



The Lake Report

Vol. 3, Issue 4

Niagara-on-the-Lake's most respected newspaper

January 30, 2020

Exclusive: Rand hotel plans revealed

Marotta confident new design addresses community's major concerns



New plans for the Rand Estate show a five-storey hotel. SUPPLIED PHOTO

Richard Harley
Editor

A new plan for the Rand Estate has been submitted to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. The Lake Report has learned.

The new design shows significant changes to the initial building drawings, including a reduction in height to five storeys, which

complies with a 2011 bylaw for another proposed hotel on the property.

Developer Benny Marotta, owner of Two Sisters Resorts Corp., the company proposing the hotel, says the revised proposal addresses key heritage benefits and more closely resembles the traditional design approved in 2011. It also better contributes to the cultural

heritage landscape due to the reduction of the height, mass and scale of the building, he said in a statement.

Marotta said the hotel now fits in better with the character of Old Town and is "completely re-imagined to co-exist harmoniously with the existing structures on the properties."

"This revised proposal has a classic and timeless

architectural feel and still introduces a hotel and conference centre development within Old Town," said Marotta.

"The design pays homage to the unique historical and environmental elements of the properties and reinforces the open space character that defines this part of

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In-depth: Queen Street parking a royal mess

But visitors, residents and business operators have some suggestions

Brittany Carter
Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

More parking lots, more free spots, better signage, allow parking for longer periods, a mobile app, two-storey parking garages tucked into nooks off Queen Street, special permits for downtown workers, shuttle buses from

off-site parking and free parking from December through March, not just the last month of the year.

Oh, and fix the darn meters, but stop trying to squeeze every last penny out of tourists.

Whether you are a resident, visitor, business operator or employee, almost everyone has ideas for how



Peter Earle, owner of Halley's Fashion for Men, said he would like to see town planners researching and testing various options for parking solutions downtown.

BRITTANY CARTER

to fix the parking headaches that plague Old Town, the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake's tourist economy.

People love NOTL but

recognize that parking in Old Town can be a nightmare.

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Volunteer Erna Braun, store manager Teresa Friesen and sales associate Karen Sawicki. DARIYA BAIGUZHIYEVA

Ten Thousand Villages to shut down NOTL store amid country-wide closures

Story on Page 9



Foam accumulation is a natural process, says a spokesperson for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. SUPPLIED/HARVEY SCHULZ

'Natural process' blamed for massive foam at Virgil Dam

Story on Page 7



Crossroads and St. Davids Public School teachers strike against education cuts. DARIYA BAIGUZHIYEVA

Public school teachers join education strike

Story on Page 8



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Hotel plans completely ‘re-imagined,’ says developer

Continued from Front Page

NOTL,” he said.

He said the artistic renderings of the new design also include a site plan that shows how the hotel will blend in with the rest of the property, including new plans to completely preserve the Randwood house and most

of the mature trees, as well as adding “sufficient landscaping” to screen the property from adjacent houses.

Marotta and his legal team have requested a meeting with the town to discuss the revisions and the developer said he is “looking forward to collaborating with the town.”



New plans for the Rand Estate show a five-storey hotel. SUPPLIED PHOTO

Town earns almost \$2 million in parking revenue annually

Continued from Front Page

With Old Town packed for the annual Icewine Festival the last two weekends, The Lake Report spoke with dozens of people about their suggestions for improving the parking situation.

Parking on Queen Street costs \$2.50 per hour on the high-demand blocks of Queen Street between King and Gate Street, with a four-hour time limit, and \$2 an hour elsewhere with an eight-hour limit.

Other than metered-parking close to Queen Street, there are few designated places for people to park and on busy weekends like the Icewine Festival, drivers seeking free spots can fill neighbourhood streets for several blocks away from Old Town.

It is a combination of those issues that has left Queen Street with a “significant drop in morale” over the last few years, said Lynda Pecchia, manager of Brims and Things.

“People need a reason to come down here. There’s nowhere to sit, nowhere to park, there’s no information booth to explain things to people,” she said.

“If this keeps up,

we (Queen Street businesses) aren’t going to survive,” she added.

Though Peter Earle, owner of Halley’s men’s fashion store, said all options need to be studied extensively by town planning staff if and when any changes are considered, he said parking in Old Town needs to be addressed.

“I’m an old planner from way back. I think you need to get the broad strategy first,” he said. The town needs to identify exactly what the problem is and then move forward with potential solutions, he added.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero agreed that parking has been an area of contention in Old Town “for several years.”

She said that during 2020 budget discussions in December, council asked town staff to look at creating additional metered spots on Wellington Street across from the old hospital.

In 2017, council increased the time you can park in the core of the Heritage District by two hours – with paid parking running from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

At the same time, council approved an increase of 50 cents per hour in peak parking areas around the Old

Town core.

The changes made in 2017 were to encourage regular turnover of parking spaces in high-traffic areas and to limit the monopolization of prime parking spots, a Jan. 16, 2017, council report said.

Disero said though the idea of creating an offsite lot for employees with a shuttle to Queen Street could work, she said she didn’t think it was a feasible option financially for the municipality to take on.

“There is a lot of free parking a few streets over employees can take advantage of,” she added.

Parking revenue (and enforcement) is a big-money item for the municipality.

The town’s treasurer and director of corporate services, Kyle Freeborn, said the town earned almost \$2 million in parking revenue last year.

“In 2019, the town earned \$1,947,000 (unaudited and still subject to change following year-end review) in parking revenues,” he said in an email response.

Many shop owners and employees said they would be more supportive of the metered parking if they could tangibly see that money going toward driving more business to town.



Joanna Szopinska, manager of Nina Gelateria, said she would like to see Queen Street closed to vehicular traffic permanently. BRITTANY CARTER

Right now, however, many said the “vigilant” parking enforcement officers and limited time frame on metered spots cause customers to rush out of the store.

Alison Drury, manager of Maison Apothecary, said, “People fly out of here because they’re worried about getting a ticket.”

As for where the revenue goes, many people said they would like to see it going back into the street.

“I have no idea where the money goes – it doesn’t go to us, the businesses,” Drury said.

Disero said the dispersal of funds from the parking reserve is transparent in the budget.

“The parking revenues are used for things like discretionary grants, so some of the money that we give to different organizations for

festivals and things like that would come through parking revenues,” she said.

“Everything is detailed in the budget in terms of where the parking revenues go.”

An October 2019 report to council outlines that parking reserve money is allocated to various town departments. Approved in 2019 with no proposed changes for 2020: \$50,000 goes toward the roads program administration, which offsets staff costs for administering parking maintenance programs and another \$50,000 for corporate services, to offset the cost of processing parking tickets, parking appeals and general administrative support.

Parking reserve money also goes toward offsetting the costs of community and development programs,

transit, bylaw enforcement, building maintenance, building services and the heritage incentive program to the amount of \$1.2 million in 2019.

“The town is very strict. They don’t give any warnings when ticketing,” said Bobby Kaltsidis of Elle Du Monde store. “People spend time looking for meters instead of shopping and some meters aren’t working. Create more parking space and be kinder and more flexible to tourists.”

Lisa Elliott of Edward Spera Gallery supports the idea of free parking from December until March or April, and suggested using it as an incentive for tourists who go shopping at the Outlet Mall.

“Build a lot or a garage

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winter

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‘Build a lot or a garage’ and why not a mobile app?

Continued from Page 2

or allow more parking time in the parking meters as it limits people who are constantly looking at their watches,” she said.

“Have a mobile app, like Green P Parking (in Toronto), to allow people to update their payments on their phone, rather than them having to go back to the meters and pay.”

Serendipity manager Ann Froese said she understands businesses want to see changes but some of them aren’t feasible.

She suggests better labeling of the drop-off boxes for people who wish to immediately pay their parking fines. In NOTL, there are four red drop-off boxes throughout town, including Picton Street, Victoria Street, town offices and Niagara College, according to the town website. There used to be a box at the Court House lot but it got broken and was never replaced, said the chamber’s

events co-ordinator Nicole Cripps.

Last Friday two customers at Reiner’s Original had to rush out without buying anything because they didn’t want to get ticketed, said manager Yvonne Bredow.

“Rates shouldn’t go up, it’s horrible, it deters people,” she said. “Tourists don’t need a bad experience, leaving the town with a bad taste in the mouth. More free parking would help in the low season. Parking in the evening, from 5 p.m. onwards, should be free.”

During the second weekend of the Icewine Festival, a few visitors complained about the cost of parking.

Ohio resident Francis McCowin, who was visiting NOTL with his wife and a friend, said when he first tried to pay for parking on Queen Street, near Prince of Wales Hotel, the meter didn’t accept his credit card, so his wife had to use another card. For three hours of parking, they paid \$7.50, which McCowin found

expensive.

“They want people to come in and shop, to eat more, drink more. (But) you don’t have enough money to stay and buy,” he said, suggesting the town build a parking lot near Fort George and have buses bring people into downtown.

Amanda Woodhouse, of Guelph, said she couldn’t park on Queen because of a broken machine, so she and her husband parked on Regent Street. She said whenever they visit NOTL, they stay at Pillar and Post Inn and Spa, so parking hasn’t really been an issue for them.

“(The town) can’t do much in terms of a parking parkade because it would wreck the feel of the town,” she said. “But make the rates more affordable,” she said.

Another American tourist, Vicki Ault from Ohio, said she parked on a side street and suggested more free parking would be helpful.

“In our city, Columbus, and its suburbs we have parking garages that cannot go too high, only a couple of storeys, but it makes a big difference in our communities, so people don’t have to struggle,” she said. “Make it free if you want to attract people on weekends. No one wants to pay.”

Kitchener’s Catherine Evenden was one of the lucky ones. She had no trouble finding a spot, parking in the lot near the old Court House.

She wishes there were more parking lots instead of just street parking.

“In summer, it’s busier, so I’m not surprised it wasn’t a huge problem to find parking today,” she said.

Kristen Richardson, of Niagara Falls, echoed the sentiments of many visitors.

“It’s already expensive as it is,” she said. “Give tourists a little break. Don’t try to get every last penny from them.”

