



Actor's gig is out of this world | Page 10



Lincoln County Humane Society takes over NOTL animal control

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The Lincoln County Humane Society is now handling all animal-related needs in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The agency was awarded a joint contract between NOTL and the Town of Grimsby to take over animal services at the end of December.

It is a four-year contract, Lincoln County Humane Society executive director

Continued on Page 11



Ashley Simpson makes final trip home to NOTL

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

With the remains of Ashley Simpson finally brought home, her parents Cindy and John Simpson say they are relieved.

"This is what we wanted. We wanted her home," Cindy said as she sat beside the urn holding her daughter's ashes.

Ashley, who was 32, went missing in 2016 in a remote community in British Columbia. Her remains were discovered in Decem-

Continued on Page 5

Polar vortex spurs icewine harvest

Group of keen photographers joins to capture the magic at Pillitteri Estates



Jamie Slingerland, director of viniculture at Pillitteri Estates Winery, drives the Great Grape Gobbler harvester early Tuesday morning. Some growers picked grapes a week earlier when the temperature dropped to -10C. **Read the full story on Page 12.** LARRY MATHEWSON PHOTO

Restaurateurs adapt to yet another lockdown

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

With a weary sense of déjà vu, NOTL restaurateurs have once again closed their doors to indoor diners and turned their focus to takeout food.

Chairs are empty, cardboard cartons are piled on tables and servers take orders over the phone.

Some are open seven days a week, while others have reduced their hours to four or five days weekly. Others have

decided not to open at all.

The shift to takeout is familiar territory and the impact on their businesses is top of mind, but all business owners worry most about their employees.

At The Grist, in St. Davids, proprietor Rob Begin says, "I've got 42 employees to worry about every day, because we can't keep them all working right now."

Begin is concerned for their well-being and also wonders whether some will

come back.

For Ruffino's executive chef and owner Ryan Crawford, keeping everyone healthy and happy is job one. "Our biggest mandate is to keep as many people employed as possible, in a safe work environment."

David McDonald, the general manager at Bricks & Barley in Virgil, says, "We'll have to see what's feasible as we go on. We're trying to keep people employed and contribute to the community

with specials and family deals."

The Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit will give eligible workers up to \$300 per week, but Garrison House chef/owner David Watt notes the support for laid-off workers is inadequate.

"Hopefully they up the ante. How can someone live on \$300 a week?"

It's a sentiment echoed by Paul Dietsch, co-owner of the Sandtrap Pub.

"Staff are discouraged and

worried financially. Christmas just ended and most people spent a little bit there. What family can live on \$300 a week?" he said.

Ravine Estate Winery co-proprietor Paul Harber said, "We have 150 staff at our peak and 80 at this time of year, but we can't keep them all now. We'll keep as many as we can employed, working on summer programs and event planning."

Continued on Page 8

Average NOTL house prices break the \$1 million barrier

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

House prices in Niagara-on-the-Lake soared to record levels in 2021

and the president of the Niagara Association of Realtors sees no sign of the trend abating.

The benchmark average price for homes sold in NOTL last year broke

through the \$1 million barrier for the first time as prices jumped about 33 per cent.

Doug Rempel, of Bosley Real Estate in NOTL and president of the regional association, expects home sales across Niagara will continue to climb.

"I think the demand of people coming to the Niagara Region is not going

to subside," Rempel said in an interview Tuesday.

"I believe that we may very well have an increase greater than what may be projected nationally," he added.

While it's impossible to predict with certainty, across the country prices are expected to rise about 7.5

Continued on Page 9



Doug Rempel, president of the Niagara Association of Realtors, predicts prices will keep rising. RICHARD HARLEY



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Apartment project will be 'wholesale destruction' of Old Town, residents say

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents came out in force Monday against a planned apartment development on the old Parliament Oak school site, suggesting the proposal could signify the end of Old Town as it is known.

"What we're confronting here is the very future of our town and its heritage," 45-year NOTL resident Jim Reynolds told an online open house hosted by the town.

More than 35 residents signed up to speak out against the development during a committee of the whole meeting which lasted nearly six hours. No residents spoke in favour of the project.

The only supportive comments came from town planner Mark Iamarino, reading comments from an anonymous resident. Iamarino noted it was the only letter received in support of the project.

"The proposal contributes significantly to the sustainability, livability and opportunities in Old Town. The existing housing market is extremely exclusive and this proposal would allow the community to accommodate a new variety of individuals," Iamarino read.

"This individual also said that a three-storey building would not destroy our town."

Residents attending the open house had a very different opinion.

"What (developer Liberty Sites (3) Ltd.) is proposing is the wholesale destruction of the geographic centre of the Old Town," Reynolds said.

"It's as if an alien species has descended on our town with a malignancy so profound that we can only recoil in horror and dismay."

Reynolds compared the current proposal of a 300-foot-long and 40-foot tall apartment on King Street to the burning of NOTL during the War of 1812 after being betrayed by a Canadian turncoat named Joseph Wilcox.

"What remained was a

smoking ruin of foundations and chimneys," he said.

"We now stand and face another invader but one who pretends that his actions are benign and will enhance our town," Reynolds said of the developer.

"Nothing could be further from the truth. If this development is approved, it will stand for a century as a monument to folly, short-sightedness and greed."

Reynolds said the future of Old Town will "live or die by this decision."

He was far from alone in that sentiment and others expressed fears that if the apartments are approved it will open the floodgates for high-density development throughout the historic centre.

Janice Thomson, the Niagara Foundation's president, spoke at length about her opposition to the project.

"Do you see this as a first step, in terms of the next developer coming in and using Parliament Oak as an example of being compatible?" Lord Mayor Betty Disero asked Thomson.

"On behalf of the foundation, I would say absolutely yes," Thomson answered.

The fear of the precedent became a focal point for speakers.

"This building goes the whole block. We have nothing like it. It's absolutely wrong," Paul Shepherd said.

"If this calamitous development is allowed to proceed, a dangerous precedent will be set and, trust me, many more will follow," said Alan Gordon, a nearby resident and vocal critic of the plan.

Liberty Sites is proposing to have the land rezoned as medium-density residential.

On behalf of Liberty Sites, Paul DeMelo proposed a density of roughly 22 units per acre.

Marilyn Bartlett, one of the first speakers, pointed out the definition of medium density in the town's official plan is 12 units per acre and further argued the true density of the proposed development is 27 units per acre.

Gordon said the surrounding lands have a density of 3.5 units per acre and any build should be compatible with that number.

Several residents, such as Bartlett, said they were fine with the land being developed for residential use so long as it was low density only.

DeMelo spoke to three specific areas of criticism of the development. Regarding density, he said under the official plan the land can have increased density if an analysis shows there would be minimal impact on the surrounding neighbourhood.

He addressed the building's height. At roughly 12 metres

"It's as if an alien species has descended on our town with a malignancy so profound that we can only recoil in horror and dismay."

JIM REYNOLDS
NOTL RESIDENT

tall, the apartment would be taller than the official plan's recommended height of 11 metres.

"There's not a prohibition against additional building height," he argued, saying while it was taller than what the official plan recommends, that plan does allow for taller buildings.

DeMelo spoke against arguments the site is not appropriate for intensification, saying the area was not considered for intensification because it was a school when intensification areas were being identified.

"In our respectful submission, had the school closed when (intensification areas) were being contemplated, this site would have met the characteristics for an appropriate infill intensification site," he said.

Resident Joan Pruitt addressed DeMelo's points one by one.



A rendering of the proposal from King and Gage streets. SUPPLIED

Regarding intensification, she said his argument is entirely hypothetical and shouldn't be focused on.

"What we need to focus on is what is currently under our official plan and the current designation (for Parliament Oak) is not medium density," she said.

Regarding the density, Pruitt said the argument is erroneous because the development would have a negative impact on the surrounding neighbourhood.

"I don't think (Liberty Sites) have provided any accurate description or demonstrated anything that would say this is minimal impact," she said.

Regarding the building's height, Pruitt agreed council has the power to allow taller buildings in Old Town.

But council could also "limit building heights to below 11 metres" in low-density residential areas, she said.

Pruitt encouraged the town to consider making the building height even less if the project moves ahead.

Several residents told council they felt the developer was disrespecting the town's official plan.

"It seems a little bit out of line to ask the council to throw out all of the work that you've done (on the official plan) so that the developer can build what they would like and maximize profits," Pruitt said.

"Submissions for this property have to be in alignment with our official plan or what is the purpose of council devoting so many hours to ensure we have an official plan that dictates the development of our town?" Bartlett read from a letter on behalf of 37-year NOTL resident Judy Pepe.

Bartlett asked council why the town should make "any amendments to the zoning

bylaw or our official plan" to accommodate the developer's wants.

"Why? Why would you let this happen? Why would you step so far away from the official plan? And why would you allow something this big to happen in an established residential area?" Lyle Hall rhetorically asked councillors.

While still focused on the details of the three-storey, 300-foot-long structure, residents shared their fears that the approval of the development would be the end of Old Town as they know it.

"Don't just get that property for the taxes it's going to bring us, no. Think of the future," said retired science teacher Leon Martin.

"We can save the property. We can put in something really decent and people will share that with their grandchildren and so on. Not something like this, which we can see all over Toronto and every place else."

The proposal includes more than 140 parking spaces for cars, which some residents saw as a way to highlight the influx of vehicle traffic the development would bring.

"160 cars in one single town block," resident Eduardo Paraffin said. "This is crazy."

Carl Finkle shared the same view, adding his concern over the extra cars coming into the neighbourhood as a result of visitors.

He pointed out that the apartment building has 71 proposed units, whereas the property would have 146 parking spaces. If each unit had two cars then there would only be four spaces for visitors, meaning cars could be parking all over the neighbourhood streets, he said.

Several speakers said quality of life in the area would be severely hampered.

Peace, tranquillity and the local ecosystem would be "all gone. All to be replaced by traffic, noise, cars, lights, garbage trucks, service vehicles and a monstrous apartment building blocking our view," Gordon read from a letter submitted to new residential group called Preserve Our Special Town.

Gordon said the apartment could be a breeding ground for short-term rentals.

"We're already experiencing a substantial hollowing out of our permanent residents. And, yes, we know that illegal short-term rentals are not officially allowed in apartment buildings, but that won't stop them from happening," he said.

In response to the hours of resident testimony against the development, Disero proposed a motion and shared her concern that the apartment would set a precedent for approving similar buildings in Old Town.

She also was concerned with routinely hearing from the developer and the planning department that the proposal is "acceptable."

"When you're looking at and judging things on what is acceptable, what you end up with is something that's mediocre, at best," she said.

"And I think Niagara-on-the-Lake is more remarkable than mediocre. All of these things have been eating away at me over the holidays."

Disero then proposed a motion asking town staff to consider the amount of green space required to acknowledge the history of the site, the long-term impact of introducing medium density to the area and the impact of the development on the cultural character of Old Town.

The motion was passed unanimously. Coun. Erwin Wiens was absent.



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Here comes the cold ...



Caroline Montgomery and her pup Henri enjoy a brisk walk in freezing temperatures on Tuesday. EVAN SAUNDERS



Left: A jogger braves the freezing temperatures on Tuesday while running down Queen Street. Right: Bulky, warm jackets were the norm on Queen Street as NOTL made its way through a deep freeze. EVAN SAUNDERS

Town planning chief Craig Larmour retiring

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



Director of community and development services Craig Larmour. SUPPLIED

Chief planner Craig Larmour is retiring from the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake on Friday.

"Craig will be sincerely missed," chief administrative officer Marnie Cluckie said during Monday's committee of the whole meeting.

Larmour's planned retirement was revealed internally several weeks before Christmas but is only being announced publicly now.

He has been director of

development and community services since 2016 and previously worked

for several other Niagara municipalities, including Lincoln, West Lincoln and Pelham.

"Craig has really been a pillar at the town and we will be forever grateful to him for his dedication to the community," Cluckie said.

"He's an incredibly kind and thoughtful leader who sets a very strong example by working hard, setting the bar high and committing himself to the organization, to continuous improvement and to the endless possibilities for the future of Niagara-on-the-Lake."

"I can't think of anyone more deserving of a bit of rest and relaxation now."

Rick Wilson, manager of planning, will temporarily fill Larmour's role while a full-time replacement is sought.

In a news release, Lord Mayor Betty Disero said, "Craig has been a pillar of wisdom, leadership and integrity for the town."

"On behalf of council, I extend my heartfelt thanks to Craig for his guidance and dedication to this community and wish him a very happy retirement."



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Canadian kids will be Canadian kids as a group of teens took to the Virgil community rink to play some hockey against the rules. EVAN SAUNDERS

Community rink needs **volunteer** supervisors

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Everything is in place for the community ice rink in Virgil's Centennial Sports Park to start getting used, except some volunteers to help supervise it.

"We just need some more volunteers to help out," rink organizer Paolo Miele said in an interview.

