



## Swimmers unaware of E. coli in water at beach

Maddy Gordon  
The Lake Report

Beachgoers are still in the water at Queen's Royal Beach despite a warning from Niagara Region about dangerous levels of E. coli contamination, suggesting that one sign encouraging potential swimmers to search online for water safety levels may not be enough.

Starting June 19, the beach was marked as unsafe for swimming due to dangerous levels of E. coli, according to the Niagara Region's online beach water advisories — as of Wednesday, July 2, it is still deemed unsafe for swimming.

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# Canada Day a sweet celebration

## Community rallies to support mammoth cake that feeds thousands



This year's Canada Day cake from Willow Cakes & Pastries, funded in part by the community, shows a beautiful edible forest filled with furry friends dressed as bakers, serving up cakes and desserts in their woodland bakery. The cake feeds thousands of people. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Dan Smeenik | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

Malachy Doyle came with his family from Welland to Simcoe Park on Tuesday to celebrate his eighth birthday at Niagara-on-the-Lake's annual Canada Day Cake Parade.

His mom, Crystal Doyle — who attended with Malachy, her

husband Andrew and daughter Molly — said the family has made the event an annual tradition since Canada's 150th birthday in 2017, shortly after Malachy was born.

"I'm pretty sure the day he was born was on the Saturday, but

it was on the Sunday we came down or something ridiculous like that," said Crystal. "We love coming down to the park."

Malachy was one of many children and adults who joined the parade to celebrate Canada's 158th birthday and take part in a

tradition that dates back decades.

Catherine O'Donnell, founder of Willow Cakes and Pastries, created this year's cake, as she has for several years. It was placed on a hitch wagon, at-

Continued on Page 4

# NOTL Hydro president explains cause of rising power outages

Dan Smeenik  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Michael Lesage has lived in 10 different cities across Canada, but it's here in

Niagara-on-the-Lake where he says he's become on a first-name basis with the CEO of the local utility company for the first time.

The reason? Lesage, a Virgil resident, says that

power outages have become a somewhat regular occurrence in his home.

Speaking to NOTL's committee of the whole two weeks ago, Lesage said he's been communicating fre-

quently with NOTL Hydro president Tim Curtis, trying to get some answers about the reason for the blackouts in his area.

"Over a 12-month period we've certainly had more

than 10 where I live," said Lesage during the June 17 meeting.

"I know this not because I counted all of them, but I emailed Mr. Curtis with the subject line saying, 'outage

number one,' 'outage number two,' I stopped counting at around outage seven or eight, and there's been more since then."

Continued on Page 3



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# ‘The province **doesn’t care** what we feel’

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A group of Niagara-on-the-Lake residents is joining growing public opposition to two Ontario government bills critics say will gut environmental protections and sidestep democratic oversight.

Seniors for Climate in Niagara hosted an event at the NOTL Community Centre on June 23 featuring three panellists who spoke out against Bills 5 and 17, both of which received royal assent on June 5.

“With Bill 5 and 17 law, I will continue to oppose what is an unjust power grab,” said Lidija Biro, the group’s founder, during her opening remarks.

Bill 5 allows the provincial government to more easily access land for economic development, including mineral-rich but environmentally sensitive areas like the Ring of Fire in the James Bay lowlands. Indigenous groups say it threatens treaty rights and the environment.



Environmental defence lawyer Phil Pothén argues against Bill 5 and 17 alongside Coun. Sandra O'Connor during a Seniors for Climate in Niagara debate on Monday. DAN SMEENK

The law also enables the creation of “special economic zones,” which allow cabinet to exempt projects from provincial and municipal laws and regulations.

Three panellists addressed an audience of just over a dozen people at the community centre: Pascale Marchand, a Green Party

candidate in the last provincial election; Phil Pothén, a lawyer with Environmental Defence; and Niagara-on-the-Lake councillor Sandra O'Connor.

Pothén warned that Bill 5 creates an unprecedented level of unchecked authority. “No one alive today has lived under a set of rules like that,” he said, referring

to the zones. “This is not a normal policy we disagree about.”

Bill 17, passed the same day, reduces regulatory requirements for housing construction. It forms part of the province’s plan to build 1.5 million homes by 2031.

O'Connor criticized the rushed timeline for consultation on both bills. She said municipalities had just three weeks to review and comment on Bill 5, which was introduced April 17.

“So, with all the information they gathered, they had three weeks to look at it, assess it, and maybe see some unintended consequences. That didn’t happen,” she said.