NEXT: What do the town and Chamber of Commerce have to say?



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The Lake Report

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

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



What The Lake Report brings to your community

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

How you can help keep local news alive in NOTL

Donations of all sizes are welcome, of course.

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Platinum – \$5,000

Your Perk: A ginormous heartfelt thank you and photograph in print

Lake Report Member – \$10,000

Your Perk: A massive heartfelt thank you in print, advertising discounts, photograph in print. An invitation for two people to an exclusive annual Lake Report gala dinner, a free half-page ad to promote the organization/charity/business of your choice

Lake Report Ambassador – \$20,000

Your Perk: A massive heartfelt thank you and photograph in print, invitation for four people to an exclusive annual Lake Report gala dinner, advertising discounts, Lake Report swag bag, two free half-page ads to promote the organization/charity/business of your choice

We need your help

Your donation helps to ensure that real, relevant community news continues to flourish in Niagara-on-the-Lake and that we can deliver it to every NOTL home every week.

Email transfers with password Donation can be sent to editor@niagaranow.com. Cheques payable to The Lake Report can be mailed to the NOTL Post Office, L0S1J0, PO Box 724, or dropped at our office at John and Mississauga street in Old Town.



TLR

Editor-In-Chief: Richard Harley
Managing Editor: Kevin MacLean
Publisher: Niagara Now
Design & Layout: Richard Harley
Advertising: Rob Lamond
Staff: Brittany Carter, Dariya Baiguzhiyeva, Jill Troyer, Tim Taylor, Eunice Tang
Contributors: Denise Ascenzo, Linda Fritz, Ross Robinson, Brian Marshall, Tim Carroll, Susan Des Islets, NOTL Writers' Circle, Jim Smith, Jaclyn Wilms, Collin Gooddine, Plunger Patrol, and many more members of the local community



Contributed by Norm Arsenault:

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

To know what one ought to do is certainly the hardest thing in life. "Doing" is comparatively easy.
 – Astronomer Maria Mitchell.

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Editorial

We need your support

Kevin MacLean
 Managing Editor

The times they are a-changin' and, perhaps, nowhere is that more obvious than the media industry.

With news literally at our fingertips and with more options for obtaining information than ever before, we really are living in an information age.

The upheaval in the newspaper business continues unabated around the world, as outlets shrink and many close. But in some small communities like ours, news outlets are as popular as ever.

Niagara-on-the-Lake, too, has been touched by all this change – not too long ago the new corporate owners of NOTL's nearly century-old paper, the Advance, shut down the paper, creating a veritable news desert in our fair town.

Bad news, good news: from that unfortunate closing came The Lake Report, a small, independent publication, with no mandate other than to publish the news and offer the residents of NOTL a professional, viable and respected news outlet.

Started on a wing and a prayer – literally a shoestring operation – your Lake Report has grown into a well-loved, well-read and well-respected publication that brings you dozens of engaging, relevant NOTL news items you simply will not find anywhere else.

However, the newspaper business model that worked wonderfully for 300 years – relying on advertising to pay the bills – is broken. Niagara advertisers have been absolutely generous in supporting The Lake Report since its inception and because readers have embraced the newspaper, those businesses that support us have reaped the benefits. We are indebted to all our advertisers, big and small. You have brought us a long way.

We also are indebted to a wonderful cadre of community contributors, who week in and week out, write stories and take pictures for The Lake Report. Our advertisers, our contributors and our readers form a winning trifecta.

Unfortunately, as anyone who has run a small business well knows, cash flow can be a huge headache. The Lake Report is not losing scads of

money, but we are in need of a boost. When your main expenditures – printing, distribution and salaries – have to be paid weekly, while each edition's revenues don't arrive in for several more weeks, cash flow can be a real burden.

Hence, as you might have seen on page 3, we have taken the extraordinary step of coming to our readers and asking you to consider helping us continue to bring NOTLers all the news you expect and deserve.

It's a big ask, one made with great humility – and a bit of humour. Guaranteed free papers for everyone, and large, really big or ginormous heartfelt thank yous to recognize your contributions. It is an unusual request but these are unusual times.

When it comes to bringing you the news, our readers have said overwhelmingly that The Lake Report stands head-and-shoulders above all other local media. We want to continue to do that for years to come. But right now, we need your help.

If you are able to help us in some small way, we think our community will be all the better for it.



NOTL should take lead on planting trees

Dear editor:

How many trees is Niagara-on-the-Lake willing to commit to as our contribution toward the national/global tree-planting goal?

If we are serious, we could challenge other cities and towns across Canada to meet or beat us.

We have won awards for our efforts in Communities in Blooms. Now, how about trees?

A few things that need to be considered:

* What is the right mix of trees for our climate?

* Is there a recommended planting pattern for a mix of trees?

* Could we use the old Department of National Defence land as a tree park, allowing for memorial trees as well as trees planted by local schools and service clubs?

* Fill in more public areas with enough trees to eliminate or reduce the need for seasonal grass cutting. This would be a win-win.

The time is right for NOTL to lead the way.

Are the lord mayor and council willing to take this on?

Mike Henry
 NOTL

Correction: Budget numbers

Editor's note: Last week's front-page story, "Council approves 8.62% municipal tax hike," contained some erroneous budget numbers for individual expenditures. The Lake Report regrets the errors.

The exact figure budgeted for legal fees is \$1,151,870 and \$2,120,000 is set aside for the capital reserve fund.

The fire department's proposed capital budget for 2020 is \$445,000.

The town will spend \$260,750 on corporate services, \$1,868,000 on parks, recreation and facilities, and \$300,000 on flood prevention.

The \$500,000 washroom replacement at 92 Queen St. was included in the town staff report by error and staff doesn't intend to proceed with the project other than a potential design.



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OPINION

Lord mayor explains town's budget and tax increases

With a large spending increase in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's 2020 operating budget and a municipal tax increase of 8.62 per cent, *The Lake Report* asked the lord mayor to explain how we got to where we are now.

Betty Disero
Lord Mayor

Let's go back in time, to 2005 when the population of Niagara-on-the-Lake was around 14,000.

There were 89 full-time staff members working for the town, only 60 kilometres of sidewalks, and 209 kilometres of paved roads.

The accompanying infrastructure chart illustrates the huge growth Niagara-on-the-Lake has experienced in the last 14 years. (NOTL property tax bills include levies for the town, region, education and the Niagara Health System. At this time, despite municipal budget approval, the total impact on residents' tax bills cannot yet be determined.)

During this time period of growth there were extremely minimal tax increases. While the last term of council started to play catchup with minor increases, it was not enough to match the massive amount of infrastructure growth.

How can municipalities pay for essential services, like utility costs and infrastructure repairs, when tax increases are minimal? There are many ways – defer non-urgent maintenance, cut services, or borrow from the reserves.

In the past 14 years, there has been an increase of four new full-time staff positions, most in planning and engineering.

The same number of front-line staff members are trying to cope with the huge increases listed above, in addition to increases in bylaw enforcement, licensing applications and general customer service inquiries. On occasion contractors

have come in to assist, but staff frequently work overtime to complete the required work.

Fast-forward to 2019.

A lot of our infrastructure needs repair, we are running around to fix potholes, instead of reconstructing roads in need, we cannot install lighting where people are asking for lighting and the list goes on.

We have had major growth in our housing developments without considering the increase in traffic, parking, bylaw enforcement and other services. Phragmites continues to cause problems in the irrigation systems. Our reserves are depleting.

This must be turned around. We need to go back to the basics of municipal budgeting and fund our primary need – infrastructure. As we do that, there will be difficult decisions for council to make and we will have to face those challenges.

Looking at other Niagara municipalities, like Lincoln or Pelham, they are now going through major growth.

Lincoln's increase was 5.99 per cent (translating into \$63.89 per \$100,000 of assessment) and Pelham's increase was 6.05 per cent (translating into \$31.03 per \$100,000 of assessment) because they are preparing for growth.

Even though the percentage increase of 8.62 per cent in Niagara-on-the-Lake seems high, it translates into \$17.36 per \$100,000 of assessment. This increase is vital because previous increases did not keep up with growth when it occurred.

In 2020, we will look at increasing revenues through taxes and user fees. In the spring we will receive the results of the service delivery review, which will recommend ways the town can provide our services in a much more efficient way.

The mandate you, the voters, gave your Niagara-on-the-Lake elected officials is to preserve heritage,

Year	Average Assessment	Overall Rural	Change in total tax bill	Change in town share	Overall Impact town share
2010	306,000				
2011	308,500	3,478.22	139.14	35.49	-0.98%
2012	338,000	3,706.62	228.40	39.07	1.12%
2013	349,000	4,210.60	109.66	6.62	0.16%
2014	401,738	4,259.93	49.33	7.17	-0.17%
2015	419,575	4,394.54	134.61	42.31	0.99%
2016	431,492	4,406.32	11.80	5.82	0.13%
2017	460,131	4,650.07	243.75	88.36	2.01%
2018	483,000	4,764.28	111.21	37.13	0.80%
2019	507,500	4,946.75	182.48	47.45	1.00%
			Cumulative Change	935.10	224.10

Infrastructure	2005	Increase	2019
Sanitary Sewers	82.5km	13.5km	96km
Storm Sewers	55.5km	15.5km	71km
Catch Basins	1,761 total	540 total	2301 total
Watermains	183.3km	15.7km	199km
Hydrants	1,067 total	112 total	1,179 total
Watermain Valves	2,300 total	265 total	2,565 total
Streetlights	1,822 total	436 total	2,258 total
Sidewalks	60.5km	12.5km	73km
Paved Roads	208.56km	14.3km	222.86km

agriculture and other community assets.

This public input has been captured in the town's strategic plan and the town's official plan.

In order to achieve our vision of the future of Niagara-on-the-Lake, we must go back to the basics and finance the fundamental needs of this community.

So now the question I have been asked of late is why I did not support the budget before council on Jan. 20.

The reason: I made a commitment to the public at the Inaugural meeting of council. This town must have a vision for the future and a sustainable budget to support the vision. While this budget will take us a long way with our operations, there was a deferral of capital projects of

\$1.7 million with no solution in sight.