The original plan was for the 40- by 80-foot rink to be open about 12 hours a day, from about 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Miele said.

But without enough volunteers it is looking like the rink only will be open from 4 until 9 p.m. on weekdays, he said.

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has said insurance requirements mean the ice cannot be used if there are no supervisors, a stipulation Miele wasn't entirely ready for.

"Do I agree with it? No. (But) the town is requesting

supervision, so that's what we need," he said.

"It's all about the amount of volunteers we can get. As we get more volunteers and more supervision we can extend those hours."

With Premier Doug Ford's announcement that kids will be back in school on Jan. 17, Miele said the after-school hours should be appropriate for the time being.

Miele would like to have the rink open longer on the weekends but, once again, more volunteers are needed.

If people wish to volunteer they can get in touch with Miele on Facebook or message the "NOTL outdoor ice rink" group on the social media site.

People can also reach out directly to the town to let officials know they are willing to volunteer.

In an interview, Lord Mayor Betty Disero said the issue of supervision was not created by town staff but is a requirement of their insurance provider.

"I did discuss it with other outdoor rink operators and they all said their insurance requires a supervisor," Disero said.

As a result, volunteer names and a volunteer schedule need to be submitted to the town so it can go to their insurance, she said.

The need for a supervisor also has nothing to do with COVID-19 and would be mandatory any time, Disero said.

That being said, supervisors will need to ensure COVID protocols are followed, such as limiting the number of people on the ice to 30 at a time and respecting social distancing among strangers.

Disero said she has been talking to as many people as she can and asking them to consider volunteering for the rink.

Helmets are mandatory and hockey is not allowed, according to the posted signage. People are also asked to wear masks, Miele said.

He said high school students who need volunteer

hours are welcome to apply as supervisors.

Disero agreed about possibly having high school students volunteer but had reservations about the idea.

"I'm not sure that they would want to, just because if another group decides they're gonna come in and play hockey, how does a high school student say to them, 'Get off the ice. You can't play hockey,'" she said.

But Disero is excited to see the rink getting used.

"I'm anxious to see people skating, people outdoors, walking around. Because that seems to be the way we're going to be moving through this winter."

"This is what Niagara-on-the-Lake is all about," volunteer Martin Mazza said at the rink on Wednesday morning.

"It's good, clean, wholesome fun. It's safe. We want people to have fun in this time of doom and gloom," he said.

Mazza gave all credit to

Miele for organizing the rink building initiative.

Miele said building the rink was about providing fun and safe activities for NOTL's youth and families.

"With COVID, people need to be outside. We're encouraging people to be outside."

On Tuesday night, Miele, Mazza and Phil Leboudec, owner of the Independent Grocer in Virgil, braved freezing temperatures to finish flooding the rink.

They'll be flooding it two to three times a week to ensure the surface is smooth or whenever it needs a fresh coat of water. Since the rink is located in Centennial Sports Park, water is readily available to keep the ice skate-ready.

Miele hopes this is the first rink of many for the town.

"That's what we want. We want it to continue," Miele said.

He said building only one rink this year allows the volunteers to focus on

getting it right. He hopes to build more rinks throughout the community next year.

"This year, this is obviously a learning curve. It takes a little bit of homework and there were some pitfalls and hurdles to overcome," he said.

Miele has an even bolder vision for future rinks at Centennial Park.

"We're talking about putting in a permanent ball hockey rink. So kids can play ball hockey in the off-season and then we can actually turn that ball hockey rink into an ice rink," he said.

"Hopefully, we do a lot more for families and kids in the community. I think that's what it's all about."

The rink cost about \$5,000 to build and start operating – all raised through community donations.

"I want to thank everyone involved and everyone that came forward to donate to make this happen. Thank you to the town and staff," Miele said.

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Ashley Simpson makes the final trip home

Continued from Front Page

ber 2021 and her boyfriend, Derek Favell, has been charged with second-degree murder.

After waiting nearly a month to bring their daughter home, the Simpsons received a call on New Year's Day from a funeral home informing them their daughter had been cremated.

John flew out the next day and was back home with his daughter in less than 48 hours.

Cindy said it was the best Christmas present she could have asked for.

After six years of searching for his daughter and hoping to find answers, John said the moment of collecting her ashes was more difficult than he was expecting.

"You finally get to that point where you are in a funeral home in B.C. and she's there. It's ... it's different," said a visibly emotional John.

"You finally got that physical moment, as much of a physical moment as you can have with ashes in a box. It was just a little bit more gripping than I thought it would be."

With the recent restrictions implemented by the province to curb the spread of COVID-19, the Simpsons have decided to postpone a formal funeral service until a large group can be safely gathered.

"I was really hoping to get (the service) done as quick as possible so we can have this phase over," John said.

Regardless of how quickly restrictions are lifted, he wants to have a service before the family gets involved with the upcoming criminal proceedings over Ashley's alleged murderer.

"I think the (court cases) will be harder, the hardest thing, to be dealing with all the stuff that comes with that," John said.

"You know, the he said, she said, what other people have said. I don't know what to expect."

John's best hope is for a guilty plea so the family can have justice and not have their suffering drawn out further. But he is not optimistic about that outcome, given that Ashley's body remained hidden for six years.



Cindy and John Simpson stand with Ashley's urn in the kitchen of their NOTL home. Ashley's remains were discovered in December 2021. EVAN SAUNDERS

If found guilty, "I hope he never gets out of jail, but that's not for me to decide." However, he worries there might be a lenient sentencing and the pain the family endured through six years of Ashley's missing will not be taken into account.

"The hardship and the anguish, the emotions and everything else" have been difficult, he said. Her killer "shouldn't be able to get away with that."

As the couple, who have been together for more than 40 years, spoke about their daughter, their two dogs barked for attention. Gypsy, a one-year-old German shepherd, was bought by John for his wife to help her cope with Ashley's disappearance.

Gypsy has her own special relationship with Ashley.

When Cindy went to pick up Gypsy from a dog breeder, the breeder recognized the Simpson name.

"He said, 'Is your daughter Ashley?' I said, 'Yeah. Why?' He said, 'Nitro, the father of Gypsy and I went on a search for Ashley the year she went missing,'" Cindy said.

Ashley also had "gypsy" tattooed on her arm, hence the pup's name.

Bringing Ashley home has enabled a collective sigh of relief for the family in some respects, but the finality has also proven difficult.

"Lucas, my grandson, he's having a bit of an issue," John said.

"He said, 'Nana, I thought Auntie Ashley had just run away.' I said, 'Why would she run away from this family?'" Cindy said with a laugh.

"It hit him really hard. Not when we said she was found but when John and Amanda went to go bring her home. That's when it really hit him."

The first thing Cindy said when she held her daughter's urn was, "You're grounded. You're not going out anywhere."

But one of Cindy's nieces asked her if Ashley could visit for a sleepover.

"So, I'm letting her go for one sleepover," Cindy said.

John said it is "absolutely" important for him to continue raising awareness about missing persons in Canada and create a positive legacy for his daughter.

"The more we can do to help others and bring awareness to the situation, I think the better off that we'll be as a family," John said.

And he isn't just saying that. Katrina Blagdon, a 37-year-old woman from St. Catharines, was declared missing on Jan. 2. John has been out for dozens of hours searching for her in Short Hills Provincial Park.

"Keep paying it forward. Keep showing that there are possibilities, that there are people with passion and

that if we all got together we can make changes," he said.

John said the Canadian government doesn't do enough for missing persons. "We had no (financial) help (from the government) until after the body was found," John said.

The family faced extreme financial hardship while Ashley was missing. They spent lots of money on flights to search for her in British Columbia and due to the trauma were unable to work, sleep and even eat for extended periods of time.

"It's hard to wonder how, as you're grieving and trying to find your lost child, how you're going to pay the rent because you're not working any more, and put food on the table for the rest of the family," he said.

"We know what it's like and we want to help people out of that situation and bring more families closure."

John is an advocate for increased financial support for families with missing members and encourages all Canadians to help in any capacity they can, lamenting that communities do not always rally together to find missing members any more. He thinks putting missing persons pictures back on milk cartons would even be a good start.

"What stops a country from trying to find its citizens who have gone missing?" he asked.



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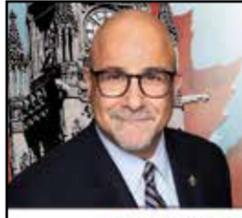


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The Local Journalism Initiative is funded by the Government of Canada.

COVID Tracker

NOTL active cases: 177

Region active cases: 5,552

Region deaths: 451

Region total cases: 27,044

Region resolved cases: 21,041

**Jan. 12 data per Niagara Region Public Health.*

Public health warns that "Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, limited availability of testing, and changes to case and contact management practices, case counts shown below are an underestimate of the true number of individuals in Niagara with COVID-19. Data should be interpreted with caution."



Contributed by Patty Garriock

"Be content with what you have, rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you." - Lao Tzu.

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Chilling out

Overnight on Monday, with the polar vortex paying a visit, the annual shoreline ice pack and snow buildup on Lake Ontario suddenly appeared, several weeks earlier than a year ago. We might see some relief from the deep freeze over the next week, but there's no doubt that winter is here. **Calling all NOTL photographers: send us some of your interesting, evocative, quirky images of life around town and we'll consider them for this space on our editorial page. Email images (1 MB or more) to editor@niagaranow.com.** KEVIN MACLEAN

Editorial

Positive reflections

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

As we hunker down in the midst of a January cold snap, with COVID lockdown measures again wreaking havoc with our lives and businesses, and Omicron making many leery of even running an errand, let's all try to make lemonade from these lemons.

Two Niagara-on-the-Lake friends we wrote about this week showcased an admirable, positive attitude: All bundled up, Jean Stewart and Magdalena Titian didn't let Tuesday's -15C temperatures deter them from a sociable walk and talk and an outdoor cuppa coffee.

In keeping with such positive sentiments, let's warm up with a few other "good news" reflections.

No, NOTLers do not have a drinking problem (that we are aware of). We

just had a lot of empties saved up from the past few months and at depots all over town last Saturday residents dropped off more than 20,000 empties for the 809 Newark Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron's bottle drive. Well done.

Kudos to town council for (so far) budgeting \$15,000 to add a rainbow crosswalk, somewhere, in NOTL, despite some opposition.

The NOTL Rotary Club was at it again, giving \$4,000 to help ensure the Pumphouse's Healing Arts for Kids program can carry on this summer.

Congrats to our grape growers on an early and successful icewine harvest. A positive outcome of those freezing temps.

Kudos to St. Davids hockey star Tai York, who this week saw a major dream realized when he became a full-time mem-

ber of the Ontario Hockey League's Barrie Colts. And he is scheduled to be home Thursday to play against the IceDogs, but with no fans, family or friends allowed in the stands.

And speaking of on-ice pursuits, a hearty thank you to Paulo Miele, Martin Mazza, Phil Leboudec and the many volunteers who have made the new Virgil outdoor skating rink a reality. Now, they need community volunteers to step up, again, to help supervise the rink. Insurance rules require it.

Live long and prosper: Kudos to NOTL actor Tara Rosling for scoring a major role in the latest "Star Trek" series.

Congrats to Alitura, which used to be the venerable Harvest Barn, for rebranding and refocusing its business model, despite the pandemic. It's an aggressive and gutsy choice and we wish them well.

The same goes for our two other major food purveyors, the Valumarts which are now the Independents. No matter the name, we've all relied on them for essentials, especially over the past two years.

And thank you to all those who are supporting NOTL businesses adversely affected by the pandemic, whether it's choosing first to shop local or ordering takeout from restaurants that aren't allowed to offer indoor dining. Please make sure you see our four-page Upper Canada Food Guide pullout, which features menus of many of the town's restaurants.

It's our small way of trying to help readers and restaurants connect. We encourage you to support them.

These are tough times for everyone, so let's stay positive and weather the (latest) storm.

editor@niagaranow.com



Let's make flag for Queen's Royal Park a priority



Dear editor:

In early November, Lake Report columnist Ross Robinson, wrote a totally compelling article in your paper advocating the installation of a Canadian flag in Queen's Royal Park.

His reasons for asking this be done were so obvious that I could not understand why this had not been undertaken many years ago.

Regrettably, I have not heard anything further on this initiative, despite the knowledge that the town has received assurance of complete financial coverage of any potential cost from generous donors Tom and Jim Caldwell.

What is the problem? Do some in the town always look a gift horse in the mouth? (The junction of Mississauga and Queen

streets comes to mind.)

Perhaps there are some reasons we are not aware of that would hinder this project, but I, for one, cannot think of any.

Please, madam mayor, over to you.

Let's get that flag up soonest so it is there when we welcome many visitors this year for the Canada Summer Games.

Don Chambers
NOTL

What's the majority opinion on Pride crosswalk?

