a drink and conversation,” says Tony Read, above the din of the Wednesday night crowd. Read is the self-styled honorary president but acknowledges that he doesn’t do a great deal anymore, except enjoy the camaraderie.

The real work is done by Keith Whitmee, who provides secretarial services for the group, maintaining the participants list and making sure everyone knows what’s going on. The Wanderers are no longer just about beer and conversation. On Monday mornings there’s golf. On Tuesday it’s a snooker. Thursday is a day off. And Friday morning the walkers take over, completing brisk four-mile weather walks around town, often followed by lunch.

On a less frequent basis, Wanderer-regular Keith Grimble organizes bridge and wine-tasting events. They even run the “Wanderers Airbus,” a mutual transport system to get members to and from airports.

Today, the Wanderers encourage spouses to attend the activities. “But Wednesday remains just for the guys.” Keith Whitmee

There is only one rule,” according to Whitmee. “Rule number one says no rules.” But someone down the table immediately pipes in: “And we don’t talk about religion. We would talk about sex but most of us can’t remember.” Warren Fraser

And while the average age of Wanderers is over 70, it’s not a prerequisite. They come from all sorts of working careers. Not everyone does all the activities. “We hover around 20 or 25 for most and fewer for bridge and wine-tasting,” says Read.

The table is somewhat punctuated by comfortable laughter, gentle ribbing and a kind of easy, familiar friendship.

With any luck, the Wanderers will be around for another 1,000 Wednesdays.

Wanderers find friendship one Wednesday at a time

Warren Fraser is an original Wanderer — number five — he thinks, so that means since 1998. He tells a number of colourful stories about the early days. But then he becomes serious: “It is the best support group I’ve ever had, even better than work.” Keith Grimble joined in 2002. He agrees with Fraser: “These are nice people. People you like to be around. We all have common interests. It is a wonderful social experience.”

Conversations around the Wanderers’ table are punctuated by comfortiable laughter, gentle ribbing and a kind of easy, familiar friendship.

With any luck, the Wanderers will be around for another 1,000 Wednesdays.

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Obituaries

Lorraine Andrews

ANDREWS, Lorraine Margaret (Caskenette) –
Died peacefully surrounded by family on Thursday, February 21, 2019, at Providence Health Care Centre in Scarborough. Lorraine was born on August 3, 1923 in Preston, Ontario. Loving wife of the late Stanley Raymond Andrews (2010). Loving, caring Mother, Grandmother and GG, family meant everything to her. Children Judy (Neil) Andersen, Peggy (Bill) Marshall, Tim (Sandra) and Bob (Sharon) and the late Rod (late Mary), grandchildren Ethan (Lesley), Ryan (Laura), Devon (Barbara), Barry (Kristen), Russ (Christine), Carolyn (Marty), Angela (Jason (Chantal)), GG to Sophie, Rowan, Ella, Hackleberry, Pippen, Arlo, Hannah, Abigail Lorraine, James, Cameron, Paige, Adelaide, Finnegan and Celeste. Lorraine was a chartered member of the St. Davids Lioness and a member of St. Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Church. She also loved to quilt, knit and sew for her family. The family will receive friends at MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Monday, March 4, 2019 from 9:30-11 a.m., with the service to follow. Burial to take place at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. In lieu of flowers family suggests donations to either the Providence Palliative Care or to the Heart & Stroke Foundation or to the Canadian Diabetes Association. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com

Local snaps

Jordan Pierre reels in a line at the Queenston docks. RICHARD HARLEY

A dog musher traveling down the Niagara Parkway on his pedal-free bicycle. The man did not want to be identified because of pressure from dog mushing protesters. RICHARD HARLEY

Two people out fishing the Niagara River. RICHARD HARLEY

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Crossword by Debbie Whitehouse, Richard Harley