Over 30 years ago, it was a handful of people that had a vision for this community, both in agriculture and in tourism, and capital investments were made, and we became the envy of all of Canada.

We cannot rest on the achievements of the past. The proposed municipal accommodation tax would have helped us with reinvestments in our infrastructure.

This year there will be opportunities for us to partner with the Region of Niagara to make major improvements to our town – if we pay our share. This year we will go back to the drawing board to see if we can figure it out for the 2021 budget.

Betty Disero is lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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

The Lake Report

Marotta's comments on court case were **self-serving**

Dear editor:

I would like to make several comments in response to news articles in your Jan. 16 edition regarding developer Benny Marotta's court case against the Town of NOTL plans for a historical designation of the Rand Estate.

Your front page photograph of Mr. Marrota will be seen by many as a subtle effort on the part of The Lake Report to promote him and his interests even though his challenge was firmly rejected by the Superior Court of Ontario in what was a three-way action.

On page two of the article, the claims made by Mr. Marrota can only be seen as being made out of his own self-interest and are, as is usually the case, without substantiation.

For example: The town's decision (to designate) is an attempt to stall progress by his company. It is not clear what his definition of progress is. He repeats himself when he claims the decision to designate was designed to stop him from moving forward.

Should he decide to appeal the Superior Court of Ontario decision, he would like the case to be decided in Toronto. This suggests that in his opinion the local courts are unable to render a fair judgment in his case.

This will be seen by many, including the courts, as an insult to the judiciary, made without any justification.

He claims that the town is acting out of malice, painting himself, of course, as a victim.

In complete contradiction to the unsuccessful effort by Solmar Development Corp. to have the heritage designation quashed by the court, he agrees to the heritage designation of the Rand Estate and the Dunington-Grubb landscape. (This no doubt will confuse many readers.) It also lies in direct contradiction to his previous Notice to Demolish dated June 15, 2018.

Mr. Marrota claims that an election promise to a small group of people was made to stop him from completing the property. (It is difficult to understand what he means by this.)

While he feels badly about the legal costs, Mr. Marrota knows full well that the elected town council has a moral and legal responsibility to the residents of the town, as well as any cultural or heritage assets that are

determined, to protect them from developers such as Solmar.

This comes with a cost and the elected town council is obliged to meet the challenge imposed upon it. It is certainly within his power to help reduce these costs, if he so chooses.

Your editorial in the same edition, "Rand Estate battle far from over," includes a number of items that call for a response.

Whether the battle is far from over will be decided by Solmar, of course. Even so, this editorial writer seems to have become a self-appointed spokesperson.

The remainder of this editorial is completely speculative, unwarranted and inappropriate.

"Does our council understand ...?" Town council is responding to a bad plan proposed by Solmar and anybody with common sense knows this.

"Is it solely heritage preservation or is it partly nimbyism ...?" "SORE (Save Our Rand Estate) has several hundred supporters who are widespread, so it can hardly be accused of nimbyism.

All of this is unwarranted speculation which leads to uncertainty among your readers.

I, as well as most people, would agree that Randwood cannot be left neglected and are not against appropriate development.

The problem has been created by Solmar Development Corp., whose so-called dream is to construct a hotel and later high-density housing on the most iconic property in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The horrendous decimation of historic trees in November 2018, for which Solmar is now being prosecuted, illustrates the disconnect between responsible development and Mr. Marrota.

This development plan gives no consideration to the the very special location or to the surrounding neighbourhood, so opposition to the plan is not surprising.

At the same time, Mr. Marrota has shown no inclination to negotiate an acceptable resolution with the town nor to those residents whose lives and properties would be directly affected.

Derek Collins
NOTL

Hummel house project still incomplete

Dear editor:

It might behoove developer Rainer Hummel to finish one project before he complains of not being allowed to start more, ("Hummel sues town for \$500,000 over development freeze in Old Town," The Lake Report, Jan. 23).

His own property on the southeast corner of Queen and Mississagua streets has been a construction site for nearly a decade: Tyvek walls, upside down bits, picture window clear views into unfinished rooms, no landscaping, etc.

John MacBeth
NOTL



A wonderful gentleman

Dear editor:

The photo of Fred Curtis in Jim Smith's Exploring Photos column on Jan. 16 brought back memories of a wonderful gentleman.

The very dapper Mr. Curtis used to bring jars of Laura Secord Humbug candies to the library staff on his visits.

Jim, I think his wife's name was Jean.

I hope Jim Smith will continue to remind us of the old Niagara with his wonderful collection of photos.

Linda Potter
NOTL

U.K. trade deal **must** ensure expats' pensions are indexed

Dear editor:

I am proposing that Prince Harry and Megan in their new role as non-royals and normal people, free from their stressful duties of attending functions, shaking hands and kissing babies, undertake a real and meaningful cause – namely, being aggressive advocates for the noble cause of working to have British expats' frozen pensions become indexed or unfrozen.

Millions of Canadians are unaware that British expats living in Canada, dozens living here in NOTL – many former military heroes who are now members of our local Royal Canadian Legion – do not qualify for an indexed British pension.

Canada and Australia, both Commonwealth nations, are two of a select few countries where pensions are not indexed.

Most British expats, in the past, emigrated to Commonwealth countries, many in their middle age or after retirement to join other family members (sons, daughters, etc.) who had emigrated in previous years.

Their pension amount is frozen at the date they left the U.K. and, sadly, we have thousands of seniors here in Canada and worldwide living on their paltry non-indexed pensions.

Overwhelmingly, other countries have indexed British pensions, including the U.S.

If you were fortunate enough to be an immigrant from the U.K. with permanent residence in America, your U.K. pension would be indexed.

Additionally, and a sore point to be polite, is the fact that a spouse of a U.K. qualified pensioner also qualifies for a portion of his or her pension, even though the spouse may never have lived or worked in the U.K.

CABP (The Canadian Alliance of British Pensioners) has advocated for decades to reverse this pension law. Previous prime ministers of Canada have supported their efforts, thus far both to no avail.

An article in CABP's magazine notes that "there are 12 million U.K. state pensioners, all of whom contributed similarly to the pension scheme via compulsory national insurance contributions. Of the 12 million, just over one million live outside the U.K.

"Half of the pensioners living overseas receive the same cost-of-living increases as those still living in the U.K., while the other half does not -- their pensions are frozen simply because of where they have chosen to reside in their retirement.

"Commonwealth nations and British overseas territories are home to 98 per cent of frozen pensioners.

"There are 144,109 in Canada plus 247,000 expats who are approaching pension age."

To add insult to injury, the first agenda item agreed to in the EU and BREXIT negotiations was Britain agreeing to index pensions for expats living in the EU. Not the Irish border situation, trade agreements, banking, etc. – indexing expats' pensions.

In conclusion, I implore CARP, in concert with our Canadian Trade Commission, the prime minister and supporting British MPs to make the indexing of pensions a top priority in any Canada-U.K. trade agreements, similar to the EU position with respect to expats living there.

Samuel Young
NOTL



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‘Natural process’ blamed for massive foam at the Lower Virgil Dam and Reservoir

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

When Harvey Schulz saw a massive amount of foam oozing over a bridge on Four Mile Creek on Saturday, he wasn't sure what he was witnessing.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake resident was out for a morning walk near the Lower Virgil Dam and Reservoir when he saw the foam overflowing the bridge and filling much of the creek.

Most of the foam was gone the next day.

But Schulz had taken a few photos and his wife Sandie contacted The Lake Report.

After the paper reached out to the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, two water resources technicians visited the reservoir Monday to investigate but there wasn't much foam left, said the organization's spokesperson Erika Navarro.

"Our water quality specialist has advised us that the foam formation at that property appears to be



Foam accumulation is a natural process, says a spokesperson for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. SUPPLIED/HARVEY SCHULZ

caused by a natural process in which organic matter (vegetation) decomposes in the watershed, which releases fatty acids that act as surfactants or surface-active agents," Navarro said in an email.

"These are foam-producing molecules from turbulence (riffles and waterfalls) that cause the fatty acids to form small bubbles that develop into the foam."

"Large amounts of foam can accumulate downstream in stream eddies or

against docks, logs, bridges and other floating objects."

Foam accumulation has been happening on streams and creeks throughout the last fall and winter due to mild winter with several wet weather events, she said.

Navarro said the excessive foam at Virgil's reservoir was likely caused by heavy rainfall last week, runoff with natural foam-forming compounds and the large drop-off created by the waterfalls at the dam.

The water technicians also collected a water sample but

results weren't immediately available, said Navarro.

There was also no indication the foam is harmful. The agency collected water samples containing foam on Four Mile Creek in 2019 and no water quality concerns were identified, she said.

There was also no indication the foam is harmful. In 2019, the agency collected water samples containing foam on Four Mile Creek but there were no concerns regarding water quality, Navarro said.

NOTL receives \$815,143 for infrastructure repair

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has received \$815,143 in funding through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund.

In total, the province has distributed about \$200 million to 424 communities across Ontario in 2020.

The provincial program, launched in 2014, provides funding to small, rural and northern communities to repair local infrastructure, including roads, bridges, water and wastewater infrastructure, according to a provincial media statement issued on Jan. 17.

All small municipalities with a population of less than 100,000, plus all northern and rural municipalities are eligible for a grant.

In NOTL, the funding will be split among four capital projects, said town spokesperson Lauren Kruitbosch.



A portion of the provincial funding will be spent on road repaving on Gate Street, from Anne to John streets. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

The biggest portion of the grant, \$350,000, will be spent on a road resurfacing project on Four Mile Creek Road from Wall to Lakeshore roads.

The town also allocated \$100,000 of the money to repave Four Mile Creek

Road, from Hunter to Wall roads and another \$165,143 will be spent on road resurfacing on Circle Street in the Chautauqua neighbourhood.

Lastly, the town will spend \$200,000 on a project on Gate Street, from Anne

to John streets.

These are just costs provided through the provincial fund, not the complete cost of the projects.