Dear editor:

In order for your readers to appreciate your published survey in its full context, ("Residents split on idea of rainbow crosswalk, Lake Report survey finds," Jan. 6), I think that a couple of issues need to be addressed.

a) The current population of NOTL is about 18,000. Using your own numbers of 175 and 146 pro and con respondents, this translates into 0.0097 per cent of the population in favour and 0.0081 per cent of the population against the idea.

Either way, this represents less than one per cent of the entire population, which is an insignificant number and is too small to be extrapolated. This result is not unlike the failed survey carried

out by the town inclusivity committee and is, again, not very helpful.

Even though considered of fundamental importance by many, the majority opinion has still not been evaluated and it appears council has budgeted \$15,000 for a rainbow crosswalk anyway.

And judging from your report, only the location of the crosswalk is still to be determined.

If this is the case, it shows that majority input and opinion is not as important as a minority agenda in council making a decision, and can be conveniently ignored.

This follows the recommendation of the town's un-elected inclusivity committee.

b) The survey asks for

confirmation of residency. It does not ask whether the respondent is a permanent tax-paying resident or simply a short-term renter.

Both are considered the same for the purpose of this survey even though in this case the distinction obviously means a huge difference, with the former having a valid and strong interest in how public property in the historic Old Town is used and for what purpose, particularly if it is to be considered permanent.

In my opinion, there is a basic dishonesty in this issue when it appears that both council and a minority group with a specific agenda are making an effort to ignore majority public input and are not interested in the fact that without it

and without public approval and endorsement it amounts to nothing more than a false statement of support and inclusivity.

Derek Collins
NOTL

Editor's note: Mr. Collins again presents an argument that the "majority" of residents may not be in favour of a Pride crosswalk. This is despite two surveys showing there is a majority of support (though, admittedly by narrow margins). While we appreciate the fact that 400 survey respondents is a small percentage of the town's population, we also remind readers that Mr. Collins' viewpoint is not supported by any data and is also not an opinion shared by this newspaper.

Dismissive response on gateway was unmerited

Dear editor:

I respectfully disagree with the dismissive and cavalier attitude of John Buchanan in his Dec. 16 letter, "Gateway bump out is no cause for concern," describing the bump out at the intersection of Queen and Mississauga streets as minor and not a safety concern.

He was responding to my letter published Dec. 9.

Are we to repeat the York Road and Concession 6 intersection safety debacle, whereby repeated complaints and accidents were ignored until overwhelming evidence forced a reactive remedial response?

Meanwhile at the gateway intersection we have a

scenario where the bump out merges outgoing traffic on Queen into a straight line with the incoming traffic from Chautauqua.

Accordingly, should either party run a stop sign, the result is a head-on crash. Never have I witnessed a scenario where a bump out aligns you with an oncoming traffic lane. Perhaps my mechanical and aeronautical engineering background afforded me to rapidly conclude this bump out defies, in my professional opinion, acceptable highway safety standards. It flies in the face of common sense.

This is hardly an ideal situation in a town where seniors have already driven

into two banks, the same one twice (Royal Bank), the CIBC, one restaurant and one convenience store, for a total of five incidents.

I, too, regularly navigate this location, but not without incident. Horn blowing by aggressive, impatient drivers is common, in addition to several near-miss crashes.

Nerves are frayed and patience is in short supply in these COVID-19 pandemic times. Statistically, during this same time period, police are witnessing an alarming increase in both speeding and crashes.

I respect both complimentary or constructive criticism of my views. Showing deference to

others' opinions and participating in a spirited and lively debate typically results in better decision-making. Echo chambers rarely work.

On the other hand, flip-pant trash-talking commentaries attacking the author's character have zero journalistic value. Instead they lay bare the true character of the attacker.

I respectfully request town administrator Mar-nie Cluckie to undertake a serious, sympathetic second review of this intersection design, and give due consideration to an accident victim's consequential life-changing injuries or death.

Samuel Young
NOTL

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205

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Above: Preparing takeout food at The Garrison House. Below: Takeout boxes are piled on dining tables at Pieza Pizzeria. JILL TROYER

NOTL restaurants **adapt, again,** to COVID lockdown restrictions

Continued from Front Page

The provincial government has announced some financial support for businesses and while all say everything helps, the communication has been late and the amount has been reduced from previous lockdowns.

"Restaurants operate on razor-thin margins to start with, so this makes it really difficult," Harber said. "We've been here before. We're trying to stem the bleeding as much as possible. It's a cash flow management game. We still have to pay all of our fixed costs."

Costs, which in some cases, have gone up significantly.

Laryssa Cesta, co-owner of Pieza Pizzeria in Old Town, notes "cheese just went up 7.3 per cent. That's huge for us."

Cost increases and COVID restrictions have "made us really examine the business. We need to streamline to

reduce costs, so we had to reduce our hours. We're closed three days a week."

There is an air of both fatigued fatalism and anchored optimism among the restaurateurs interviewed.

"It's been a yoyo of a year. Things have been changing daily," is how Harber describes it.

"It's a little numbing," admits Watt, adding, "It's a bummer, but it could be worse."

For Dietsch, "It's been such a roller coaster and communication about new restrictions seems so last-minute. Let's hope it's short."

Crawford says, "We've learned how to adapt, so we're rolling with the punches. We'll come through it."

And Begin, whose restaurant opened in the middle of the pandemic, says, "We spent three years getting the place up and we've enjoyed a good degree of success. I hope we don't lose the mo-

mentum we've built up. We try to stay positive and make the best of the situation."

Cesta concedes that "it's depressing. It seemed we were just getting back to moving forward when this happened. We're just finding a way to hold on and ride these waves out."

McDonald notes that people are "tired and frustrated and the hospitality industry has taken the brunt of this."

Restaurants will be closed for indoor dining at least until Jan. 26 and uncertainty looms over whether that date will be extended.

All the restaurant operators The Lake Report spoke to expressed gratitude for community support during this lockdown, and for loyal customers ordering takeout while they have to keep their doors closed to indoor dining.

See *The Lake Report's special pullout guide to takeout dining*, pages 13 to 16.

Warm friendships help to fight freezing weather

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



Magdalena Titian and Jean Stewart enjoy a piping hot cup of coffee outdoors as temperatures reach 15 below freezing. EVAN SAUNDERS

The streets of Old Town were cold and lonely on Tuesday, but at a patio on King Street one warm pocket of friendship was ablaze.

Outside Balzac Coffee Roasters, Jean Stewart and Magdalena Titian were dressed in full winter regalia enjoying a hot cup of coffee as temperatures reached -15C.

“We are trying to beat it,” Stewart said.

Old Town was a ghost town on Tuesday as COVID-19 restrictions kept indoor dining closed and freezing temperatures drove away the usual crowds.

Dogs were as bundled up as their owners, both trying to stave off the deep chill of winter.

But such things hardly mattered to the hardy pair sipping their coffee.

“Life goes on and we are going to enjoy every day,” Titian said.

Stewart said just because restaurants are closed and the air is cold doesn't mean she can't enjoy the Old Town atmosphere.

“This town is as pretty in the winter as it is in the summer,” she said. “You just have to embrace it.”

The duo hadn't set out to sit outside in the cold. “We just like walking,” Stewart said.

“We walk whenever we can,” added Titian.

“I'm the one who wanted the coffee. My fingers were cold,” Stewart said.

Titian said the chill isn't so bad if you are prepared.

“We're well-dressed. I've got everything I own on,” she said with a laugh.

Titian shares her last name with famous renaissance painter Titian Vecelli.

“And I'm a painter as well,” she said.

Around the corner, Robert and Carolyn Montgomery were out for a stroll with their dog Henri.

“It's pretty cold right now,” Carolyn said while Henri, unperturbed by the chill,

chewed on a choice stick. “He loves sticks.”

Robert said he usually takes Henri for a walk along the shore of Lake Ontario every morning. But not in this weather.

“Yesterday was hell,” he said.

With low inventory, housing costs are expected to **keep climbing**, says realtor

Continued from Front Page

per cent in 2022. “I think we might see 10 per cent” in Niagara, Rempel said.

NOTL prices on the realtors' housing price index – a compendium of statistics that measures housing costs – topped \$1.043 million to end 2021, up from \$786,000 a year earlier. Real estate in NOTL remains the most expensive in Niagara.

The town's “unique and iconic” nature plays a role in that, Rempel noted. But there are numerous factors influencing the cost of resale homes. One of the big ones is what the industry calls inventory – the number of homes on the market.

Today, there are simply more people looking than there are selling.

“When you have a lack of inventory, supply and demand will continue to push hard on prices,” he said.

“A lot of people recog-

nize the wonderful opportunities of coming down to the Niagara region and the Niagara peninsula, where they could keep the equity they have in their home in the GTA and do very well” in this market.

COVID also has been a factor in attracting newcomers, he noted, as more people are working from home, their children have been doing online schooling and lifestyles have changed. And many find their buying power goes further in Niagara, he said.

No one has a crystal ball to see what the future holds, but Rempel is confident the real estate market will remain stable.

He downplays media chatter about a housing bubble or other problems on the horizon.

“I don't think for one moment that there is anything to suggest that there would be any kind of a bubble that's going to burst. There is absolutely

no justification for that kind of conversation,” he said.

“The fact that the market has gone up has had a lot to do with supply and demand in the Niagara region, an increased awareness of the opportunities that are here, the low cost of borrowing money, and all those factors coming together.”

But what about young families or those who grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake, will they ever be able to own here in town?

Rempel acknowledges that buying in Old Town might be tough, but believes with a sound strategy – and some patience – eventually calling NOTL home is possible.

Having a downpayment is one of the first hurdles to be overcome. Many younger people are paying as much or more in rent than they might on a mortgage. While many

parents try to help their kids financially, not everyone has that luxury.

Rempel's advice is to be realistic about what you can afford, start small and maybe in a lower-priced market like St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Thorold or Welland. But “know your limits,” he cautions.

Understand your needs, get properly qualified for a mortgage and create a long-term plan, whether it's five years or more, and through careful acquisitions, you could make living in NOTL a reality.

“Now is a good time to get in and I think to wait is only going to cost more because there's nothing to suggest that prices are going to go down,” he said.

“The cost of borrowing money today is really good. And so if you can qualify for a mortgage and get into the market today, that's a really important step. But don't go beyond your expectations.”



Doug Rempel, president of the Niagara Association of Realtors predicts Niagara-on-the-Lake home prices could rise as much as 10 per cent in 2022. RICHARD HARLEY



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NOTL actor's role is **out of this world**

Tara Rosling plays a major part in the latest season of 'Star Trek: Discovery'

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Tara Rosling wasn't too into "Star Trek" for much of her life. She knew about the show and how significant the series was, but it wasn't something she watched avidly.

That was until the now 51-year-old actress landed a major role in the franchise's latest series, "Star Trek: Discovery."

Now, Rosling tunes in to each episode with her husband Patrick and daughter Eliana, to watch "through her fingers" with gritted teeth.

"It's terrifying watching yourself, right? And you don't know how cringe-worthy you're going to be," Rosling jokes in an interview with The Lake Report.

"I have to say for the most part, I've been pleasantly surprised. I haven't sucked, by my own barometer," she laughs.

Rosling first debuted the out-of-this-world role in the show's third season, but just for one episode. She plays a Vulcan named T'Rina, who is the president of the Vulcan planet Ni'Var.

She said it was a complete surprise she was called back for such a big part in Season 4, which sees her in nine episodes.

She was excited to get the role, but said it was a bit of a "wild process."

"When I got the audition, it wasn't clear what I was auditioning for," she said.

"There was no species attached and I think it was actually an admirer. So I didn't know it was the president of Ni'Var."

Shortly after that she was "pinned" for the role with several other actors. Strangely to her, she was called in for a prosthetic fitting before actually getting the gig, but before she arrived, she learned she had landed the part.

"When I got the script I was super excited and a little bit terrified," she said, adding she was "gob-smacked" at how substantial her part was.



Above: Niagara-on-the-Lake's Tara Rosling as T'Rina in the latest season of "Star Trek: Discovery." SUPPLIED
Below: Rosling at Silversmith brewery in Virgil, where she hosted a Christmas reading in December. RICHARD HARLEY

"Certainly when I stepped onto set that was quite an experience, because it's a legendary show, the cast is so well known, they have three cameras rolling at all times, so it was a bit intimidating. But the whole thing was very, very exciting."

Fast-forward to Season 4 and she was once again unaware she was being called back — let alone for a major role.

Because Rosling is a day actor and not a contracted core cast member, she kept getting surprised by being called back.

"They don't commit to me until the week before we shoot really," she said.

"It was like my agent calls

and says, 'Oh, they have you pinned for episode 402,' meaning they'd like to put you on hold, but they're not committing to anything. And then so the week before he's like, 'OK, they've booked you. These are your dates.'"

Rosling said it's her biggest role for film and TV so far in her career. She has also done extensive theatre work and several indie movies.

"It's crazy. They just posted a poster for Paramount, because Paramount is now streaming the show, and T'Rina made the poster. So it's very exciting. It's a big deal, especially when you're a 50-year-old lady living in Niagara-on-the-Lake."