“Bill 17 was even worse,” she added. “Royal assent was given before we were able to put in any comments about the consequences. To me, that says ... the province doesn’t care what we feel.”

Much of the panel’s criticism centred on what they called the authoritarian nature of Bill 5’s exemptions. Pothén described the

“special economic zones” as a “cheat code” that lets the province override laws it dislikes.

He also took aim at Bill 17’s erosion of urban design controls, which he said is Environmental Defence’s “biggest problem” with the bill.

“What you can get without urban design controls is actually fewer homes,” he said. “It’ll be a less appealing environment for people.”

Other concerns raised during the evening included threats to the Greenbelt, Indigenous rights, density limits and how “habitat” is defined.

Eight audience members asked questions, including Coun. Gary Burroughs and former Pelham mayor Dave Augustyn, who ran in this year’s provincial election as an NDP candidate.

Burroughs voiced concern about housing developments already approved by the town but not yet built.

“The residents need to know what we’ve already approved,” he said. “We’re overwhelmed with build-

ings, but we’re just not building. ... Give them two years to build and if they don’t, get rid of (the project).”

Augustyn suggested one possible way to push back against the bills would be to seek small-scale exemptions, such as protecting lands managed by Niagara Parks.

The panellists and several attendees emphasized the importance of public pressure.

Pothén said people should not hesitate to be vocal in their disapproval.

“We made it very personal,” he said, referring to how members of Environmental Defence confronted MPPs after the Greenbelt scandal. “We personally guilt-tripped those individual MPPs in public. ... This is the summer to do that.”

Marchand agreed. “Be as annoying and squeaky wheel as possible,” she said.

A representative from the NDP was originally scheduled to participate in the panel but had to withdraw.

[daniel@niagaranow.com](mailto:daniel@niagaranow.com)

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## Trees **top of mind** as council approves Konik Estates development in Virgil

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake council approved the construction of homes in west Virgil during its general committee of the whole meeting on June 17.

The development, known as Phase 2 of the Konik Estates, will be built north of Line 2 Road, east of Concession 6 Road, south of Homestead Drive, and west of Frontier Drive. It includes 52 single-detached lots and three townhouse blocks.

Much of the discussion focused on tree removal.

In July 2024, the developer agreed to retain three rows of trees as a buffer between the new homes and neighbouring properties. However, Coun. Wendy Cheropita, who chaired the meeting, said the removal of these trees remains a concern for local residents.

"Residents were very unhappy about losing this line of trees," she said. "Now the new trees that go in won't even be as high as the fence."

Although the original agreement called for preserving two rows of trees, the developer removed one of them and the other was



A map of the area of the Konik Estates development in west Virgil that council approved on June 17. SUPPLIED

later taken down after a health assessment found the trees posed a risk during windstorms.

"There were issues related to the stability of that row of trees," said Kristen McCauley, the town's director of community and devel-

opment services. "So, we agreed, following a health assessment of that row of trees ... that that row of trees was removed."

McCauley said a condition of removing the final row was that the developer must install a fence

— already in place — and replace the trees with "mature" ones at least 50 millimetres in diameter.

Cheropita questioned whether council should regulate the height of replacement trees.

In response, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said introducing new conditions now could be seen as unfair to the developer.

"If you wanted to drop these in, you should have done it last year," he said. "We're offside."

Coun. Gary Burroughs asked when construction would begin, expressing concern that projects are approved but not completed.

"As we continue to approve more and more residential lots, is there actually a timetable for getting them built?" he said. "Is it in these agreements or is it open-ended?"

McCauley said the developer is "motivated to construct," having already submitted plan registrations. She added that construction must begin within three years of the draft plan's approval in July 2024.

According to the council report, the developer is responsible for all costs associated with the project.

[daniel@niagaranow.com](mailto:daniel@niagaranow.com)

## Frequent power outages **explained** at council

*Continued from Front Page*

In two consecutive weeks, Niagara-on-the-Lake council heard about the issue of power outages in the town, the number of which have been going up in the last 12 months, said Curtis, who attended a special council meeting on June 24 specifically meant for NOTL Hydro.

"We are more than aware that we have had a lot more outages in the last 12 months than is normally the case," Curtis said.

"I know you had someone presenting recently to council on that ... I certainly understand the frustration and I do sympathize."

Three of the outages were due to a loss of power supply from Hydro One, Curtis said.

"That's unusual, we can go several years without any," Curtis said.