Crossword Puzzle

Across
1 Beautiful (8)
5 Moves through water (5)
10 Unconventional (7)
11 Pilot (7)
12 Pollen gatherers (4)
13 When the living is easy (10)
14 Otherwise (4)
16 Artificial sparkler (10)
19 Corridor (10)
22 Yorkshireman (4)
24 Preceding wedlock (10)
25 Precious stones (4)
28 Shining (7)
29 Hollowed inward (7)
30 Bovine mammary gland (5)
31 Austrian Alpine resident (8)

Down
1 Farewell (7)
2 Plunder (5)
3 Paradise (4)
4 Lie (7)
6 Restaurant worker (8)
7 Marriage (9)
8 Opera by Bizet (6)
9 Current of air (6)
15 Pendent (9)
17 Large island in the Channel (1,1,1)
18 Computer information store (8)
19 Thin and translucent (6)
20 Expels (6)
21 Disorder (7)
23 Oriental (7)
26 Fill with high spirits (5)
27 Umsie (4)

Last issue’s answers

Sudoku

Spring needs to hurry up.
Eye of the beholder

Brian Marshall

First, a quick word about residential design hierarchy. Briefly stated, every element used in the composition should work in concert to create an intuitive understanding of the design by guiding your eyes, and subsequently your movement, toward natural flow points (front door, principal reception room, etc.) in the design. Hierarchy is all about placing the emphasis on the most important elements of the building by using key design principles to set up a cascade which irresistibly draws your focus to these points.

Working together, scale and proportion play a vital role in establishing hierarchy while at the same time contributing to a comforting emotional response when the building is experienced. In architecture, scale refers to sizing elements according to a known standard; most frequently the human form. So, by using scale the designer can maintain consistency between the perceived size relationships of: two specific elements; the elements to the whole; and/or, the entire composition to the viewer.

Proportion is the discipline of arranging elements to establish a consistent set of visual relationships between the building’s individual components, the components to the whole, and the whole to its context. Aesthetically complete compositions require the designer achieves a perceived equality (or ratio) between all elements in the design.

The neo-classical MacDougall house shows both simple and subtle applications of scale and proportion contributing to hierarchy. The subtle: decreasing the vertical proportions of the second storey arch tier moves your eye down to the principal floor. Now you’re there...

The simple: increasing the scale of the opening for the front door to fill the entire arch leaves no question where guests are received.

Tract McMansions. SUPPLIED

MacDougall house shows both simple and subtle applications of scale and proportion contributing to hierarchy. The subtle: decreasing the vertical proportions of the second storey arch tier moves your eye down to the principal floor. Now you’re there...

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MacDougall house shows both simple and subtle applications of scale and proportion contributing to hierarchy. The subtle: decreasing the vertical proportions of the second storey arch tier moves your eye down to the principal floor. Now you’re there...

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Caught Between the Walls

Concluding Chapter 1: Do you believe in ghosts?

There was silence once again. I knew I was alone that night, but also that I was standing on the very spot, where in the past, thousands of people had come to the Courthouse/ Gaol. Some would have come in despair and desperation; and some would have come with hope. Some escaped to freedom and a hopeful future, others met with torture and death. I brushed a few little snowflakes off my shoulders. They felt heavy, as if they carried the pressure of something bigger.

“OK,” I yelled. “I get it. There’s something here.” I accepted the responsibility of discovering and sharing the tales.

As I stood in the snow, I wondered, what was it like — back in 1817 — what actions would land someone in jail? Conditions must have been brutal. They felt heavy, as if they carried the pressure of something bigger.

I knew there had to be another path — or rather beasts that had rushed past me at the plaque. I knew there had to be another path — hidden for a long time — that I must find and follow to discover the truth. — hidden for a long time — that I must find and follow to discover the truth.

They definitely weren’t human. They were coyotes.

They must have raced from a distant woodlot, cut across my backyard, followed my trail and then dashed away beneath the swing set. That’s what I’d seen racing towards me. Something had scared them away and kept me safe. The coyotes had disappeared, just like the stories of the old Courthouse.