One fun part of playing the role is seeing how "smitten" a lot of fans are with the "Star Trek" universe. When she tells people about it, they tend to go wild.

She recalls telling people about her previous role in a series called "Impulse," where she had a regular role in the second season.

"When I tell people about it, they'd be like, 'Oh, yeah, that's cool.' And then when I tell them I had one episode of 'Star Trek,' they lost their minds. It was like, 'Oh my God.' I just found that fascinating and that's 'Star Trek' culture, right? Some people are so tremendously excited by anything to do with 'Star Trek.'"

Most of the series is filmed in Toronto, so Rosling commutes. It's typically a long day of shooting for her, with about three hours of makeup involved to make her look like the pointy-eared Vulcan president.

"The site is all built in a studio called Pinewood. It's just up Commissioners Street in Toronto, and then the stuff we shot in Ni'Var — like at one point we were shooting on my planet — they built an AR wall in Brampton. And that's used a lot in the end of this particular season as well."

She said seeing the augmented reality wall was "mind blowing."

It's basically an active projector instead of a blue or green screen, which is linked to the cameras to change as they move. The actors can also see some of the projection.

"I don't know how it works, really, but it's a whole bunch of screens that are put together in kind of a half circle and they feed imagery to a projector but it works with the camera. As the camera moves, the image moves on the wall. It's like this wraparound imagery that moves with the actors with the camera. So you don't have to pretend that you're seeing something."

She said the whole experience has been "great fun."

"The thing that stands out the most is how incredibly generous the entire cast are and were," she said.

"It's really tricky shooting in COVID," she said, adding the logistics of having only one makeup team allowed in at once, etc., made things take longer.

"The hours are sometimes long. Like sometimes we shot 16 to 17 hour days because there's three hours of prosthetics for me. And if you can't socialize, then you know, that's a lot of time sitting in a corner by yourself," she said.

"But because of the attitude of everybody involved, it was doable, and often pleasurable."

All in all, she's grateful to have the role.

"It was a huge gift that fell out of the sky considering theatre had come to a grinding halt and I had no idea that they wanted to bring her back. I'm very grateful."

She said she's also happy with her character, script-wise.

"It's quite beautiful how they've woven T'Rina into the final episodes of the season. I was really super chuffed about how they used her."

You can watch Rosling in "Star Trek: Discovery" on Crave in Canada, or Paramount+/CBS All Access in the United States.



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Mayor says town anticipates savings with new animal control contract

Continued from Front Page

Kevin Strooband said. For the past 22 years, Ken Reid was canine control officer for NOTL. Reid said the lack of transparency around the shift to a larger organization led him to feel he had been treated poorly by the town.

Lincoln County took over the service Jan. 1. Details about the terms of the contract are expected to be discussed at an upcoming meeting when councillors enact a bylaw to formalize the agreement, Lord Mayor Betty Disero said.

For now, all Disero would say was the town expects to see savings with the new expanded services.

"I'm glad that animal services will continue for Niagara-on-the-Lake. I'm told that the (request for proposal) results are anticipating a savings in terms of our budget," Disero said in an interview.

"Provided they are able to give the service that our residents expect, I'm happy about it."

Disero said the reason council didn't vote on the contract before it was



The Lincoln County Humane Society on Fourth Avenue in St. Catharines. EVAN SAUNDERS

awarded was because of the town's new procurement officer.

"We have a new procurement officer that is working with town staff to determine the best and most fair results for our RFPs," Disero said.

She said the Lincoln Humane Society's proposal "met the budget and procurement criteria so no further approval is required except the bylaw approval."

The handling of Reid's contract was the subject of controversy in town last

year, with upset residents voicing their disapproval over Reid no longer being canine control officer.

He told The Lake Report in December that he was considering applying to be a bylaw officer, an idea Disero said she is amenable to.

Reid has "done a lot of good work for the town over the years. If there is an opening for bylaw, certainly the staff should consider the experience that he has. I see no reason why he wouldn't be a suitable candidate."

But Reid has yet to apply. "I'm trying to figure out what my next step might be," Reid said in an interview Monday. "I don't want to shut any doors."

Reid said he also has yet to reach out to the Lincoln Humane Society to apply for a possible position.

As a potential bylaw officer, Reid has plenty of past experience. On top of the 22 years he spent enforcing NOTL's canine bylaws, he is a certified provincial offences officer, worked for

the Canadian Automobile Association and volunteered with the Vancouver police department through the Citizens Crime Watch program.

Reid said on one occasion, he actually helped recover a sheriff's stolen car.

He thinks one of the best parts about having him as canine officer was the personal touch he brought to the town, like patrolling the streets of NOTL daily.

He has noticed an uptick in roadkill on municipal streets since the humane society took over.

"I used to pick them up if I was just driving by. The humane society's not just driving by," he said.

Reid said he also would routinely help people who were having car trouble when he was driving around, thanks to his experience with the CAA.

Since he won't be cruising the town looking out for people's lost animals and helping with car trouble, Reid wants to encourage residents to call the humane society if any of their pets do go missing.

"I just hope the community still puts in the calls. Their animals aren't getting

picked up because I'm not patrolling around looking for them," he said.

Strooband said his organization is happy to be in NOTL full-time.

"We're very excited because we've certainly had animals come in from people in Niagara-on-the-Lake and we've always enjoyed our interactions," he said in an interview on Monday.

Strooband said NOTL residents can expect professionalism and customer service from the humane society. He emphasized that with the new contract, his organization becomes the "one-stop shop" for all animal-related issues.

"It's good for residents to know exactly who to call and where to go," he said.

Strooband said the public can expect a high level of animal care.

"We're held to standards by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on how we govern a kennel. So, they come in for inspections and we've always done well with those," he said.

The Lincoln Country Humane Society number is 905-682-0767.

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Early Tuesday morning Pillitteri's Jamie Slingerland was out harvesting icewine grapes. A polar vortex created the right cold conditions. LARRY MATHEWSON

Frigid nights perfect for **icewine** harvest

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

When the temperature plunges to -15C overnight, most of us snuggle deeper into our duvets.

But grape growers and winemakers bundle up and brave the bitter cold to harvest precious grapes for making icewine.

And that's exactly where they were in the wee hours of Tuesday morning this week.

The windchill made it -21C, but those who work in the Niagara wine industry have to be hardy.

Regulations require the temperature to be at least -8C, or colder, before grapes can be picked for icewine.

According to Matthias Oppenlaender, the chair of Grape Growers of Ontario, just about everyone is fin-

ished harvesting now.

Grower Curtis Wiley and some others picked Vidal grapes a week earlier, on Jan. 3, overnight into Jan. 4, when the temperature dropped to -10C.

And this Monday night into Tuesday morning, "there were a lot of people out picking," said Oppenlaender, adding, "It's a real relief, a really, really good feeling when you're done and you can relax a little."

With the polar vortex settling over the province and bringing frigid temperatures to Niagara, harvesters at Pillitteri Estates Winery in Virgil were among those who were out Monday night.

"Some years are colder than others. The last few harvests were right on that -8C to -9C cusp but this year was a bitterly cold one," said Jamie Slingerland, Pillitteri's

director of viticulture.

Their harvest continued into the morning, for 16 straight, chilly hours.

Also at Pillitteri this year, members of the Niagara Falls Camera Club were on hand to document the harvest.

Club member Ron Planche noted, "The icewine industry forms an important part of the economic strength of the Niagara economy. Our members are very interested in giving visual strength to this industry. The fact that harvesting icewine happens in the dark is an excellent challenge to our club members."

The photographers also had the chance to see the pressing of grapes at the winery and photograph the first batch of grapes as they were squeezed through the traditional basket presses.

Last year harvest conditions didn't arrive until February, which is later than usual.

This time of year is ideal, said Oppenlaender, explaining that the longer the grapes stay on the vines, the more are lost to birds and other pests. "We all see the huge flocks of starlings and the icewine grapes are ideal food for them."

In its 2021 Vintage Report, VQA Ontario reported that growers had reserved 1,952 tonnes of grapes for this year's harvest, which is almost double last year's record low of 1,068 tonnes, though still well below previous years (in 2019 it was 5,789 tonnes).

The drop in the volume of grapes reserved for icewine is because of lower international sales of icewine since the pandemic began.



A group of keen photographers from the Niagara Falls Camera Club were up early and bundled up to capture the magic of the icewine grape harvest. RON PLANCHE

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Upper Canada Food Guide

Vol. 1, Issue 1

Serving up delicious food to all of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Jan. 13, 2022

NOTL restaurants **band together**

Pullout newspaper menu lets people know what's available and encourage supporting local during lockdown



From left: Anett and Todd Kane (Budapest Bakeshop), Adam Brooker (The Irish Harp Pub), David Watt (The Garrison House), Ryan Crawford (Ruffino's Pasta Bar & Grill and BarBea), Paul Dietsch (Sandtrap Pub & Grill) and Paul Harber (Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery). Missing is Kelly Turner of The Angel Inn. These restaurant runners have banded together to put this takeout menu out for the community, to encourage people to support local during continued lockdown restrictions that put a halt on indoor dining. RICHARD HARLEY

The Food Guru Upper Canada Food Guide

It was an idea cooked up by some of Niagara-on-the-Lake's top chefs and restaurateurs — to give Niagara-on-the-Lake residents a one-stop shop to support local during this round of pandemic lockdowns.

The goal? Encourage people to help our area restaurants by ordering takeout, while in-person dining is shut down.

The end result is the Upper Canada Food Guide, this exclusive, limited-edition pull-out section.

This "menu of menus" contains several hybrid menus from NOTL restaurants, so you can easily check out the deals of the week and find something to suit your cravings.

Pull it out of the paper right now and put it on the fridge as a reminder to keep supporting local.

Also included weekly in the pullout menu will be a story about one of the businesses within.

Read The Lake Report weekly to find out about your favourite restaurants and chefs, and to check up on new menu items and delicious meals.

“ If NOTL restaurants could tie their ships together during this storm, it would help protect them all from the dangerous waters that lockdowns bring.”

THE FOOD GURU

There are a maximum of 12 spots available weekly, but if you're a NOTL restaurant owner and would like to be a part of this initiative, email Megan@niagaranow.com.

Mindful of the tough times restaurants are facing, we're offering the ads at substantially reduced prices.

The Lake Report is

excited to team up with NOTL chefs to bring something once-in-a-lifetime to our town during these worrisome times. As a small business we know first-hand the challenges associated with lockdowns.

We live it, too.

So it's our pleasure to provide this menu at a minimal cost to NOTL's

dedicated food establishments. It helps us help everyone.

A bit of background: The idea for this menu comes from chef Ryan Crawford of Ruffino's and BarBea. He wanted to do something to help promote all NOTL restaurants. Crawford thought that if restaurant operators could tie their ships together during this storm, it would help protect them all from the dangerous waters that lockdowns bring.

By creating a foundation for all, stability can be formed. And we can do it at a minimal cost to those

already suffering from lower revenues due to the loss of in-person dining.

We applaud Crawford and all of the businesses involved in this project. We are a tight-knit community and it shows in times like these when businesses, all competing for customers, can stick together and find ways to bring each other up.

Found in this week's issue are menus for: Ruffino's Pasta Bar & Grill and BarBea, The Garrison House, Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery, The Irish Harp Pub, The Olde Angel Inn, Budapest Bakeshop.