The provincial infrastructure funding allocated to NOTL has also increased in the past five years. Previously, the town received \$796,298 in 2019; \$518,451 in 2018; \$366,001 in 2017; \$195,245 in 2016 and \$195,245 in 2015.

Among the other 11 regional municipalities that received money, Thorold will get \$470,298, \$1,112,750 was allocated for Grimsby, \$418,760 for Port Colborne, Wainfleet will get \$50,000 and Lincoln will receive \$616,612.

Niagara Falls will receive the largest portion in the Niagara region – \$3,370,443. West Lincoln will get \$272,786; Welland \$950,916, Fort Erie \$1,076,740 and Pelham \$483,112.



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Teachers from Crossroads, St. Davids join strike against provincial education cuts

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

A handful of Grade 5 and 6 Victoria Public School students joined a one-day strike last Thursday by elementary school teachers who walked off the job to protest provincial government cuts to education.

"We came to support the teachers because the class size matters and education matters," said Grade 5 student Ellie Smith.

All elementary public schools under the District School Board of Niagara were closed on Jan. 23, as members of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario participated in rotating one-day, provincewide strikes, protesting increased average class sizes and advocating for full-day kindergarten and more support for special needs students.

If a deal with the province is not reached by Jan. 31, the union has said it will escalate its provincewide rotating one-day strikes starting Monday, Feb. 3.

Niagara elementary public teachers plan another walk-out on Feb. 6 and 7, when all 83,000 union members across the province will



Crossroads and St. Davids Public School teachers strike against education cuts. **More photos at www.niagaranow.com** DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

strike if no deal has been reached.

Last Thursday, teachers from four public schools, including Crossroads and St. Davids from NOTL, and Martha Cullimore and Victoria in Niagara Falls, held a three-hour morning strike in front of Thorold Stone Plaza in Niagara Falls.

Four other schools were slotted to strike in the afternoon.

More than 60 teachers gathered at the plaza, walking up and down the street holding signs and posters as passing drivers were honking, giving thumbs up and cheering the protesters.

A few cars also had signs displayed on their windows in support of the strikers.

Teachers said the location was chosen due to the high volume of traffic and visibility the location provided to the protesters. They also said several parents stopped by to drop off coffee and doughnuts, and they didn't encounter any naysayers.

St. Davids school teachers said they have already experienced negative effects caused by the cuts to programs for special needs children.

"I feel hurt for our kids. I feel hurt and worried that if

further supports are disrupted and eroded, those kids who need that extra help won't be given it," Grade 2 teacher Tara Black told The Lake Report.

"I feel worried for the kids that don't need extra help because our teacher time is spent trying to manage and help and assist those who need help."

"And I feel hurt and sad for the teachers who have gotten in this career because they love kids and want to do the best they can for kids, but we're just spread so thin that it's taking a toll on teachers having that many children in a

class with that many high needs."

Kindergarten teacher Lindsay Parravicino said she has 30 students in her class at St. Davids and it's "very full" and "cramped."

"We really rely on working individually in small groups with kids, so we need that time and it's really difficult to do with 30," she said, adding there's not enough funding to support some school programs and teachers have to pay out of their own pockets for hands-on materials and special events.

A high student-teacher ratio is detrimental to ensuring academic excellence, said Chris Koop, a long-term occasional teacher at Crossroads, who said he was standing in solidarity with other teachers.

From his experience teaching at different schools as an occasional teacher, he said some classes have more than 30 students in a classroom and the physical space cannot accommodate the children.

"This is something you will find a common consensus across all teachers. We want to be able to do our job as best as we can because we care about our kids, we

care about their academic potential and we care about attending to all the particular needs that the students might have," he said in an interview.

Brian Barker, a former federal New Democratic Party candidate for the Niagara Falls riding and vice-president of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario Niagara local, said with the proposed education changes, his children, who are in Grade 3 and 5, along with other students across the province, wouldn't be able to "flourish."

"We need to be able to put resources in place to support all kids," he said in an interview.

We need to fight to ensure that resources are put into our program to allow those kids to be successful and to grow and flourish. Because we're building a foundation for our future lawyers, doctors, construction workers. We really need to preserve what we have."

When asked why teachers were not protesting at their respective schools, Barker said it was because the "battle wasn't against the District School Board of Niagara" but against the Ford government and its cuts.

NOTL dog is a champion in Canada and U.S.

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Connor is a two-year-old soft-coated wheaten terrier who, despite his age, has already earned his Canadian and American championship titles.

But for his owners and Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, Carol and Doug Williams, seeing their dog happy and living a full life is more important than winning at dog shows.

"We're getting a kick out of showing him, but a more important thing is he's just a lovely member of our family."

"He's a very nice wheaten but more important at the end of the day, he's a very

nice dog. He's a very nice family member and a very good community member," Carol Williams said.

Connor received his Canadian championship when he was seven months old but he didn't participate in the American show until he turned one.

Last year, Connor took part in three shows at the Florida Gulf Coast Cluster held at a huge farm in Brooksville, Fla., and won his American championship.

For a Canadian championship title, a dog should have 10 points and two major wins, while the American dog shows require 15 points and two majors, which makes it "a little more dif-

ficult" to get a U.S. title, Williams said. When a dog beats enough animals to earn two, three, four or five points, it's called a major.

The titles are gained by an accumulation of points and a maximum of five points can be earned at a show.

Two weeks ago, Connor once again participated in three conformation shows in Brooksville.

In a conformation show, dogs do not compete against each other but are judged on how closely their body shape and function conforms to the standard of their particular breed. This Best of Breed winner then goes into a Best in Group competition and the closest representative of its breed

standard goes into a final round called Best in Show.

Connor won twice in the owner-handled best of breed class and came in second, having won select dog in the open Best of Breed competition, beating eight other male wheatens.

Many dogs participating in the shows are handled by professionals and they don't "have a life outside of dog showing" until they retire and become somebody's pets, Williams said.

"Connor has a full life and he's getting shown on the side. That to me is a perspective that I think is important for him," she said in an interview.

Williams said they are now working on acquiring



Carol Williams with her dog Connor winning Owner-handled Best of Breed class at the Florida Gulf Coast Cluster in January. SUPPLIED

a grand championship title for Connor, which would require a total of 25 points and three major wins.

"He's very social, he's a very friendly dog. He has lots of dog friends," said

Williams.

"When we take him away for dog shows, he really misses being in Niagara-on-the-Lake and playing in the Commons with his friends. He's like a kid."



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Ten Thousand Villages NOTL store to **close** its doors in May

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Although the closure of Ten Thousand Villages makes Niagara-on-the-Lake store manager Teresa Friesen feel “extremely sad,” she finds comfort in knowing that friendships developed among the community, staff and volunteers who worked at the store for the past 34 years will carry on.

“Just because the store is closed, doesn’t mean that our relationships end. It doesn’t mean we’re never going to see each other again,” Friesen said.

“These relationships that we’ve built and we bonded over this mission here with Ten Thousand Villages, that doesn’t break us.”

Ten Thousand Villages is a fair-trade social enterprise, launched by the non-profit Mennonite Central Committee. It sells crafts, home décor and other items made by artisans in developing countries.

In a news release on Jan. 21, the Mennonite Central Committee Canada announced it will shut down its corporate operations across Canada, including its head office, the distribution centre and Ten Thousand Villages Canada webstore.



Store manager Teresa Friesen said it’s been an honour to work for Ten Thousand Villages in NOTL.
DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

All operations across Canada will be shut by June. The NOTL location is expected to close on May 29 and all merchandise will be liquidated.

Ten Thousand Villages U.S., which is a separate entity, and eight independently-owned Ten Thousand Villages stores across Canada, including one in Port Colborne and another in Cobourg, will remain open.

Since the announcement, a lot of NOTL residents have come in and expressed how sad they were to hear about the closure, Friesen said.

“Being in Niagara-on-the-Lake for so long, for us to have to close our doors, it’s hard.”

Friesen said she will miss the community, interacting with customers and working with volunteers who became like family.

“It wasn’t just a job. We were doing something more than that,” Friesen told The Lake Report. “Those relationships that we’ve developed over the years that I’ve been here, that’s what I’m going to miss the most.”

In a media statement, Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of the Mennonite Central Committee Canada,

said the “dramatic changes” in the retail market and consumer habits have led the organization to close its operations as its business model was no longer viable.

In NOTL, the store has experienced a significant decline in customers in the past year, Friesen said. Store data shows 20 to 40 per cent fewer customers on weekends in the summer.

“For a business, to carry on and cover our costs and cover the cost of our rent, which is very high, it’s hard to keep your head above water. And we’re a not-for-profit organization and that makes it even harder.”

Online shopping has been a huge factor in customer decline, Friesen said, wondering whether, with the ever-changing retail market, other brick-and-mortar stores will become “something of the past.”

“It goes to show it’s not just the change in retail, it’s a change in society. What is important, what is ethical? Because online shopping creates so much waste,” she said, noting the gas emissions created by delivery vehicles and the amount of packaging in goods sent by mail.

“As a society, we have to decide what’s important.”

Harley dealer to host **chili cookoff**

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

For motorcycle enthusiasts and chili lovers, Clare’s Harley-Davidson Niagara is hosting a chili cook-off and exclusive shopping event on Thursday, Feb. 6 from 4 until 8 p.m.

Six contestants, including staff from Clare’s Harley-Davidson, Community Support Services of Niagara, the Niagara Harley Owners Group and Clare’s Cycle and Sports Ltd., will show off their skills in a chili cook-off starting at

4 p.m.

Six different chilis, including a vegetarian version, will be available for sampling. The final voting on the cook-off is at 7:30 p.m. and the winner will take away a prize and bragging rights.

Visitors also will be able to check out new 2020 motorcycle models and learn about incentives on 2019 models at the York Road dealership.

In addition, the event will offer discounts on Harley-Davidson watches, jewelry, accessories and apparel.

TIDBITS

Garbage tags now \$2.50

In efforts to increase the diversion of recyclable and organic material, Niagara Region is increasing the price of garbage tags to \$2.50 from \$2 per tag starting Feb.1.