I knew there had to be another path — hidden for a long time — that I must find and follow to discover the truth. In the distance, the empty swing in the snowy park creaked and lifted once again in the bitter night air. Then it hung motionless, still waiting beneath the silent starlit sky.

Aunt Trudy had already had window treatments put in with yards of diaphanous white silk. There was an aura of pale blush, not quite-pink pastel throughout the lower level. Aunt Trudy called the wall colour in the living area “Candied Tulip.” The thirty-foot “theatre” room was paneled with walnut. A library or den was a little lighter, as was the living room. In what Trudy called a toasted maple. The atmosphere was, to Steph, pure elegance. Her face shone with admiration for her lovely aunt who somehow never seemed to warm up to people and yet had such good taste.

The front of the property was not yet fully landscaped. Several red bud trees had been planted, and numerous azaleas would be outstanding in the spring. Gardeners had been there, clipping and pruning the natural trees and bushes, but they had been given strict orders from Trudy. She wanted the growth to be wild and plentiful; she didn’t want “prying eyes gaping in the windows.”

To Steph’s delight there was a small stream at the furthest point of the backyard. There were dragonflies, and small minnows darted at the edges of the water.

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(FOR SOME REASON MY STORIES USUALLY END UP AS MYSTERIES. I WILL NOT REVEAL WHAT HAPPENS TO TRUDY.)

A passage from one of my stories follows.

A lady named Trudy has just joined a writers’ group of people, led from its beginning. A small town. Nothing holds it back!

We are fortunate indeed. That’s what makes the writing in people that think alike. That’s what makes the writing in people that think alike.

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NOTL skaters win medals

Skaters from the NOTL Skating Club competed in the Super Series – Brampton Flower City Invitational Competition held Feb. 15 to 17 in Brampton. Pictured left to right: Audrey Morrison, Jeong Lee, Marin McLaughlin, Ashley Backshall, Kyra Marotta, Ashleen Hale, Tatum Lyric Bidal, Soraya Felice, Mira Strickland (absent Rachael Hunter).

1st - Kyra Marotta (Pre-Novice Women)
5th - Ashleen Hale (Pre-Novice Women)
5th - Mira Strickland (STAR 5-U10)
6th - Soraya Felice (STAR 5-U13)
6th - Marin McLaughlin (Pre-Novice Women)
8th - Jeong Lee (STAR 5-U13)
10th - Ashley Backshall (STAR 9)
11th - Tatum Lyric Bidal (Juvenile Women-U14)
11th - Rachael Hunter – (STAR 8 and STAR 9)
13th - Ashley Backshall (STAR 10)
13th - Audrey Morrison (Novice Women)
14th - Mira Strickland (STAR 7)

High winds down power lines

Strong winds caused fallen trees and power outage throughout Niagara-on-the-Lake Sunday afternoon.

“We’re still receiving calls but we’ve got over a dozen calls so far about power outages in the city,” NOTL Hydro spokesperson told The Lake Report Sunday afternoon.

Outages were reported across town.