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Ruffino's

Antipasti 289-819-0179

WOOD-FIRED SOURDOUGH FOCACCIA | olive oil | balsamic 7
SOUP | winter root vegetable minestrone 12 (500ml)
CAESAR SALAD | romaine | sourdough | traditional dressing 12
CALAMARI FRITTI | lemon | jimmy nardello chili aioli 19
THE GREAT BAMBINO | cured meats | cheeses | foccacia | olives 36

Pizza

THE OG | basil | sauce pomodoro | fior de latte 22
PEPPERONI | mozzarella | sauce pomodoro 22
THE RUFFINO | sausage | piacentino | cacciatore | ricotta | pomodoro 24
THE DANIELLA | roasted garlic | kale | lemon | potato | rosemary 22
THE BEATRICE | mushroom | crema di pecorino | black pepper | nduja 23

Pasta

SPAGHETTI CARBONARA | pancetta | farm fresh egg | black pepper 28
TORTELLINI | roast chicken brodo(broth) 28
PORK RAGU A LA BOLOGNESE | rigatoni | parmigiano reggiano 28
SPAGHETTI & MEAT BALLS | tomato | basil | parmigiano 26
2lb BAKED SEAFOOD "MAC N' CHEESE" | shrimp | scallop | lobster 38

Secondas includes 2 contori*

BONE-IN PORK SCALLOPINI | lemon | caper | butter 29*
GRILLED VEAL CHOP | marsala & mushroom cream sauce 39*
"EGGPLANT PARMESAN" | marinara sauce | mozzarella | sourdough 29
WOOD-OVEN 1/2 CHICKEN "SALTIMBOCCA" | sage | lemon | prosciutto 29*

Contori

WOOD-FIRED PARSNIPS | balsamic reduction 11
BROCCOLI SPRIGARELLO | lemon | garlic | anchovie 11
POLENTA | grass-fed butter | parmigiano 10
WOOD-OVEN ROASTED POTATOES | rosemary | preserved lemon 10
WOOD-FIRED NAPA CABBAGE | parmigiano | pine nuts | thyme 11

Dolci

CHOCOLATE PANNA COTTA | paw paw dulce de leche 9
TIRAMISU | coffee | cocoa | mascarpone 9

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APPETIZERS

"Not Your Average Chicken Balls" (6) \$12 crispy chicken lollipops lowrey bros sweet & sour sauce	Mama Tong Egg Rolls (2lg) \$12 garlic bean sprouts niagara plum sauce Steamed Jasmine Rice \$4	BBQ Pork Bao (3) \$12 linton pork char sui steamed sourdough bun pickled root cellar veg
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RICE | NOODLES | STIRFRY

Shi-Tong Cantonese Chow Mein \$18 house extruded egg noodles beansprouts broccoli	Beef & Broccoli \$20 crispy fried flat iron beef carrot ginger garlic sauce broccoli
General Tso's Chicken \$18 dried gochujang peppers scallion	Yangzhou Shrimp Fried Rice \$18 bbq pork shrimp peas carrots scallion farm egg

\$69 SPECIAL PEKING DUCK DINNER

Peking Duck Bone Broth roasted duck leg wonton	Tong's Wood Oven Roasted Peking Duck roast duck breast slices crispy duck skin tong duck sauce steamed pancakes (6) cucumber & scallion
Tong Stir Fried Shredded Peking Duck water chestnut bamboo shoot mushroom fried vermicelli noodles	



FREE DELIVERY IN OLD TOWN

POPULAR MENU ITEMS

Shepherd's Pie Potato Skins \$17
Potato skins, champ, ground beef, corn, peas, cheese, gravy

Shrimp Wrap \$17
Tortilla, breaded shrimp, lettuce, tomato, Guinness mayo

Prime Rib Sandwich..... \$18
Prime rib, mozza, mushroom, onion, gravy, ciabatta

Chicken Curry \$21.50
Chicken, yellow curry, jasmine rice, mango chutney, bread

Shepherd's Pie \$19.50
Ground beef, sweet peas, corn, gravy, cheese, veg and champ

Irish Hot Pot \$22.50
Steak & Guinness pie, St. Pat's Irish stew, veg and champ

Fisherman's Wharf \$21
Haddock, four coconut shrimp, slaw, lemon, tartar, fries

1pc/2pc Haddock or Cod \$16.50/\$19.50
Haddock or cod, slaw, lemon, tartar, fries

Maple Glazed Salmon \$24
Atlantic salmon, maple, veg, rice

Apple Crumble Rumble \$9
Pecan ice cream, caramel sauce

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SWEETS WITH A SPREAD..... \$8.75
Nutella and Walnut, Oreo Cheesecake, Coconut Cheesecake, Strawberry Cheesecake or Walnut Cheesecake

CHIMNEY SANDWICHES..... \$10.95
Black Forest Ham, Hungarian Salami, Spicy Genoa, Veggie or Turkey (\$11.25)

SAVOURY CHIMNEYS

Aged Cheddar and Herb..... \$8.00
Jalapeno and Cheddar..... \$8.25
Bacon and Cheddar..... \$8.25
Sundried Tomato and Monterey Jack..... \$8.25
Spicy Salami and Cheddar..... \$8.25
Pizza - Monterey Jack and Pepperoni..... \$8.25

SAUSAGE CHIMNEY..... \$10.95
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POPULAR MENU ITEMS

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BACON AND BRUSSELS SALAD | 14 | GF

Lennox Farm's shaved and roasted brussels sprouts, wedge, parmesan cheese, classic caesar dressing, sourdough crouton, black pepper.
+ Add roasted and rubbed organic chicken breast | 9 | GF
+ Add roasted and rubbed Kuterra Salmon | 9 | GF

MARGHERITA ROMANA PIZZA | 26

Organic flour Roma dough, house-made red sauce, fior di latte, fresh basil pesto, extra virgin olive oil.
+ add house-made garlic dipping sauce | 2

RAVINE BURGER | 20

7 oz. Cumbrae's beef, Dre's bun, American cheese, house-made kosher dill pickle, comeback sauce, house cut fries.
+ change to gluten-free bun | 2 | GF
+ add extra cheese | 1

BEEF SHORT RIB | 36 | GF

8 oz. master-stock braised short rib, black garlic sauce, creamed swiss chard, fried brussels sprouts, buttery mashed potatoes, pickled chili.

ROASTED KOREAN CHICKEN | 28

Organic Yorkshire Valley Farms roasted, ginger and soy marinated 1/2 chicken, radish and daikon pickles, house-made kimchi, gochujang, fried rice.

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Homemade Burgers \$13.49+

7 oz. homemade. Additional toppings | \$1.25

Pub Style Fish & Chips \$14.99

8 oz. beer battered haddock

Stone baked Pizza and Wings

See online menu for prices and specials

Oven Roasted Turkey Clubhouse \$13.99

with fries, soup or salad

Lasagna \$15.99

with Caesar Salad and Garlic Toast

Wraps and Sandwiches \$13.99

Mac and Cheese \$11.99

Additional toppings extra | \$0.99

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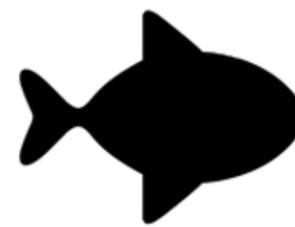
We have Live Entertainment on our back patio every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday (*weather permitting*) for anyone who wants to come and join in on the fun. We have heaters pumping and a tent set up to help with the wind. Our number one priority is the safety of our staff and guests. Whether you want to come join us on our patio, or you prefer takeout or delivery, you can do so confidently knowing that we take careful precautions every step of the way to keep everyone safe. Thank you all for your continued support. We look forward to serving you soon!

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Green light for region-wide transit plan

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake has endorsed an ambitious new integrated, region-wide transit system.

During their final council meeting of 2021 on Dec. 20, councillors unanimously voted in favour of the regional transit proposal presented by Matt Robinson of GO Transit.

“The vision for a single, consolidated transit system in the region has been years in the making,” Robinson told councillors.

The proposal, called Moving Transit Forward, requires a majority of Niagara’s 12 municipalities to approve it in order for the plan to become a reality.

NOTL was the sixth municipality to give it the green light. The next night, Thorold city council followed with its approval, meaning the plan is now a go.

The proposal required a majority of Niagara’s municipal councils, representing a majority of Niagara’s electors, to vote in favour of the plan for it to become a reality.

The move is being framed as a win for residents who need to travel between municipalities for work and an aid to growing traffic congestion on Niagara Stone Road from out-of-town travellers.

The unanimous vote came after Robinson previously made several presentations to council this year and re-worked the proposal to meet the unique needs of NOTL.

Funding model was changed

One of the main road blocks was the proposed assessment-based fund-



NRT OnDemand now connects Niagara municipalities.
FILE/RICHARD HARLEY

ing model, which means a municipality would pay for transit according to the price of property value in the city or town.

When NOTL regional Coun. Gary Zalepa and Lord Mayor Betty Disero heard about the regional expansion plan, “We went, ‘yay,’ and then found out about the assessment across the region and went, ‘Oh my God, this has to be fixed,’” Disero told Robinson.

Since NOTL has some of the highest property assessments in Niagara Region, NOTL taxpayers would have been paying one of the highest bills for the transit plan.

The assessment-based model was subsequently thrown out and replaced with a service-based, user-pay model, Robinson said.

“The service that is being delivered in Niagara-on-the-Lake is now only being paid for by Niagara-on-the-Lake, and I think that’s a big change,” he said.

As it stands, NOTL currently pays roughly \$1.8 million per year for transit. In 2023, that will be increased by an additional \$200,000 due mostly to

inflationary costs, Niagara Region financial consultant Heather Talbot told council.

By 2025, the town will see an additional 5,500 service hours of transit per year, when buses will operate from 6 a.m. to midnight every day of the week. NOTL taxpayers will be paying about \$2.7 million per year for the service, Talbot said.

NOTLers’ regional taxes will increase as a result of the expanded hours of service but, “per hour the cost is going down although, overall, it might go up,” Coun. Clare Cameron said.

Coun. Erwin Wiens asked what the town could do down the road if NOTL finds the service is not being used enough in relation to its cost.

Robinson said usage hours will be constantly monitored by the region and if there is a noticeable deficit in usage then service hours can be reduced, which would also decrease the cost to NOTL taxpayers.

Wiens said something that would never sit well with him is the possibility of empty buses driving around NOTL.

But, “looking towards the long-term, globally, meaning that in 10 or 20 years or after I’m gone, this system is in place and by that time being well used. So, thank you and I support it,” Wiens said.

Another boon Robinson touted for the initiative is a \$3 fare for people to travel anywhere in the region. The system will use digital payment technology.

Hours of service were also increased in order to accommodate workers who may need to be at work for 7 in the morning or work a late shift, Robinson said.

On-demand service continues

Riders will be able to book a ride by 5:45 a.m. to be picked up for 6 a.m., he said.

NOTL now uses on-demand transit, which will continue under the new system but there is potential for growth and change, said Robinson.

“If specific corridors warrant a higher level of dedicated service, the commission will look to add that type of additional community-specific routes into the service plan as well.”

Another change made by Robinson and his team was to pivot the governance model to be more inclusive of the region’s smaller municipalities.

The original governance model did not have enough seats for a member from every municipality to be involved. The new model has 15 seats, three from St. Catharines, two from Niagara Falls and one from every other municipality, he said.

The new service is expected to commence on Jan. 1, 2023, said Robinson.

RIDDLE ME THIS

I belong to you, but other people use me more than you do. What am I?

Last issue: David’s parents have three sons: Snap, Crackle, and ____?

Answer: David

Answered first by: Eva Rasciauskas

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Susan Hamilton, Terry Nord, Pam Dowling, Ron Cane, Chris Yak, Wade Durling, John Venables, Pia Seeger, Margie Enns, Josh Langendoen, Kim McQuhae, Mary Drost, Sylvia Wiens, Doug Bruce, Gary Davis, Sheila Meloche, Lisa Gerrie

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



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Proud winners of NOTL’s Choice Awards 2020



A car zips up Niagara Stone Road between the community centre and St. Andrews Glen. The area could one day have a pedestrian crosswalk to help people on foot traverse NOTL's busiest roadway. EVAN SAUNDERS

Town wants regional crosswalk near community centre

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A pedestrian crosswalk on Niagara Stone Road near the NOTL Community Centre could be in the works if town council gets its way.

Niagara-on-the-Lake's councillors unanimously voted to ask the region to consider adding the crosswalk.

Since Niagara Stone is a

regional road, the design and implementation of the crosswalk would be entirely up to the region after it has completed its studies, director of operations Sheldon Randall told council on Dec. 20.

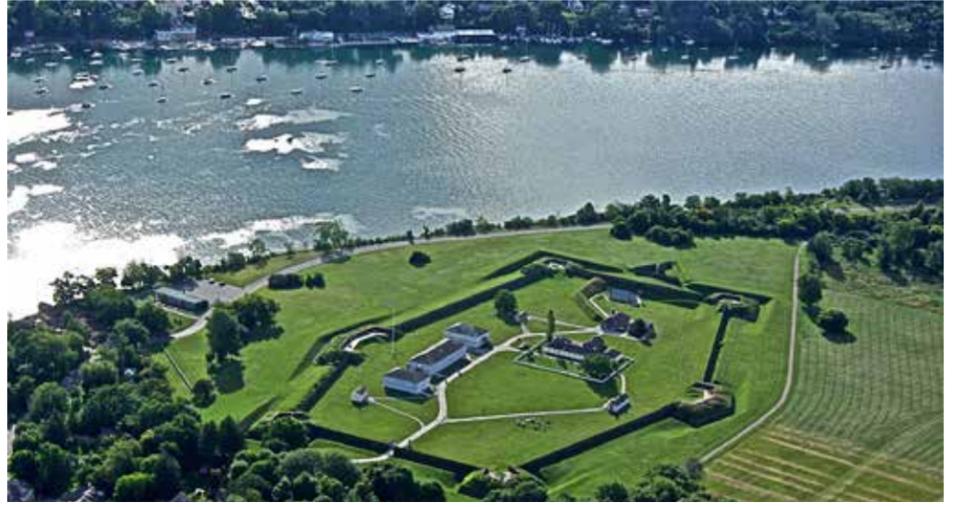
Randall noted residents have told the town "it is challenging to get across that street."

"At a minimum, the (crosswalk) will assist anybody that is trying to cross on a bike or walk

across that intersection." Coun. Gary Burroughs was apprehensive about the idea of leaving everything up to the region.