Area residents will be able to place their \$2 tags on any extra garbage bags or containers after Feb.1 or until they run out of them, according to the Niagara Region’s announcement.

Niagara Regional Housing elects 2020 board members

The elected officers are chair Walter Sendzik, vice-chair James Hyatt, treasurer Gary Zalepa and secretary Karen Blackley. The board of directors also includes Betty Ann Baker, Barbara Butters, Tom Insinna, Betty Lou Souter and Leanna Villella.

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<h2>The Lake Report</h2> <p>COMMUNITY FAVOURITES: Legion Fish Fry every Thursday 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Duplicate Bridge at the Community Centre Tuesdays and Fridays at 1 p.m.</p>			
2	3	4	4
<p>Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.</p> <p>Open Mic with host Buzz Hummer - 2 p.m. - Legion Branch 124</p> <p>Writers' Circle - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Superbowl for the Flutie Foundation - 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. - Club 55</p> <p>NOTL Ukesters Sunday Workshop - 2:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p>	<p>Committee of the whole Planning - 6 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Public Meeting: Zoning Bylaw Amendment - 6 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Babies and Books - 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>Nobel Prize Series Nobel Prize in Chemistry - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Tumble Tots - 9 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>NLH Level 1 Classes - 6:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p>	<p>Author Presentation Black Waters Flow - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Steam Story Time: 9 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Yoga with Melaina Tree - 9 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>NOTL Toastmasters - Niagara College Danforth Campus</p> <p>Chess Club - 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p>Irrigation Committee - Operations Boardroom</p>
9	10	11	11
<p>Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.</p> <p>Embraceable You - 4 p.m. - St. Mark's Church</p> <p>JazzyOke Singalong Sundays - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Club 55</p>	<p>Committee of the Whole General - 6 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Babies and Books - 11 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>Coffee with Lord Mayor - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - Unite Room, Holiday Inn Express</p> <p>Municipal Heritage - 6:30 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p>Tumble Tots - 9 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p>Yoga with Melaina Tree - 9 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p>Wine and Words: 7:30 p.m. - The Hare</p> <p>Lord Mayor's Economic Advisory Committee - Committee Room 1</p> <p>Communities in Black - Council Chambers</p> <p>NOTL Toastmasters - Niagara College Danforth Campus</p> <p>STEAM Story Time: 9 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>

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Report

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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	30 Beards on Ice - 11 a.m. - Wayne Gretzky Estates Winery and Distillery Audit Committee - 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - Council Chambers Seniors Drop in: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Homeschooler Drop in - 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library NLH Workshop: Shaping my Dancing - 7:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre	31 Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library NOTL Newcomers Coffee and Conversation - 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre	1 Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Repair Cafe - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Shaw Festival Film Series: The Biggest Little Farm - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre
5 from Niagara Deep - 6 p.m. - Dinosaurs - 11 NOTL Public from Salt to Community - 7 p.m. - el J Patterson - NOTL Public ee - 2 p.m. - m	6 Grinder Pump Committee - 9 a.m. - Council Chambers Homeschooler Drop In - 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Fire in the Bowl: Clare's Chili Cook off - 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Clare's Harley Davidson Niagara Harry Potter Book Night - 5:30 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Royal Oak February Fun Camp - 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. - Royal Oak School	7 Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Royal Oak February Fun Camp - 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. - Royal Oak School Movie: Harriet - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library A Brand New Winter Murder Mystery - 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Fort George	8 Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Reading the Rainbow Storytime - 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Shaw Festival Film Series: The Grizzlies - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre
12 from Salt to Community amra Zafar - Wine Co. omic ee - 7:30 a.m. - oom - 2 p.m. - - 7 p.m. - el J Patterson Dinosaurs - 11 NOTL Public	13 Homeschooler Drop in - 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library	14 Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Film: Journey to Justice - 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Museum Light Up Heart Cards - 10 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library PA Day Film: Toy Story 4 - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library PA Day Fun at the Rink - 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. - Fort George Skating Rink	15 Days of Wine and Chocolate - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Shaw Festival Film Series: Jojo Rabbit (to be confirmed) - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre Colours to Dye For Lecture by Sandra Lawrence - 10 a.m. - NOTL Museum

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Hometown Traveller

Renting a car is best way to see a country



This typical French scene is under threat. Napoleon and the aristocracy are variously credited with planting the roadside plane trees. But for several years after 1999, thousands were cut down to reduce traffic deaths. DON CAMERON

Don Cameron
Special to The Lake Report

The most challenging thing after finding a parking spot in Trieste was getting out of it.

Most of this Italian port city at the northern tip of the Adriatic lies on a hillside at the foot of an escarpment with the sea on the other side. The streets are narrow and were congested even when my wife Mickey and I visited in 1979.

After much circling we found two spots and parked in one. The other was clearly too small for our car. Not so for a Fiat that arrived moments later. Four young men emerged, grabbed each corner and tucked the car into the spot. Next morning as we tried to pull out, two vehicles appeared on the single-lane street, one facing the other, each determined to have our spot. We just played the waiting game, too, until one of them blinked.

Despite parking and other problems, we always found the best way to see a country was not from a tour bus, but with a rented car.

In France, armed with a stack of yellow Michelin regional maps we would follow the yellow roads — country roads that took us far from the superhighways.

As we reached the edge of one map we dug out the next and chucked the first in the back seat. At times we felt like Audrey Hepburn and Albert Finney in “Two For the Road,” complete with the swearing.

Many times we were lost. In Budapest, our map wasn't in sync with newer roads. But we didn't feel too inept after a second car pulled into a vacant lot after us, a couple emerged with maps in hand and told Mickey in Hungarian, her native language, that they too were lost and lived just outside the city. Then followed lengthy circling on one-way streets to arrive at the Gellért Hotel. Totally frustrated, we parked on a side street and left the car unmoved for five days until we were leaving.

In Lisbon, arriving at 10 p.m. we found roads were being rebuilt to prepare for the city's year as Europe's Capital of Culture in 1994. In the dark we found ourselves driving through the bays of a bus station to get back on track.

In Split, the second-largest city in Croatia, we thought to visit the Plitvice Lakes National Park, which looked to be not far away. How wrong we were.

We started up the side of the coastal mountain range

on a road with multiple hairpin bends and no guard rails. At the top we were in a land of silence except for cowbells tinkling in the distance. By the side of the road an elderly woman pulled quantities of combed wool from a box by her feet and rolled them between her palms to make yarn while keeping an eye on her sheep. In the field behind, her husband guided a plough pulled by two oxen.

With no road signs of any kind, we were relieved when a small boy flagged us down. Anxious to practise his English, he drew a map (two, in fact, because he wasn't satisfied with the first) directing us back to the coast on a less terrifying road.

The national park, now a World Heritage Site, comprises 16 lakes arranged in cascades. They are separated by natural dams of travertine. The distinctive colours of the water, ranging from azure to green, grey or blue, change constantly depending on the minerals or organisms in the water and the angle of sunlight. In addition to tours of the lakes, the official website offers hiking, cycling, skiing and sleighing.

Cars can be temperamental. In Jamaica, as we drove to the airport in Montego

Bay en route home, our rental stopped dead in a small village. Nothing we did would restart it, until three young local men arrived with a magic touch. As repayment, they asked to be taken into town, and we were glad to have them along in case the car died again.

Our first rental in France in 1977 was a tiny Renault 5 that had seen its best days. Trying to climb a hill in the centre of a village, it was reduced to a dead stop even in the lowest gear.

We had to reverse back down and take a detour. We came up with two solutions: First, pull into a track in a forest, put the gear in neutral and floor the gas pedal. For several minutes, huge clouds of black smoke filled the air and we expected the pompiers (firefighters) to arrive.

Second, arrange a purchase-repurchase next time. For less cost than a rental we bought a brand new car with the understanding that it would be repurchased at the end of the trip. The only stipulation was that after 1,000 kilometres it should be taken to a dealership for an oil change. Peugeot and Citroën still offer them under the less-scary “leasing.”

A rental car is a natural fit when staying in a gîte

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Happy trails.

— a holiday home available for rent. Technically, to be called a gîte, the owner must live close by. They are generally old farmworkers' cottages or converted outbuildings and barns within proximity of the owner's principal residence, but today the definition has been broadened to cover more luxurious accommodations.

The one we rented at Riec-sur-Belon on the Brittany coast was an old farmhouse with all the modern conveniences and its own charm: a large pigpen attached at the back but downwind from the house, and turkeys and hens gobbling and clucking as they wandered about in front.

A short drive away was Chez Jacky, an oyster farm and restaurant where we wandered among the tanks before buying a bucket of Belons and savouring them at the gîte with a bottle of Chablis.

The restaurant today is Michelin-recommended and highly rated on Trip Advisor. The Guardian newspaper reported this month that fishing and selling of oysters in shellfish farming areas on France's northwest coast has been banned because of a norovirus. Oyster farmers have blamed untreated sewage.

Another gîte was in

the town of Ramerupt in the Champagne region and owned by someone who made horsehair mattresses by hand. He gave us a tour of his workplace before inviting us in for drinks of his homemade brandy with his wife.

At the risk of offending Québécois readers, here, for a second time I was complimented on my French, learned in Scotland and Ontario, and told, “We can understand you but not Québécois speakers.” Told that I was still studying French for my job, the gîte owner said, “I hope your teacher is from France.”

French roads in the 1970s and '80s were not as clearly marked as today but one could depend on every rural intersection having a sign pointing to Paris. Most signs were cement bordered and under six feet high. It was easy to turn the wrong way because the sign might be overgrown with bushes or hidden by a group of locals having a confab.

But signs for attractions or notable buildings never suffered from that problem. Pointing out the windshield I would shout, “That sign, what's it about?” knowing Mickey's response in advance: “Oh, it's just another 12th-century church!”

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Dr. Brown: Even when Einstein was wrong, he was **right**



Dr. William Brown
 Special to The Lake Report

In one of four pivotal studies in 1905, any one of which would merit a Nobel prize, Albert Einstein revealed that while in common with the rest of the electromagnetic spectrum, light had wave-like properties, light was also quantal in nature – it was composed of what he called photons.