Local horse and rider grace pages of Horse Sport magazine

Leslie McCormick and chestnut thoroughbred Alex’s Love have a long and successful history of competing together, but the first place red ribbon they won together at the last Royal Horse show was especially sweet. McCormick, an experienced coach and competitor, says Alex “was always the bridesmaid but never the bride” over their many years of competing at the Royal. Alex always competed reliably, and brought many ribbons home to Red Ribbon Stables, the family run barn on Concession #6 in Niagara-on-the-Lake where McCormick coaches and trains, but until now, never a first. Their big win is documented in the February edition of Horse Sport magazine, noting they “won the Thoroughbred Senior Performance Under Saddle class.” Alex first arrived at Red Ribbon Stables as a young racehorse, to spend winters there between racing seasons. He had a long and successful racing career, with 83 starts, 13 wins, 16 seconds, and 13 thirds, with career earnings of $190,323.00. McCormick says she loved his “movement, conformation, and manners” from the start, so when his racing career was over, McCormick sought out his owners and bought him so he could come to Red Ribbon Stables to stay, more than 10 years ago. “What you see is what you get with Alex,” says McCormick. “He’s a great asset to the farm, with a steady sweet disposition and lovely movement. He’s absolutely reliable, he would never do anything rotten.” Alex has helped many young riders get started in the school at Red Ribbon Stables, while also competing with advanced riders. McCormick has a soft spot for thoroughbreds. Alex is one of 14 thoroughbreds living at Red Ribbon Stables, some owned by McCormick, and others who board at the barn. She says “the breed has been stigmatised as a high energy horse, but it all comes down to individual temperament. Thoroughbreds are a very versatile breed, they can come off the race track and become successful at almost any discipline, from hunter or jumper, to eventing, or even western barrel rac- ing.” One of McCormick’s newest thoroughbreds, a big chestnut named Curly, came off the track in mid-September, and competed at the Royal Horse show just weeks later, in November. McCormick notes with some pride that “Curly placed 5th and 6th in the Junior Thoroughbred Under Saddle class.”

In addition to competing throughout the summer show season and at The Royal, McCormick trains horses, coaches riders, and hosts horse shows at Red Ribbon Stables. The lesson program has students of all ages, the youngest being 3 years old, the eldest at 60, with everything in between, and riders range from absolute beginners to advanced competitors. For more information visit the website at redribbon-stables.com
Mahjong community helps keeps minds active while building friendships

Jer Houghton  
The Lake Report

When Lesley Walsh first moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake from Newmarket more than five years ago, she turned to the NOTL Newcomers group to stay active after retirement.

What she didn’t know, was how an ancient Chinese game would foster so many lasting new friendships.

At the time, members from the group were meeting regularly to play Mahjong (also referred to as, Mah Jongg), a Chinese tile-based game that hones in on concentration, memory and strategy.

“A couple of the ladies got together and taught me the game, and I got absolutely hooked on it, very, very quickly,” Walsh says. “Each hand is a challenge.”

Played in groups of four or three (and rarely two), the tile-based game is complex, and not something that you can just sit in on.

It revolves around 54 hand sequences dictated by the Mahjong card, which changes at the beginning of every April.

“(That’s) what also makes this game so interesting and why so many people like it to keep their memory going,” Walsh says.

Walsh says the game constantly keeps your mind active by trying to quickly figure out what hands players are trying to play while trying to win yours.

“It’s extremely good for keeping your brain active. Think of it as a skill game, strategy game, memory game to know what tiles have been given out,” she says.

Since arriving to NOTL, Walsh says the popularity of the game has increased “ten-fold” in town.

You can now find an organized Mahjong at weekly drop-ins played at the community centre and bi-monthly games through the NOTL Newcomers – it’s even spread into residents’ homes where groups meet to play and rotate from house to house each week.

“It’s unbelievable the play at the different venues,” she says, explaining that at some houses there are anywhere from two to four tables playing at one time for upwards of three hours.

“In the group I’m with, there’s eight of us that meet but I know of 20 to 30 women who belong to different groups, and they’re all doing this.”

Depending on the venue and group playing, each table will have different rules to make the game more challenging and enjoyable, and this is why training has become such a big aspect to starting, Walsh explains.

Walsh says she started doing a lot of training because of the amount of interest from so many people wanting to learn. Though a lot of her training is through the NOTL Newcomers, she trains her sorority club and has trained friends, acquaintances and couples in the past.

“I just started training a number of women, and then my name got out, and now I do a lot of training for the newcomers that are coming in,” she says.

“It’s not one of those games that you can just go and sit and watch how it’s played because there are a fair amount of rules and you have to have an understanding of how the tiles work.”

She says she typically takes four to six people at a time over three weeks, which starts with learning how to set up the game, understanding the different types of tiles and knowing how each group of tiles are paired.