"It's great that we are trying to resolve a problem there but I am concerned about specific dangers and us not really having an opportunity to comment on them," Burroughs said.

Randall said he would ask the region to present the final design to council.



Friends of Fort George is inviting kids to design their own fort. SUPPLIED

Contest invites kids to design their own fort

Staff
The Lake Report

Kids love building forts and now they have a chance to show off their skills.

The Friends of Fort George and Parks Canada are holding a Fort Building Challenge throughout January and are inviting kids ages four to 12 to participate.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake area has many examples of 18th- and 19th-century fortifications, including Fort George, Fort Mississauga and Fort Niagara, the Friends of

Fort George said in announcing the contest.

Those fortifications were integral to protecting the town during the War of 1812 and the early years of settlement.

Each was built to different specifications – some are made of stone, some of wood and each has a different defensive earthwork shape to try to maximize the defensive power of the fort.

The challenge: If you got to design your own fortification, what would it look like? Using any materials, you can find around your house (Lego, paint, Play-

Doh, Popsicle sticks, snow, blocks, etc).

Email your fort creations to the Friends of Fort George at admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca by Jan. 29 for a chance to win a gift basket from the Friends of Fort George Gift Shop. Age categories are 4 to 8 and 9 to 12

Submissions will be reviewed by Friends of Fort George board members, and the winners will be announced on Jan. 31.

For more information, call the Friends of Fort George at 905-468-6621 or email admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca.

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Alitura **reopens** after first phase of renovations

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

After completing phase one of its renovations, Alitura is once again open for business.

Last Friday, as Sam Cooke's "Wonderful World" played in the background, staff were busy painting counters, sweeping the floor and deep-cleaning the vegetable storage bunkers.

The new Niagara-on-the-Lake market, which changed its name from Harvest Barn in 2021, will be going through several phases of renovations over the next two years, manager Ted Stones said.

The first phase is focused on the bakery plus some maintenance and painting. Phase two will be a revamping of the salad bar and phase three will be the (hopeful) introduction of an in-house butcher.

Stones said the owners are "hoping within a two-year timeframe we can get that all done."

Last week they "did a lot of mechanical maintenance that needed to be done



Manager Ted Stones explains some of the changes coming to Alitura while staffers paint and clean in the background. EVAN SAUNDERS

that's been neglected over the years," he added, but the planned installation of a new bakery counter was put on hold after the contractor tested positive for COVID-19.

The counter top will be installed as soon as the contractor is feeling better and done with quarantine, Stones said.

"We're going to remove the hodgepodge of displays that are over (at the bakery) and kind of just make a nice beautiful countertop,

kind of a talking piece that makes a statement," he said.

There will also be a large bread display. Stones said Alitura is currently producing about 85 per cent of its baked goods in-house.

Early in 2021, Alitura finished building a wood-burning stone oven outside. It was hardly used this past year but Stones hopes it can become a staple of what Alitura has to offer.

"The original idea of that (oven) was to produce all

the breads there," he said.

Eventually breads, pizzas and other baked goods will be produced at the outdoor oven.

"In the summertime we're looking to do a take-away program from there and then you could do like a little picnic around the property."

A lot of what Alitura is changing inside the store right now is meant to streamline the shopping experience for customers, Stones said.

Cluttered areas are being stripped down and self-checkout machines will soon be installed.

Stones said the self-checkouts are being brought in to accommodate NOTL's work force and ensure lines move efficiently.

"Construction workers say they only have like half an hour for lunch and in busy times there tends to be some deep lineups," he said.

"So they'll be able to bypass (the lines), do their self-checkout and kind of enjoy the time they have for their lunch."

Later this spring, depending on COVID, Stones hopes work on the salad bar can get underway.

"We're going to have a hot and cold table rather than just a salad bar with ice on it," he said.

But the biggest change will be the eventual introduction of an in-house butcher. Stones couldn't say when or even if it actually will happen, but felt it would be a boon for the business and its customers.

"Fingers crossed, we're hoping to get a butcher so

we can have fresh meats. A butcher in-house dealing with the farmers on a first-hand basis," Stones said.

"I know they have delis at the Independents, but nothing kind of niche, you know, working with the farmers directly."

"I don't see it being an unattainable goal. I feel like it's one of those things we can accomplish."

Alitura is using all its staff to help out with the renovations where specialized skills aren't required.

"We didn't get any contractors in. It's good for team synergy and everyone's behind the project.

They know that they put their own work and blood, sweat and tears into it.

They can feel proud about what they've done," Stones said.

While there is a big picture to Alitura's future, it all starts with the smaller details so the store can reopen quickly for its customers, Stones said.

"The customer base has been so loyal and we look forward to welcoming them back and them telling their friends about the changes."

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NOTL hockey star returns home as OHL player

St. Davids' Tai York now playing full-time for the Barrie Colts

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

When the OHL's Barrie Colts roll into Niagara on Thursday – if COVID doesn't cancel their game versus the IceDogs – the plan was for all of Tai York's family, friends and even his old kindergarten teacher to pack the stands to cheer him on.

But the latest pandemic lockdown means no fans in the stands, so no one can be there in person to watch the 17-year-old St. Davids hockey phenom.

They'll all be watching York and the Colts on the OHL Live television channel, though.

It's disappointing for York, who spent his formative years playing in Niagara, notably with the Niagara North Stars AAA organization.

But there will be future

games for the young winger, who was called up to the Colts temporarily in late November.

Playing for the Cobourg Cougars of the Ontario Junior Hockey League he worked hard on his game, earning the call for a closer look in the big league.

Then, after Sunday's 7-3 win over Owen Sound, York learned he was staying in Barrie full-time.

Coach-GM Marty Williamson was impressed with how York performed in the six games he's played so far (two goals, two assists) and now the Niagara-on-the-Lake native can focus on getting better and stronger.

"I'm excited and happy to be here full-time now," York said in an interview after practice on Tuesday.

He credits Cobourg coach Wes Wolfe and his staff for helping make him an OHL player.



St. Davids' Tai York is coming home to play the IceDogs. TERRY WILSON/OHL IMAGES

"They really worked with me to improve" with "fast, intense practices" and a focus on becoming a more complete player.

His parents Susie and Justin York, and older brother Austin, 19, share his excitement.

Tai didn't make the Colts out of training camp in the fall but hoped to be there

next year. So when he went to Cobourg aiming to improve, Wolfe and his staff "really helped him work on his defensive game," Justin said in an interview.

York has always been a speedy, slick sniper, able to score at every level he's played.

Six games into his major junior career, he feels ready

to perform at the top level but remains keen to learn more and develop his all-round game.

When the Yorks' two boys started playing hockey there were no dreams of playing in the pros – the focus was fun and enjoyment.

But Tai, a natural athlete whom his mom says from a young age was keenly

competitive and loved all sports, has pushed himself to constantly get better.

As he got older, despite interest from some U.S. schools, "he always wanted to go the OHL route," Susie told The Lake Report. "He definitely was keeping doors open, but that's always been his dream."

"I'm really impressed with how hard he's worked because he didn't make the team right away and he didn't give up."

Actually making it to the OHL is a huge accomplishment for any young hockey player. So many try, but so few get there.

His family is proud of his achievements. "We feel like he belongs, like he's not somewhere that he doesn't belong. We feel in our hearts that he's proven that he deserves to be there," Susie said.

They won't get to see him on the ice this time, but the Colts' next visit to Niagara is already circled on the family's calendar.

Marathon skater returns to Gretzky's for Alzheimer's fundraiser

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Steve McNeil is a rolling thunder, a pouring rain, he's coming on like a hurricane as he skates for 19 hours and 26 minutes to raise money and awareness for the Alzheimer Society – fuelled only by the music of AC/DC and the memory of his late mother, Eunice McNeil.

Alzheimer's disease robbed McNeil of years with his mother, so now he holds National 1926 Skate Day for Alzheimer's each year on her birthday, Dec. 15.

The 19 hours and 26 minutes on the ice represent her birth year, 1926. This will be the 10th year holding the marathon skate and he will be skating in 10 cities across Ontario. He held the initial marathon skate in Toronto on Dec. 15 and will stop at Wayne Gretzky Estates Winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake on Jan. 26.

Due to the most recent COVID-19 measures, some



Steve McNeil will be skating for 19 hours and 26 minutes for Alzheimer's on Jan. 26. SUPPLIED

of his dates are postponed, but Judy Brandow, McNeil's "right-hand," says Gretzky's is still in the books to proceed as scheduled. Though new regulations might delay some of his dates, he says he plans to try to ensure he reaches them all.

"That's always been my goal, just like any hockey player – they get up, they get on a good team and they just want to make the

team better and play better each time they get out there. It's the same thing with me," McNeil says. "It's just a hockey player mentality."

"Basically, how it started was coming up with an idea of paying tribute to my mom because even though she couldn't say my name, and she just had that clouded look while in the fetal position at that point

of her life, I still knew she knew who I was," he says.

McNeil dreamed up the idea for a marathon skate while refereeing a recreational hockey game, something he has been doing for nearly 40 years.

At that time, McNeil says his mother was still alive in a nursing home and had been battling Alzheimer's for the better part of 20 years. He held his first skate on Dec. 15, 2012. She died in February 2013.

The skate has evolved each year, bringing more awareness, raising more money and more locations are visited. The inaugural first date in 2012 was at Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto.

"I only told two people that I was doing it, that was my wife and Rob Ford, who was the mayor at the time, just to make sure that I could stay on the rink all night," McNeil says.

The second year, he decided to grow the dream to try to do more for the Alzheimer Society.

"That's when friends and family convinced me to maybe start turning it into a fundraiser," he says.

McNeil encourages people to donate money to their local Alzheimer Society in their own communities.

"Each community I go to, I skate for that community but at the same time, I'm always encouraging people anywhere just to donate to their local Alzheimer's at any time," he says.

In 2018, McNeil skated in each of the seven Canadian National Hockey League team cities, and in 2019, he crossed the country skating in 11 cities in nine provinces. In 2021, with the coronavirus pandemic in full swing, McNeil says he thought he might need to cancel the skate altogether. But Gretzky's contacted him with the help of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario "and they invited us out there to use what I classify as Wayne's ice in his winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake," he says.

"I've got to say, for 39

years I've been a recreational referee. I refereed thousands and thousands of hockey games at every possible level you could probably think of and one of my biggest thrills was being able to step on that ice last year."

McNeil will have three things with him for each of his 10 skate dates.

He will listen to the music of AC/DC to give him the energy to persevere throughout the nearly 20 hours of non-stop skating. He will be holding his "Thunderstick," a prop used since his first skate to provide support on the ice and a little air guitar throughout the night.

And he will be wearing a yellow hoodie, which he hopes to have signed by anyone and everyone, including local hockey teams, to donate to auction to raise even more money for the Alzheimer Society.

To donate, visit 1926skate.com and money will be directed to your local Alzheimer Society.



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Cory Abt said raising money to support the cadet program is essential. EVAN SAUNDERS

Thousands of bottles collected in air cadet fundraiser

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake loves its cadets.

And the community demonstrated that again on Saturday, Jan. 8, as mountains of bottles were donated to the 809 Newark Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron's bottle drive.

"We're raising money for the cadet squadron, for the kids to have money to do their field training exercises or go on field trips," parent Kimberly Abt said in an interview at Van Noort Florists.

Bottles were dropped off by residents at the St. Davids Lions Club, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 and Cornerstone Community Church, and then transported to Van Noort's to be organized.

The cadet bottle drop off is organized by the parents of the Newark Squadron's members to help pay for activities over the coming year. With COVID restrictions, the cadets weren't able to participate.

Abt was working hard

with her husband Cory, the squadron's chair, and other volunteers to organize the thousands upon thousands of bottles donated throughout the day.

Bottles will be picked up and counted by the Beer Store sometime this week, Cory said.

In the bottle drop off's 15-year history more than \$50,000 has been raised. That's about \$3,300 per year, he said, and the weekend blitz totalled just under \$3,500.

Cory and Kimberly are strong believers in the cadet program, having seen it transform the life of their 18-year-old son, Spencer.

After six years as a cadet, Spencer has enrolled in the aviation technician and aircraft maintenance program at Canadore College in North Bay.

"He came home from the cadet summer camp and said, 'This is what I want to do,'" Kimberly said.

Cory thinks the program has had a profound impact on his son and 15-year-old daughter Emily.

"It's immeasurable. I mean, the confidence, their

BOTTLES BY THE NUMBERS

All those empty beer, wine and liquor bottles really add up. Saturday's bottle blitz for Niagara-on-the-Lake's 809 Newark Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron raised almost \$3,500, organizer Cory Abt said. Generous donors turned in:

- 11,616 wine and liquor bottles
- 2,880 beer bottles
- 6,000 beer cans
- 120 wine bags
- 220 plastic liquor bottles

speaking, you can really see the effect. They pick up skills, even weird skills like shooting air rifles or starting a fire in the rain," Cory said.