That discovery made him the father of particle physics. However, as a theoretical physicist, he was most comfortable with the world of the large – the relationships between space, time (special relativity) in 1905 – to which he added gravity (general relativity) in 1915.

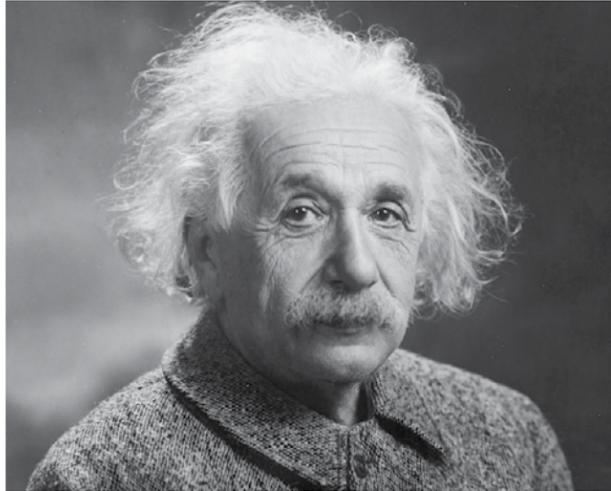
General relativity provided remarkable insights into the nature of the universe. For example, predictions

based on relativity's equations, revealed that the universe was expanding and hence must have been incredibly dense and tiny at one time, from which it expanded (the Big Bang).

General relativity also predicted that collisions of massive bodies, such as later discovered black holes or neutron stars, would produce gravitational waves in the space-time fabric of the universe (observed first in 2015, garnering a Nobel prize in 2017). His equations also predicted that the mass of large heavenly bodies such as stars or even whole galaxies could bend light sufficiently to see stars and galaxies, otherwise hidden from view (gravitational lensing).

And because Einstein was unhappy with the whole idea of an expanding universe, he introduced his famous cosmological constant into his general relativity equations, to restore "stability" to the universe. Wrong to do so, he later rued the day he introduced his constant.

However, that constant exactly predicts what would



Albert Einstein circa 1947. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

later become known as dark energy, as the force expanding the universe and which would garner other physicists later in the 20th century, another Nobel prize. So even when he was wrong, it turned out he was right.

He was also wrong about particle (quantum) physics, the physics, which governs atoms, subatomic particles and forces. Einstein simply could not abide the uncertainty inherent in particle physics, which was set forth by two of the early leading lights in the field, Werner

Heisenberg and Erwin Schrodinger (both Nobel laureates). They championed the "uncertainty principle," that at the subatomic level, for example, you could know the momentum of a particle but not its position, or the reverse, but never both at the same time.

And what about the whole idea that the observer somehow influenced the result? All were troubling to Einstein, as was the idea of entanglement at a distance, whereby the behaviour of particles separated by great distances could somehow

behave in lockstep with one another. Recent studies have convincingly shown that such entanglement occurs, as weird as the phenomenon might seem.

Famously, Einstein debated many times with Niels Bohr, a leading theoretician in particle physics and winner of the Nobel prize in 1922, by creating clever mind game objections to particle physics. The two were great friends despite their fundamental disagreements about particle physics. The story is told that after Bohr died, colleagues found one of Einstein's thought experiment sketches on a large blackboard in Bohr's office.

Einstein is certainly an example of the gift that keeps on giving because in recent times predictions he made decades ago, for example about gravitational lensing and waves, have spectacularly been proven to be true.

And even when he was wrong to rejig his relativity equations, by introducing his cosmological constant,

the constant proved useful to later physicists in quantitating dark energy. The latest example of a triumph for Einstein was the capture of the first image of a gargantuan blackhole whose shape corresponded to predictions based on Einstein's equations for general relativity.

To his last days, Einstein continued to wrestle with particle physics, constantly looking for flaws in the equations governing the field. He didn't succeed but apparently when he died, papers beside his bed fell to the floor revealing his last work on the subject.

Oh, and did I mention that most iconic of his equations, the one relating mass to energy, $E=mc^2$ where E represents energy, m represents mass and c the speed of light – perhaps the briefest most consequential equation of all time.

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

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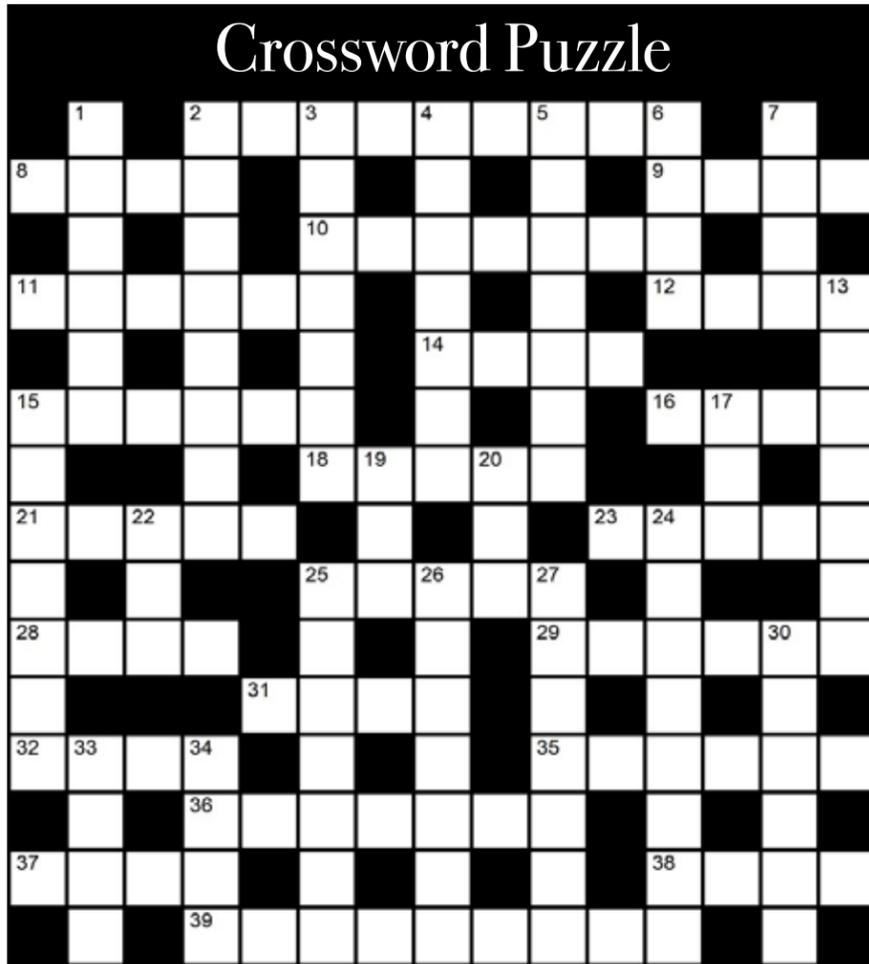


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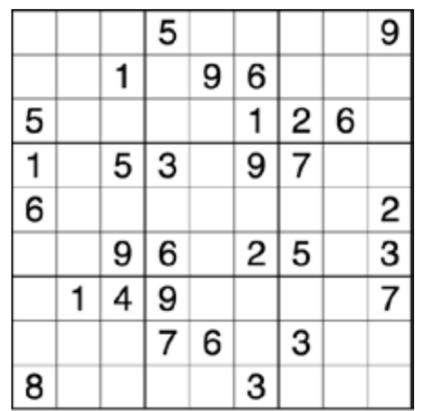
- Across**
- 2. Laboratory glassware (4,5)
 - 8. Entreaty (4)
 - 9. Mesopotamia was here (4)
 - 10. Middle East expert (7)
 - 11. Useful kind of truck (4-2)
 - 12. Employs (4)
 - 14. Bombs (4)
 - 15. American vulture (6)
 - 16. Thickly curled hairdo (4)
 - 18. More mature (5)
 - 21. Bring together (5)
 - 23. Have a taste (3,2)
 - 25. Egyptian water lily (5)
 - 28. Without purpose (4)
 - 29. Kitchen feature (6)
 - 31. Great Lake (4)
 - 32. "Shane" actor (4)
 - 35. Canter round a lure for bees (6)
 - 36. Sticks like glue (7)
 - 37. Sudden assault (4)
 - 38. Rhythmic swing (4)
 - 39. Gastric (9)
- Down**
- 1. Abnormally white (6)
 - 2. Discussed (6-2)
 - 3. "Walkin' back to Happiness" singer (7)
 - 4. How critical things may come (2,1,4)
 - 5. Conveyor (7)
 - 6. If it's in place it's in this (4)
 - 7. Charge per unit (4)
 - 13. Dated (7)
 - 15. Pivotal (7)
 - 17. Not easily hoodwinked (3)
 - 19. The fifth of twelve (3)
 - 20. Flightless bird (3)
 - 22. In poor health (3)
 - 24. Attendance check (4-4)
 - 25. Pitched abruptly (7)
 - 26. Proposition demonstrated by reasoning (7)
 - 27. Registers (5,2)
 - 30. Not quite (6)
 - 33. Small cells (4)
 - 34. Shocking art movement (4)

Have some fun

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



Last issue's answers




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WINE COUNTRY

WITH VICTORIA GILBERT

Perridiso: A bit of paradise in Niagara-on-the-Lake

Victoria Gilbert
Special to The Lake Report

In the south of Italy, a farmer and his donkey, laden with a barrel of wine on either side, make their way down the mountain as the sun is rising.

The ancient town of Nicasastro, within the slenderest part of Calabria, Italy, is bustling on Saturday mornings. The market is vibrating with locals buying wines and herbs which the town is known for.

At 216 metres above sea level, the donkey and his master have a fine view as they make their way, but with eight children to feed, the man needs to sell everything he produces to take care of his family.

“The stories were alive,” Joe Perri, founder and winemaker of Perridiso Winery in Niagara, says of his childhood.

Perri’s family left Calabria when he was a baby, but his humble Italian heritage stayed with him and ultimately led him to following in his parents’ footsteps.