She says the second and third sessions are more about reinforcing the moves and strategies in how to start matching the patterns and tiles and being able to move around the card.

“That’s why I do this over three sessions, then they’re not intimidated by some of the more experienced players because they will feel more comfortable in being able to ask questions,” Walsh adds.

“When you go out after you’ve had your training, however you get trained, most people say, ‘I’ve had training, but I am new.’ Everybody’s been in that position, so they don’t mind helping people out and answering lots of questions like, ‘Can I do this? Or, I can put this? Will this work?’

To be trained in the game of Mahjong by Walsh, she is asking anyone interested to contact the community centre by leaving your information with the main desk and a group training session can be arranged.

For anyone looking to drop-in and play, the community centre offers Mahjong every Friday in the Mori room from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Residents can also join the NOTL Newcomers Mahjong group to play.

“It’s just continually grown and grown – you go into the community centre at any time and you’ll always see someone with a game of Mahjong going on,” she says.

“Everybody’s always wanting to make sure that they keep active. It’s a social game, you’re out meeting new people, but most of all, you’re keeping your brain active.”
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Bill Tatarnic: An eye out for scenery

Amateur photographer keeps his work in the family

Bill Tatarnic snapping photos in NOTL. BRITTANY CARTER

Photography is a family affair for Bill Tatarnic. An amateur photographer focusing on scenery shots in Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Niagara region, Tatarnic, 55, said he has been pursuing the hobby steadily over the last few years.

He encouraged his daughter, Cassandra, to explore photography during camping trips when his family was young.

"When we started camping with the family, she wasn't too interested in (camping). So, I decided to give her the camera and let her take family photos and stuff like that."

He said he became an impromptu chauffeur for his daughter, assisting her on her photographic journey by driving her to shoot pictures all over town. He suggested which photos to take and where she should point the camera. When she began taking more of an interest and asserting her independence, Tatarnic said he wasn't ready to call it quits.

"When she became more independent, I thought, well I really want to take a picture of these things."

He said that’s when the hobby started to take hold. Since then, he said his daughter has been working up to a photography career after studying at Sheridan College. She shoots weddings on her own and is employed with a studio, growing her portfolio on the road to her own photography company, Tatarnic said. As for him, he said he’s strictly a hobbyist.

"For me, it’s more a hobby, I think it’s really hard to get into photography as a career. Seeing my daughter go through it, and other people I’ve talked to online; there’s a lot of competition."

Using a Panasonic G9, he said he’s usually out snapping photos by himself.

While shooting in the winter is tough because the sun isn’t as prominent, he said he does enjoy the peace around town in the colder months.

"Winter is hard because it’s not as sunny. The sun really helps with the quality of the pictures. It’s gloomy in winter, so it’s hard to take really good shots."

There is an upside to winter photography, though.

"There are opportunities with the ice and the snow. I like Niagara-on-the-Lake downtown, I like taking pictures at night. There are no crowds in your way."

Experiencing new opportunities and learning along the way, Tatarnic said he’s open to furthering his knowledge of the craft. A co-worker and friend of his is also into photography, Tatarnic said he mentioned taking a course down the road.

"That’s something I’d like to get into."

He’s had some playful run-ins with animals as well. A red fox came right up to him while he was shooting one day, he said it must have caught scent of a granola bar he had earlier.

"I think he was just looking for food. He went right inside my jacket."

Another time, he said a bird landed on his head, "I think it was playing with me, trying to show off to its friends."

Taking the opportunity to learn more about historic buildings in NOTL, Tatarnic said he will often take photos of the name of a building so he can learn more about it when he gets home.

While he said he doesn’t see himself taking photography past the hobby level, that’s for his daughter, he does plan to continue taking scenery shots around town and the region.

"It’s something I’ve really enjoyed."

His pictures can be viewed on his Instagram page under the username @bylt63.

Old Town on a winter’s night by Bill Tatarnic.