"Their training programs are incredible, just fantastic. My son, it changed his whole focus in life and what he wanted to do."

The summer training program has been affected by COVID-19, resulting in virtual programming for cadets.

"But, normally, the cadets would go away between two to six weeks in the summer" and train at Canadian Forces Base Borden in Simcoe County, he said.

Kimberly and Cory do not see the program as a recruiting arm of the military but are happy if any cadets decide they want to pursue a career with the armed forces.

A few NOTL cadets have gone that route, but not many, Cory said.

The couple see the program as an important way for young Canadians to build character, learn valuable skills and gain discipline.

"I can't speak highly enough of this program," Kimberly said.

"My son and my daughter and the opportunities that it's given them to feel com-

fortable in themselves, to learn things that otherwise I don't think they would learn, it's incredible."

It's not all about learning how to build a fire and fix a plane with the cadets. There are some practical and important skills being taught in the program.

"They have to learn how to do their own laundry and be independent. It's a good start for families that are going to have kids going away to university or college because they learn in a controlled environment," she said.

Traditionally, the bottle drive was done by going door-to-door to see if NOTLers had a stash of empty beer, wine or liquor bottles the cadets could take.

"We like the door-to-door because it's interactive with the public," Cory said.

Due to the pandemic, bottles have been getting dropped off by individuals at several collection sites instead.

COVID has brought its own unique benefits.

"The funny part is that we were always short of boxes and we were always scrambling to get enough,"

Cory said.

He said there is no shortage of boxes now since people have been buying large quantities of alcohol during the pandemic.

"That's 100 per cent true," Cory said with a laugh.

Cory thinks the drop off format will continue in the future but says there may be room for a hybrid bottle drive.

The bottle drop off is purposefully held after the holidays since it's one of the busiest times of the year for alcohol sales, Cory said.

With that idea in mind, the next bottle drop off will be held after the May long weekend, he said.

Donations pretty well matched previous collections, despite COVID-19 restrictions increasing last week.

It's "very much appreciated that the Niagara area has supported us, especially through COVID. We've been able, with the parents, to continue through this and raise a lot of money for the cadets so that they can do some really awesome things in the future," Kimberly said.



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Town of NOTL declares 2022 the 'Year of the Garden'

Staff
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has proclaimed 2022 as the Year of the Garden.

"The Year of the Garden 2022 will highlight and celebrate the important contribution of gardeners, our local gardening organizations, horticultural professionals and local horticultural businesses," Lord Mayor Betty Disero said in a news release.

Actually, the Year of the Garden is being proclaimed all over the country in honour of the centennial of the Eastern Canada Nurserymen's Association, the precursor of the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association, a non-profit federation of nine provincial landscape and horticultural associations, according to its



website.

The association recommends Canadians nominate someone in their community who "inspires and leads volunteers in planting a love of gardens and gardening" to be declared Canadian Garden Hero.

Gardens have only grown more important over the last two years as they "have helped us face the challenges of the COVID pandemic," Disero said.

She also proclaimed the Saturday before Father's Day as Garden Day in NOTL, as a legacy of the Year of the Garden. It will fall on June 18 this year.

\$49,500 grant will support Pumphouse's virtual programs

Staff
The Lake Report

A \$49,500 grant from the province's Community Building Fund will allow the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre to continue offering virtual arts education and increase in-person programs and marketing.

A portion of the grant was used to hire new program co-ordinator Kateri Foreman, who is responsible for the planning and implementation of year-round programs and outreach activities for children, youth and adults, families and the community.

Foreman is working with Pumphouse director Rima Boles to develop programs for various mediums and skill levels.

Boles said she hopes the grant will help the

Pumphouse reach new audiences in Niagara and elsewhere.

She noted that "providing a place to learn and grow, to enrich and inspire the community is one of our core values. With the pandemic, adapting programs for remote delivery and instituting in-studio health and safety protocols were among the major challenges we overcame."

Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates said the past few years have been tough for the arts sector and was happy the province chose to support the Pumphouse.

"The work the team at the Pumphouse does to make art accessible in our community is outstanding and I can think of few other programs as deserving of provincial recognition and support," Gates said.



Rotary donation supports kids' Healing Arts program

Staff
The Lake Report

Thanks to the support of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club, the Healing Arts for Kids program is returning to the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre.

Coming up on its fourth year, Healing Arts for Kids offers free in-studio and virtual summer art programs for disadvantaged children and youth in the Niagara Region.

Jeannie Manning, of the NOTL Rotary Club, presented a cheque for \$4,000 to the Pumphouse to help fund the program.

Arts centre director Rima Boles thanked Rotary for its donation and noted, "The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre is very appreciative of everything they do for our community."

This summer, the Pumphouse will offer art camp programs to children and youth, ages 6 to 12. Students will explore different art mediums through projects in drawing, painting, sculpture and more.

Organizations, schools, teachers, or principals that would like to nominate a child to participate in the program can contact office@niagarapumphouse.ca.

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DR. BROWN It's time for universal vaccines for coronaviruses

Dr. William Brown
Special to The Lake Report

Evidence from Israel last year suggested the immunity to the COVID virus created by two shots of a mRNA vaccine might begin to wane as early as three to four months following the second shot.

This conclusion was based on significant increases in the number of breakthrough infections among fully vaccinated Israelis, a few of whom developed symptoms severe enough to warrant medical attention. Those observations prompted Israel, and soon other countries, to offer the first booster shots.

Now, Israel has begun offering second booster shots roughly six months following the first one, which poses important questions.

Is the new norm in the management of this pandemic going to be an unending series of booster shots at three-to-six-month intervals? And, if so, with which vaccines – the original ones or vaccines updated to take account of the major variants so far, as AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson propose? Or



Dr. William Brown says it's time for universal vaccines for coronaviruses. FILE PHOTO

is there a better way?

In 2020, a proposal was made to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the United States to develop a universal coronavirus vaccine capable of taking on earlier coronaviruses such as SARS, MERS and any COVID variants likely to develop. The aim was to tackle closely related coronaviruses in wild and domesticated animals because those viruses could

potentially jump to humans in the future.

Although the proposal for universal vaccines was considered "outstanding," it wasn't funded in those early days when the push was on to get simpler effective vaccines into the arms of the public as quickly as possible. Most of those programs were huge successes.

The Omicron variant prompted many scientists, including Dr. Anthony

Fauci, the head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID) division of the NIH, to argue in a recent editorial in the New England Journal of Medicine that the time has come for a universal vaccine.

What a difference two years, several crippling waves and variants have made. What was a clever but unfunded proposal two years ago, is now center-stage and funded.

The reasoning behind the development of a universal vaccine is sound and based on evidence that all coronaviruses share certain highly conserved genomic components that are resistant to mutation, which makes them ideal targets for a universal shot.

These and other selected targets have the potential to create a truly universal vaccine, which would offer us the best chance to get a leg up on this virus without the current prospect of a continuing stream of variants, some of which might be as catchable as Omicron and in the worst case, as lethal as the original SARS.

Universal vaccines are

more challenging to develop because they involve characterizing the genomes and proteins of many more coronaviruses than was the case for the far simpler mRNA and the AstraZeneca vaccines, which were based on the original COVID virus in China.

One clever idea is to attach representative antigenic protein components from previous coronaviruses (such as SARS and MERS, and all variants of the COVID virus), to some form of nanoparticle lattice.

It would be constructed so every antigenic protein has an equal opportunity to stimulate the immune system. It's a bright idea viewed in three-dimensional thinking that perhaps has found its time.

Now that we've had a taste of what high-tech targeted COVID vaccines can and cannot do, it's time to get on with developing universal vaccines. That doesn't mean we should abandon current vaccines. Omicron has shown how effective the original vaccines have been in preventing serious disease.

The problem is that this

virus continues to mutate and surprise us as it so clearly showed with the Delta and Omicron variants and who knows what variants to come.

There have been reports of a variant that combines genomic features of Delta and Omicron, which if true, would be very worrying and a further indication that we are a long way from corralling this virus.

And given the likelihood that sooner or later a really worrisome variant will emerge, it makes sense to develop broad-based, less likely to be circumvented, vaccines and stockpile them for future outbreaks that are sure to come, just as COVID followed SARS and MERS in this century.

The good news is that several universal vaccines are under development and one is in the first stage of the clinical trials process.

Fauci is right: we need universal vaccines.

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.



Comment on the Region's Proposed Draft Consolidated Niagara Official Plan

NIAGARA IS GROWING!

The region is forecasted to grow to a minimum of 694,000 people and 272,000 jobs by the year 2051. This represents an increase of over 200,000 people and 85,000 jobs compared to 2021. To guide this growth, Niagara Region has prepared a new draft consolidated Niagara Official Plan for consultation.

The draft consolidated Niagara Official Plan sets out objectives and policies to shape Niagara's physical development, protect what's valuable, and balance the interests of current and future residents. Niagara is facing many growth management challenges, including; housing affordability, protecting the natural environment, minimizing impacts from a changing climate, and increasing economic prosperity. The draft Niagara Official Plan proposes a made-in-Niagara solution to address these challenges.

THE DRAFT NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Consultation has taken place on background work to inform the Official Plan as well as many individual draft policy sections. Now a proposed draft consolidated Niagara Official Plan is available for comment. The proposed draft Niagara Official Plan is available at niagararegion.ca/official-plan

We welcome your comments and feedback by March 4, 2022. Comments should be sent to: makingourmark@niagararegion.ca

Register for the sessions at niagararegion.ca/official-plan. Video recordings will also be available online following the sessions. If you are not able to attend, you can provide input or ask questions by emailing makingourmark@niagararegion.ca or contact David Heyworth, Official Plan Policy Consultant at 905-980-6000 ext. 3476.

VIRTUAL PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRES

Attend a series of virtual public information centres to learn more about the proposed draft consolidated Niagara Official Plan, ask questions to the project team and provide your input.

Wednesday, Jan. 26 | 6:30 p.m.
Topic: Settlement area boundary expansions

Thursday, Feb. 10 | 6:30 p.m.
Topic: Natural environment system

Tuesday, Feb. 24 | 6:30 p.m.
Topic: Draft consolidated Niagara Official Plan

Personal information collected or submitted in writing at public meetings will be collected, used and disclosed by members of Regional Council and Regional staff in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). The written submissions including names, contact information and reports of the public meeting will be made available. Questions should be referred to the Privacy Office at 905-980-6000 ext. 3779 or FOI@niagararegion.ca.

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in meetings or events, please let us know in advance so that arrangements can be made in a timely manner. Please contact the Accessibility Advisory Coordinator at 905-980-6000 ext. 3252 or accessibility@niagararegion.ca.

GAMES



Have some fun

Across

- 1. Relating to aircraft (4)
- 3. "The Hay Wain" artist (9)
- 10. Moving stairway (9)
- 11. Joanna (5)
- 12. Hopelessness (7)
- 13. Among (7)
- 14. Back of the neck (4)
- 16. Poisonous mushroom (9)
- 20. Custom (9)
- 21. Doing nothing (4)
- 24. Pear-shaped fruit (7)
- 26. Breakfast flatbread (7)
- 28. Dull yellowish brown (5)
- 29. Professional personal car driver (9)
- 30. Observe with festivities (9)
- 31. Irritate (4)

Down

- 1. Removing faults (8)
- 2. Speed contests (5)
- 4. Farthest from the centre (9)
- 5. Rub vigorously (5)
- 6. Desire for food (8)
- 7. Type of impermanent tenure (9)
- 8. Communion table (5)
- 9. Injury (5)
- 15. Rectory (9)
- 17. Air-freshener (9)
- 18. Put on a pedestal (8)
- 19. Investigate (8)
- 22. Small nails (5)
- 23. Rigid (5)
- 25. Happen (5)
- 27. Wide-awake (5)

Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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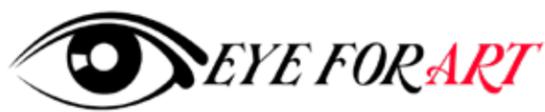


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'The Magpie'

Penny-Lynn Cookson
Special to The Lake Report

In 1868, Claude Monet (1840-1926) was in Paris, committed to painting, selling little, submitting work to the Salons but being rejected, seriously in debt, with his soon to be wife and model, Camille Doncieux, expecting their first child.

A new patron, appreciative of his work, offered a cottage near Étretat, on the coast of Normandy, to the floundering young couple. It was to be one of the happiest periods of the artist's life and career. By day, he painted outdoors, returning to the cottage to nestle before the fireplace with Camille and their son, Jean.

The most famous of his snowscapes, "The Magpie," was created at this time. Why is it so popular, according to postcard sales at the d'Orsay? Why does it profoundly resonate with the viewer?

For those of us who live with winter and snow and

are keen birders it seems straight forward enough but that doesn't answer the questions.