“My parents were wine-makers in Italy. I can still remember my dad saying, ‘Leave the wine alone. Let it do its thing, let it mature on its own, do not interfere or intervene because then it will curve the process of maturation.’”

Perri, who grew up in Hamilton, returned to Italy when he was older and was inspired by the place of his childhood. “The grapes get so sweet, you can smell them in the fields.”

Perri had four children of his own and was living in Niagara Falls when he encountered like-minded wine and food lovers who began experimenting with making their own creations.

“We started making wine when we were 40 years old, as amateurs. The passion



Joe Perri of Perridiso Winery. VICTORIA GILBERT

that this group of individuals had for making wine, soppressatas, charcuteries, cheeses – it brought me back to a time of the past, and I thought, ‘This is the way we should be doing things,’” recalls Perri.

He took a leap of faith and purchased a property with 29 acres of land above Niagara College in the mid-1990s. By the year 2000, he had planted six acres of vineyards above a lush Carolinian forest, where maples, oaks, birch and elm trees flourish.

“People want nature,” he says with a stroke of his greying ponytail.

Located in the middle of the Niagara Escarpment along the St. David’s Bench, it’s an ideal spot to successfully grow the Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Riesling and Pinot Grigio grape varieties Perri planted.

“You’ve got this cyclical effect of wind current. So the warm air rises, the cold air hits, pushes it back down and this whole cycle of up and down and moving winds is wonderful for the grapes or orchards.”

There is another advantage which Perri discovered after planting his vineyard.

“We have in front of the property a very high berm which the CN rail uses. The trains come all times of day and night, maybe 10 times a day. As silly as it might sound, when a train is coming by, I can tell it is coming five minutes before it actually gets there because it creates a wind current. It really does work as a wind machine and moving things.”

Perri is convinced the temperature of the environment is affected by the trains and this unique advantage keeps the leaves dry in his vineyard.

“Moisture is an enemy. When you have these damp and humid summer days, moisture sticks to the leaves and invites critters and creatures and flies and mildew and mould. That’s not welcome in this vineyard.”

His philosophy of winemaking and grape growing comes directly from the stories of his parents. “Picking grapes by hand, pruning, training the vines to grow a certain way, minimal mechanical intervention, spraying to a point where you are not excessive, those kinds of things.”

When asked why his

wines taste as robust and polished as they do, he holds up his hands and shakes them gently in the air:

“These hands have touched every wine, and they have caressed every vine. They control what and how I’m going to treat the wine.”

Perri produces about 10,000 litres of wine a year and sells his wines to high-end restaurants locally or directly from his winery.

“We do not want to become this commercialized institution. The best experiences that I’ve had with wine is going to Italy, France or Portugal and going to these small boutique wineries or houses and we sat down and had the best time. That’s how I feel when family and friends come over. We eat and we drink, and I want to share that.”

No one works in his wine boutique, other than Perri and his partner, Antonia Mori, and that’s how he likes it.

“We are small and we want to stay small. We’re family-oriented, I have a wonderful partner with Antonia Mori, who assists in any way she can to promote our commitment to quality and identity to what we do.”

With no plans to plant more grapes, and a firm desire to stay small and humble, Perri’s hope is people will discover his “hidden gem” and feel a little as he does when he returns home to Italy.

“I see Perridiso as a destination. When you see it, it takes you away to another place.”

To book a tasting, call Perri directly at 905-358-4222.

NOTL resident Victoria Gilbert has been telling the stories of wine people in Canada and abroad through print and video for 15 years.



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- Richard Harley

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Writers' Circle

Dids' story: The human truth about war

This is the final of three parts. The whole story can be found online at www.niagaranow.com under "featured columns."

Richard West
NOTL Writers' Circle

We spent 1944 on Arctic Service and later supporting the D-Day landings. Then we went to the Indian Ocean to assist with operations there. At the very end of the war, our ship was part of a destroy-

er group that attacked and sunk the Japanese cruiser Huwago. This was the last naval action in the war involving naval gunnery.

When the war was over, I returned to Downham and found work, as a freelance journeyman or doing small jobs as a contractor. In the late 1950s, I married Ellen and we moved to Bromley. People knew me as the smiling man who was never too busy to say "Hello!"

In 1960, my nephew was

11, and he had seen a movie involving a naval battle. I heard his excited talk about the movie. When I told him I had been in a sea battle during which the Scharnhorst had been sunk he was enthralled.

"Uncle, please tell me, what you did during the battle?" He pleaded.

After giving him one of my characteristic chuckles, I said, "I hid under the boilers until the firing stopped!"

I could see his surprise at this unexpected

remark.

"It's true! The Chief Stoker had everything under control and he knew how scared I was. I know he was scared as well, but he was in charge!"

"You should also remember what this was about. We were there to kill the Scharnhorst or to be killed by her. When she went down, more than 1,500 brave sailors went with her. This was a frightening thing to be involved with when you are 18 years old. Every-

one was very sad it had happened. But glad to be alive."

I hoped my candid remarks would help set my nephew straight about how terrible war is. Not by blustering or lecturing, but by showing him how human all the people involved are. Those fighting the sea that night were probably not very different from me. No matter which side they were on.

Ellen tells me it's 2015. A man came today

and Ellen said he is my nephew.

He asked me about when I was at the Battle of the North Cape. I could remember visiting India in a destroyer but had no memory of being in battles.

At 90 years old, I'm better off not remembering. Even if there was a battle!

I chuckled and smiled at such a strange thought.

This story was previously published on www.commuterlit.com.



The Denielle Bassels band performs at Willowbank Sunday. More photos at www.niagaranow.com DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

Willowbank Salon Series kicks off

The Willowbank Sunday Salon Series kicked off last Sunday with Toronto-based Denielle Bassels performing on opening day.

The next concert, featuring the Thorn and Roses trio, will be held on the second floor of the historic campus in Queenston on March 22. Tickets cost \$37 and can be bought through the Eventbrite website.

All proceeds support Willowbank and its programs. Refreshments are provided and attendees can also participate in a 50/50 draw.



Spectators watch the Denielle Bassels band perform on Sunday. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA



Danielle Lepp and Jaclyn Willms show the V-sit. STAY FIT NOTL

Flatten (and flatter) your core

Jaclyn Willms
Special to The Lake Report

Your core is the foundation of all your movement — your body's power, stability and strength comes from your core.

Whether you're looking to flatten your tummy or relieve low back pain, core exercises are always key.

Here are four exercises to do at home or at the gym.

- 1) V-Sit
- 2) Side Plank
- 3) Deadbug
- 4) Plank with toe taps

Get your timers out and do each exercise for 20-30 seconds each for 3 rounds.

Note: Keep your core braced to make sure your core muscles are engaged and you're not putting any pressure on your low back.

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

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EXPLORING PHOTOS

WITH JIM SMITH



John Wright

John Wright, seen in this picture, lived at the foot of King Street next door to the Whale Inn. For many years he was the director of Boys Town, which was held in the building known as "the compound" and was located at the end of Veterans Lane. Many will remember his son, who was a hairdresser on Queen Street and was known as Mr. Barry. In the winter, when we kids would venture out on the lake ice, Mr. Wright was always there to chase us back to safety.

SUPPLIED PHOTO/JIM SMITH

ARCHITEXT

Do your **reno** groundwork

Brian Marshall
Featured

Even under the best circumstances, renovation projects often have a tendency to expand. Almost inevitably there is "job creep" that occurs as the work reveals hidden issues that require additional labour and materials to address.

However, nearly as common is the "runaway reno," wherein changes, additions and upgrades drive the renovation far beyond its original objective and budget.

To manage any project well, and to end up with a result that actually meets your defined criteria, developing a scope-of-work document is invaluable.



What is the best way to approach a renovation? SUPPLIED

Provided you have sufficient expertise in all facets of the renovation process, this document can be self-authored, but more typically it is something that should be provided by your general contractor and form the core of their contract.

In order for them to develop a scope-of-work proposal it is incumbent upon you, the client, to provide clear and detailed information speaking to your needs, wants, desires and limitations.

In our last column we looked at employing a diary to identify and prioritize the

issues that ideally will be solved through the renovation. The resulting list will likely contain most of your must-haves (needs), some should-haves (wants) and perhaps a few of nice-to-haves (desires). However, it will not be complete.

I suggest you engage a professional design consultant whose experience will both elicit dialogue to develop a more fully realized list and provide conceptual options to serve as the basis of your design development. Note that this is not design but rather establishment of

the criteria the design must fulfil.

In my opinion this critical step is probably most overlooked by clients and almost invariably leads to an unsatisfactory "runaway reno" where all sorts of things are missed and other items added at a higher cost later.

At this juncture a preliminary budget for the project needs to be identified. Here again, a third-party design consultant can be a solid source of information.

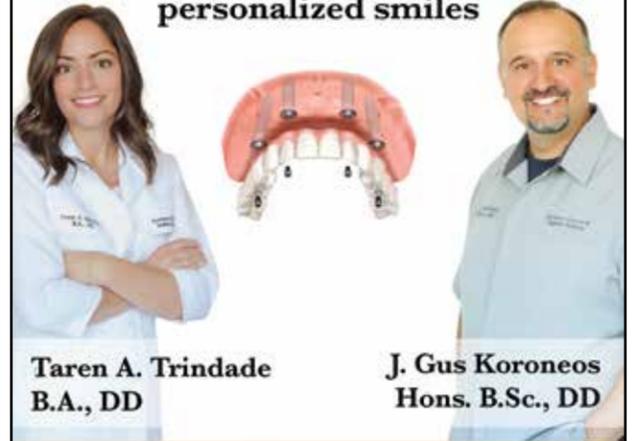
While such an individual cannot provide actual pricing, they can suggest general estimates based on the design criteria developed. Realistically, it's good practice to take this estimate and add about 20 per cent contingency to cover "job creep" issues. When budgeting for a reno, it's always best to prepare for the worst and then manage to the best.

Stay tuned next week for smart selection of your design and contracting professionals.

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The Lake Report FACTS

The Lake Report recently conducted a readership survey, and sent information on how to participate to every farm, residence and apartment in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

More than 80% of people surveyed chose The Lake Report as their preferred choice for local news and information.

SOURCE: TLR Readership Survey; October 2019

Did you know?

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

The ink is also vegetable-based.



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NOTL Legion in the **modern era**



Denise Ascenzo
Exclusive/The Lake Report

This is the second of a two-part series.

The Legion had its share of struggles in the early days: In 1929 the world was thrown into the Great Depression. Then the "dirty 30s" arrived, a period where jobs were scarce, families moved away and homes were lost.

This caused the finances of Branch 124 to almost run dry.

In 1931 the Legion gave up its rental of the Curtis House at 175 Victoria St. and temporarily moved into several rooms at the Prince of Wales Hotel. A few months later the next temporary move was to the Town Hall, which became home for four years. Finances started to improve and in 1935 Branch 124 moved into 272 King St. – the Carnochan House.

In 1936, General Dm. M. Nelles died at the age of 72. On his death he was made an honorary member. Two years later, with permission of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 124 officially changed its name to General Nelles (Ontario Number 124) Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Once again the Legion was on the move and purchased a small house near the Oban Inn. However, it was discovered that no expansion could be done on the home so another move was anticipated.

But this time it was a bit more complicated. Property was found that could be rented for \$5 a year. The decision was made to dismantle the entire house near the Oban Inn and, with volunteer labour, move

the house and rebuild on the new site at 225 King St. The new site was on the property beside Greens Livery (Grill on King) and Lees Laundry (Balzac's).

The 1930s were a big challenge to the Legion, but it also was 10 years of improvements, a more efficient management system and many annual activities were established.

However, rumblings of another world war were circulating and the Legion started to move into readiness. Soldiers were once again training at Niagara Camp and using the Legion facilities more and more. Women were now forbidden to be included in any activities held at the Legion.

In 1942, the Branch 124 Ladies Auxiliary was given its charter and in March, women were approved to be part of the membership. The auxiliaries eventually replaced the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE), which had worked closely with the Legion and helped launch the poppy campaign.

Now even though the women were not permitted in the Legion for many of the activities, they could hold their own activities on other nights inside the facility.

The Legion carried on throughout the Second World War, assisting the young trainees in town, helping their families and supporting the war effort with fundraisers. The women's auxiliary continued raising money as well.

After the Second World War ended, membership in all Legions across Canada swelled and Branch 124 was no exception.

Prior to the war, plans were made to expand the building at 225 King St., but with \$6,000 in the budget the Legion instead purchased the land called "The Pines" at Ricardo and Wellington streets. There was a large two-storey



NOTL Legion Sergeant at Arms Doug Garrett is 92. JANICE WHITE

brick home on the property that could be used for many purposes. On Feb. 18, 1947, the new location of Branch 124 was officially opened.

In 1948, Branch 124 was proactive in helping veterans from the Second World War. Members were able to initiate the building of a small housing complex just east of King Street. A contest was held to help name the three rows of houses in this area. The Carnochan Subdivision was one of the winning names

as was Nelles Street.

Branch 124 pushed further to develop a new sports park, east of King Street where Veterans Lane now is. The baseball diamond was a great hit with the community, especially when lights were installed in the 1960s.

As well, Branch 124 brought to fruition one of its major proposals. In the 1950s, with church graveyards being closed to all but members of the church, the Legion pushed through

the idea that a public cemetery was needed in the area. In 1966, Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery officially opened and it includes a veteran's section.

In 1965, the members of Branch 124 made one more move, their final purchase, 410 King St., the land near the baseball diamond. In 1966, the cornerstone of the new building was laid and on July 8, 1967, the new Legion hall was officially opened.

The General Nelles (On-

tario Number 124) Branch Royal Canadian Legion finally had a permanent home to carry on its members' support for community projects and to honour all Canadians who served in the military.

It remains an integral part of the community today.

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



COMMUNITY



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



Piggy bank campaign supports children's mental health

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

The Meridian Credit Union wants you to gather your loose change and fill a piggy bank for children's mental health during the Fill the Pig, Feel Better fundraiser for Pathstone Foundation's eight Hear and Now walk-in clinics across Niagara.

The adopt-a-pig campaign, which officially kicked off on Monday, is held in partnership with Meridian Credit Union.

Piggy banks can be "adopted" at any of the 17 Meridian Credit Unions in Niagara, taken home to fill with money and brought back to any location by the end of February.

This is the second year for the campaign, which has added new ways to get involved.



Financial service rep Jane Clattenburg and member services reps Charlene Neufeld and Janene Stefanovich show off pigs at the Niagara Stone Road Meridian Credit Union.

BRITTANY CARTER

The Pen Centre in St. Catharines will hold a Paint the Pig Night on Tuesday, Feb. 4, from 4 to 8 p.m. Spots need to be reserved online before the event. A \$25 donation will

get you a piggy bank and a seat at the art table to personalize it.

Every store in the Pen Centre will also have a pig at the cash register to collect donations throughout

the month.

A celebratory wrap-up and campaign total announcement will be held during the March 8 Ice Dogs game at the Meridian Centre in St. Catharines.



THE GOLDEN PLUNGER

With Betty and Jane

Willow Cakes & Pastries



Sean O'Donnell accepts the Golden Plunger on behalf of Willow Cakes and Pastries. THE GOLDEN PLUNGER

Although this is Willow's first review, this is not its first Golden Plunger Award. It made our list in 2017. Willow is a local favourite hot spot. If you've had its Lindt hot chocolate you know what we are talking about. Hot gals, at a hot spot, downing hot choc. What makes me a hot gal in a hot spot? A hot flash. All this with the most awesome carrot cake. We can enjoy ourselves, we've already seen the washrooms. All before we got to the front counter. They're located just inside the door, offering a special privacy and patio convenience. No need to walk through the cafe to get to them. Fresh high-quality pastries and a high-quality freshening experience. Willow Cake and Pastries received 3.5/5 Golden Plungers

3.5/5 Golden Plungers



NOTL DART LEAGUE

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

There were no regular games this week. Instead, the dart league held a blind draw doubles tourney Tuesday night at the Legion.

Winners were Dave Kemp-Welch (Guzzlers) and Amanda Langlois (Dartbags). Second place went to Richard Maxwell (SandTrap) and Matt Pospiech (Jini)



Tarot of the week

Lisa Tache/Special

DATE: Jan. 30, 2020

The Nine of Pentacles relates to happiness and success. There are lots of opportunities for us to depend on the support

of others, but the Nine of Pentacles signifies the achievements we have gained through doing it on our own actions and efforts. The card is uplifting and encouraging. This can mean that your financial worries are over for a while, and that things in general will be going better than you thought possible. Enjoy this good energy, and share your wealth and happiness with others. You have worked hard in your life to create abundance, and the Nine of Pentacles says you can enjoy the fruits of your labour. Invest wisely and seek financial advice to make the most of your wealth. Don't rely on others to support you; this Nine speaks of independence, luxury and self sufficiency.

ASK YOURSELF THIS

How have you created abundance in your life?

RIDDLE ME THIS

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

Last Week: Different lights do make me strange, thus into different sizes I will change. What am I?

Answer: A pupil

Also accepted: Shadow

Answered first by: Margie Enns

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Quinn Tiller, Marjory, Sheila Meloche, Gary Davis, Margaret Garaughty, Jacob Willms

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

NOTL: SPECIAL WINTER EDITION

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

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



NOTL'S CHOICE AWARDS

We want to hear what businesses, organizations and individual professionals are your favourites in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The survey can be completed as many times as needed, so you can nominate as many local businesses as you'd like.

To nominate your favourites, go to LakeReport.ca



PRESS PASS PROGRAM

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

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



FEATURED LOCAL STORY



Comedian David Green stands in front of 4680Q radio station on Queen Street in Niagara Falls, where he records "Live on Queen with David Green" Monday nights. BRITTANY CARTER

He's got talent

Comedian hopes attention from his audition on America's Got Talent will boost Niagara fundraiser

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Niagara comedian David Green says he wants to refocus attention from his recent America's Got Talent audition toward The Harder They Fall, a fundraising event in support of the Niagara Falls Community Outreach soup kitchen.

The evening will feature the premiere episode of a four-part series of the same name.

In addition to the screening, Green, who is also the host of 4680Q radio show

"Live on Queen with David Green," will lead the night with more comedic performances by some of the cast and crew of the series. There will also be live music and raffle prizes with all proceeds going toward the soup kitchen on St. Lawrence Avenue.

He drove to Detroit almost on a whim to join friend and fellow comic Kat Chartier last week to try out for America's Got Talent. Successful contestants should be notified by the beginning of March, he says.

And though he wouldn't say it had necessarily "always been a dream" of his to make it on the show, he says he appreciates what the opportunity could do for his career.

He has been able to support himself through his performance career since about June of last year, he says. And he appears to be in high demand. Right now, his weekends are booked solid until the end of May.

"It was cool to have all the attention, and everybody has been really supportive,"

Green says of the outpouring of positive feedback and support he's received since posting about his audition. He says he would like to see that momentum drive more support for the fundraiser.

"It would be cool to get some of that attention (locally). People are excited about Simon Cowell — (it would be great if) they could get excited for the stuff that we're doing here in the community," he adds.

Green says the web series is a massive collaboration among musicians, dancers, choreographers, directors

and actors. And it all was made possible by a grant from the Niagara Falls Cultural Development Fund, so he wants to showcase downtown Niagara Falls through the show.

He felt a "responsibility" to include messaging that would help people, he says.

"If we're going to spend all this time and effort to make this, how can we make this a good thing for the community?"

He says an effort was made to shine a light on relevant local issues like homelessness and mental

health.

"Even though it's a comedy — it gets a little serious and tackles some serious topics and issues that we feel strongly about and showing them in a light that's not really been talked about before," he says. "Which I'm pretty proud of."

The Harder They Fall will be held at the Hub on Queen, at 4333 Queen St., Niagara Falls on Feb. 7, from 6 to 9 p.m.

Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased through Eventbrite.com.

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