In 1868, a Journal du Havre article by Léon Billet described the scene: "It was cold enough to split rocks. We glimpsed a little heater, then an easel, then a gentleman, swathed in three overcoats, with gloved hands, his face half-frozen. It was M. Monet, studying an aspect of the snow ... this pleased us. Art has some courageous soldiers."

Monet was resolute in his desire to observe and depict nature in new ways. Early on, he was influenced by Eugène Boudin to paint en plein air (made possible by pigment in metal tubes and portable easels) and by the Dutch painter Johan Barthold Jongkind advocating the use of optical colour, what is actually perceived, as opposed to local colour, what is conceptualized.

There were Chevreul's new colour theories and many shared ideas with



Claude Monet, "The Magpie," 1868-69, Oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

the other artists, soon to be known as the Impressionists, keen to capture on canvas the fleeting nuances of changing light. In "The Magpie," Monet is using coloured shadows, not the traditional academic black, to investigate the actual changing conditions of light and shade.

He restricts colours to complementary blue, yellow

and earth tones and with loose, short and rapid brushstrokes he creates movement highlighting reflections in the snow. The blue violet shadow of the wattle fence contrasts with the spatial clarity of the focal point of the work, a magpie perched on the top rung of a gate.

The shadow of the gate and the magpie is reflected on the snow, in a five rung

diagonal line directly to the foreground, to possible footprints, to Monet, to us. Its form is softened, but our perception of it is sharpened.

For Monet, "the motif is altogether secondary, what I want to represent is what exists between the motif and me." If it was about fugitive light and colours for Monet, for us it's about

memories. You cannot enter an Impressionist painting. You receive and what you receive depends on what happens between you and it.

For me, "The Magpie" recalls fiercely cold, bright days on a bluff overlooking the South Saskatchewan River. The dry air is so fresh it scrapes the lungs and waters the eyes. Boots squeak and scrunch on sparkling snow until one stops, motionless, to admire the regal strut of a magnificent black billed magpie with iridescent purple and blue plumage.

In a moment, it fans a two-foot wide black and white wing spread and with a loud ka-ka-ka-ka breaks the silence to vanish into the sun. And, as to Monet's magpie, we know, as did he, that it will fly off at any moment, and that memory and loss will remain the central core of his work.

Penny-Lynn Cookson is an art historian who formerly taught at the University of Toronto and was head of extension services at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Watch for her upcoming series, "The Venetians" for RiverBrink Art Museum, Feb. 17 to March 24 on Zoom.



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Harrison & Sons Hardware Store

Being stuck at home during the pandemic has motivated many of us to renovate our living spaces. Several decades ago, many would have visited the Harrison & Sons Hardware Store and Lumberyard for their building supplies as well as equipment for gardening and fishing. The lumber yard was located in the back and many local kids had memories of playing among the stacks. In front of the building are owners William Harrison and his son Jack. There's also a unique hitching post near the curb that is like the one found near the curb at the museum today. This building was later torn down and is now the site of the post office on Queen Street.



An old solution to the housing quandary

Brian Marshall
Columnist



Houses like these were the answer to Canada's wartime housing crisis. SUPPLIED

As I was listening to talk radio one day last week, I heard a caller state:

"I'm 33 years old and make \$130K per year. I have been looking to purchase a house, with no success. I simply cannot afford a property within an hour-and-a-half commute from my place of work in Toronto."

This statement wasn't news to me. My son and daughter-in-law went through the grinding torment of the 2021 first-time buyer real estate market.

Real estate prices in the Golden Horseshoe are obscene and bear no relationship to the cost of building. Builder-grade townhouses, which would cost no more than \$200 per square foot to build/develop, are bringing \$680 per square foot on the resale market.

Moreover, while real

estate pundits still proclaim that our housing prices remain "reasonable" when viewed on an international basis, I beg to differ. "Reasonable" must be determined on the basis of a ratio between incomes and the cost of property.

In 1980, the average cost of acquiring a residential property was 2.8 times that of the average household income. In 2020, the average acquisition cost had risen to 10 times that of the average household income, according to the Canadian Real Estate Association and Statistics Canada.

While there are many other considerations that might be factored into this, the fact remains the cost of residential property has escalated out of proportion to household income.

But, say these pundits, this is a factor of market forces. And, arguably, this is true. The demand has far outstripped the supply of entry and mid-level housing in the resale market, escalating prices and thereby allowing developers to charge more for their products.

Perhaps the answer to this quandary lies in increasing the supply in a non-traditional fashion. We need to look back to Canada in the 1940s to find our answer (that's right folks, we don't need to reinvent the wheel).

From a cold start in 1941, while facing drastic labour and supply shortages caused by the war effort, the newly formed company Wartime Housing Limited completed housing developments across Canada. They not only built 26,000 houses in

four years, they installed complete infrastructure for each development.

How did they do it?

It started by a commitment from all levels of government to expedite the process of land development and then-current compliant construction on each build site.

Then, architects developed several standardized house plans between 600 and 1,200 square feet, which were designed to be built on blocks or piers incorporating factory prefabricated panelized components.

Using specialized teams, the components were installed in an assembly line-like process which worked so well that one of these houses could be completely finished in 36 hours.

Could we do this again? Absolutely!

But, call me a cynic. In our bureaucratically driven country complicated by four levels of political special interest considerations, I have my doubts. However, it desperately needs to be done and next week we'll take a look at how one community is meeting the challenge of building affordable homes.

Looking to the Stars



Monday's full moon helps make everything clear

Thursday, Jan. 13: A flexible moon in Gemini gets a boost from Jupiter in Pisces. It's a gift that comes with strings attached. Regardless, it is a gift that is worth the effort. Happy Birthday #61 to Julia Louis-Dreyfus, the comedian who was Elaine on "Seinfeld" and then starred in "Veep." She is the 2018 winner of the Mark Twain Prize for American Humour.

Friday, Jan. 14: Today, Mercury goes retrograde. Stationary Mercury is square Uranus. There may be some important announcements and revelations about themes connected to the Saturn/Uranus square. The approach to the pandemic may change, there may be some revisions and new perspectives being considered. Since Mercury is retrograde, this may not be the final direction. Mercury goes direct on Feb. 5, 2022. On Jan. 14, 1943, Franklin Delano Roosevelt flew from Washington to Casablanca for a summit to combat Hitler.

Saturday, Jan. 15: As the moon moves into her home sign of Cancer this morning, she sets up a perfect harmony with Jupiter in Pisces, bringing gifts that build security. On this date, 610 years ago, Joan of Arc was born in France. Famous as a hero in a war against Britain, her story, as told by George Bernard Shaw is a favourite at the festival here in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Sunday, Jan. 16: Today, the sun is conjunct Pluto. This is the time to surrender our ego to whatever the deeper Pluto truth requires from us. We not only have this, but also Mercury and Venus all conjunct Pluto from December to early March. There's a lot of Pluto energy, inviting us to transform at a core level. If you're still unsure about what all these Venus, Mercury and Pluto transformations exactly require from you, pay attention to anything around Jan. 16. As soon as we surrender to whatever this truth is, the exact thing we've been

terrified of becomes our greatest ally. It was Jan. 16, 1919, that Prohibition became the law in America.

Monday, Jan. 17: Today, we see a full moon in Cancer. The full moon is opposite Pluto, reinforcing the transformation and renewal themes of this month. If you've been feeling the Pluto pressure, but also stuck with no clear options on what's the next step, the full moon in Cancer will give that outside perspective. Things will suddenly become clear and we will know exactly what we need to do. On Jan. 17, 1922, Betty White was born in Oak Park, Illinois. Her death a few weeks ago was cause for a great outpouring of love and affection.

Tuesday, Jan. 18: Today, Uranus goes direct, so we will have an intensification of Uranian energy. Some sudden changes, announcements, revelations can turn our lives upside down. Since the north node is now in Taurus activating Uranus for the entire year, we'd better get used to Uranus' liberating energy. Some Uranian-driven changes may come at a shock, but if we're really honest with ourselves we know that these changes only happen to get us unstuck from situations. It was Jan. 18, 1980, that Pink Floyd's album, "The Wall" reached number one.

Wednesday, Jan. 19: Today the sun enters Aquarius. 2021 was an intense year for man. Your rulers, Saturn and Uranus have just come out of their third (and final) square so relief will come soon. She is best known as a singer. She's also a successful actor. And she now is a major philanthropist, giving millions of books to needy children through her Imagination Library. She is Dolly Parton and she turns 76 today.

Next week we see the sun and Mercury together in Aquarius.

Bill Auchterlonie has more at Looking Up to the Stars at www.lutts.ca. Check it out.

Astrology is a form of entertainment, not a science.



The Museum is temporarily closed, but visit notlmuseum.ca to explore our online resources, or to shop the gift store.



The importance of creating a **sense of entry** to your garden



Joanne Young
Garden Columnist



One of the first elements to consider when preparing your garden plan is to create a sense of entry. JOANNE YOUNG

I wrote last week about taking advantage of the winter months to plan for changes that you would like to make in your garden.

When speaking of gardens, there are five senses of design that should be incorporated into your plans. One of the first elements to consider when preparing your own

garden plan is to create a "Sense of Entry."

Before you even arrive in the garden you need to create an entrance, something that invites you to enter and entices you and your guests to want to see more of it.

It is something that makes people feel instantly welcomed in your space. A proper entrance gives you the sense that

you have arrived.

It might be something that adds a bit of mystery to the garden, that makes you want to see what lies beyond the entrance. The entrance should be welcoming, giving you glimpses of the garden without necessarily giving up all of the garden's secrets.

A sense of entry should convey the style you want

to portray. A well-planned garden entry will gently guide your guests in the direction you want them to go. It will subconsciously take them to a given destination, whether that would be your front door or a special feature of your back garden.

In any front yard, the main focal point is always the front door. A good garden design will help to accentuate the door, drawing your eye to that area. When speaking about the front entrance of our homes we often use the term "curb appeal."

This can apply to the exterior of the home as well as the landscaping, outdoor fixtures, side-walks and driveway. It's been said a house with a good sense of entry can increase the value of the home by at least five per cent.

The front entrance

might be the only part of the garden that people will get to see during their visit, so it is important to make it something that they will enjoy and will make them want to come back again.

When we are talking about incorporating a sense of entry into your garden design, we are not only speaking about the front garden. It is equally important to create a sense of entry for the back garden. As one walks down the side of the house toward the backyard what is there that draws you in and entices you to continue down the path?

A sense of entry can be achieved in various ways. One way is by using structures such as an arbour, gate or portal. Another is with the use of plants.

If you want to create an entry in the garden, place two identical plants across

from each other. Our instinct will be that we need to walk in between them.

A low hedge, such as boxwood, will also lead your eye to the desired destination.

Paths and walkways are a third way to create a sense of entry as they lead you to a destination of some sort. It is the front walkway that will first welcome your guests and it should work its way down the driveway a bit farther and flare out at the driveway to greet your guests.

The sense of entry is an important part of good garden design. As you evaluate your existing garden, be thinking about how you can be adding or improving upon this aspect in your garden..

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

Obituary

Ancell Blamires



Blamires, Ancell, M.Ed.
Ancell's family is devastated to announce his death on December 30, 2021, one month prior to his 93rd birthday. We were fortunate to be our little family of three when he left this earth and for that we are forever grateful. We had all been together when our mother Vivian died and what an honour it has been to see those two beautiful souls ushered into their next realm. Jane Blamires and Ruth Rawsthorne had the privilege of calling him dad. He was thrilled to call Jason his son-in-law and as well his former son-in-law, Ken. He was a proud Papa to the four apples of his eye: Naomi Fox, Grace Rawsthorne, Sophia Fox and Nicholson Rawsthorne. Ancell is also survived by his beloved sister Nora Walker and her husband, Stan and was uncle to their children Craig Walker and his wife Connie, and Lynn Walker. Ancell was

a former teacher at NDSS, Lakeport Secondary School, and Kenya Technical Teachers College, a real estate agent, trombonist, xylophonist and hypnotist. He travelled the world many times, spending three years in Kenya where the family enjoyed many adventures. He loved The Arts, the intrigue of invention, story-telling, and whiskey. He had the kindest eyes of any human we have known and that is just an iota of what we will miss about him. He was our rock, cheerleader, blanket of comfort and enduring love. We have been lucky.

Covid has robbed us of the opportunity to see him off in the manner befitting him. We shall reconvene in the Spring to give him a proper send-off and we shall let everyone know. In the meantime, as per his wishes, he has been cremated and will be buried alongside Vivian.

We would like to thank the excellent staff at St. Catharines Place who took such good care of our dad and made a home for him. We are forever grateful in particular to Joy and Pat who were like surrogate daughters. We would also like to thank William for the friendship he offered our dad. He thought the world of you.

Arrangements have been entrusted to George Darte Funeral Home, 585 Carlton St., St. Catharines. If desired, donations in Ancell's memory to the Lincoln County Humane Society would be appreciated.



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