He also told council that wilderness issues were to blame for some of the outages, and NOTL Hydro had taken measures to deal with



Virgil resident Michael Lesage voices concerns about frequent power outages at council on June 17. His experience coincides with NOTL Hydro president Tim Curtis's words a week later in council that NOTL has seen an increase in outages in the last 12 months. DAN SMEENK

them.

"We've increased our budget by 50 per cent to try and trim trees to avoid outages," Curtis said.

Other reasons for outages, Curtis said, are accidents, wildlife and equipment problems.

During the June 17

meeting, some councillors responded to Lesage's comments with some degree of skepticism.

"I've lived here since '64," said Coun. Gary Burroughs. "I'm in the Old Town, but I don't find outages to be a problem."

Lesage said that Curtis

has told him there could be "wilderness issues." He also expressed skepticism of NOTL Hydro based on the "aspirational picture" heavy nature of the reliability stats page of their website.

"If you're having to post about how reliable you are, you're not very reliable," said Lesage.

Burroughs followed up with this and said, "Being critical of the hydro is not what we want to hear about. We want to hear your concerns, and we'll do something about it."

Coun. Wendy Cheropita also defended NOTL Hydro.

"There's a lot of good that comes from NOTL Hydro," she said.

Ultimately, Curtis concluded during his council appearance, customers tend to want one thing above all else in his industry.

They just want power, he said.

Curtis also said that electrical demands are expected to go up 75 per cent, or 2.2 per cent per year, by 2050.

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# Canada Day party and big cake draw huge crowd

Continued from Front Page

tached to a pickup truck, and driven down Queen Street to Simcoe Park. The cake featured two anthropomorphic characters — a rabbit and a skunk — dressed as bakers in a forest surrounded by mini cakes and other desserts. It was escorted by a fife and drum corps from the Friends of Fort George and Niagara College students.

A large crowd of hundreds greeted the cake at the park, awaiting the moment it would be sliced. The crowd sang “O Canada” twice, including one version led by vocalist Dianne Ticknor, before digging into sweet vanilla cake.

Tom Pekar, a director with the Friends of Fort George, has helped organize the event for “around 25 years.” He drove the vehicle carrying the cake and also served as town crier, calling the crowd to attention when the cake arrived at the tent.

“It started out very simple,” said Pekar. “It was a three-by-six slab cake. Then Catherine at Willow got involved and it started



Left: A packed Simcoe Park filled with hundreds waiting for a slice of the Canada Day cake. Right: Ward Simpson flips a hot dog. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



getting a little more fancy, then fancier, and now it’s elaborate, and now it’s intricate and it’s complicated.

“And it’s the most wonderful fantasy of edible things you could ever find.”

This year’s cake came together thanks to the efforts of Willow Cakes and Pastries — which closed its

only storefront in January — and thousands of dollars in donations from the local community.

Many attendees said the cake was a highlight of the day.

“Probably the cake and enjoying it with family,” said Ann-Marie Forbs when asked about her favourite

part of the event.

“He liked (the cake) so much,” said Jean Rocaford, who visited Simcoe Park with her husband and two children for the first time.

Amarik Singh, who attended with her husband to celebrate their anniversary, described the cake as “very nice.”

Omar Alias, who came from Hamilton with his family to enjoy the nature and community, called the experience “great,” a sentiment echoed by his relatives.

But it wasn’t just the cake that drew people in. Many came for the weather, to be with family, and to cel-

ebate Canada — reflected in the sea of red and white throughout the park.

The Doyle family, aware of the special significance of Malachy’s July 1 birthday, said they’re grateful for the country they call home.

“It’s a safe, unique country,” said Malachy.

[daniel@niagaranow.com](mailto:daniel@niagaranow.com)

## Artistry by the Lake welcomes locals and tourists to Artstravaganza

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

This year’s Artistry by the Lake market proved a huge success over the Canada Day weekend, attracting crowds of eager buyers from across Ontario and many American tourists.

The pop-up market, held from June 28 to July 1 at Queen’s Royal Park, featured more than 60 Canadian artists and artisans, including five local Niagara-on-the-Lake creators, showcasing fine art, jewelry, pottery, woodwork and textiles.

“Our message is simple — we value our American visitors and want them to feel welcome in town,” said Evelyn Williams, the NOTL Chamber of Commerce’s event co-ordinator.

Williams, who was responsible for running the event, said many tourists return year after year, drawn by the town’s lakefront charm and Canada’s more welcoming political climate.

“Speaking as an American, visitors will come and say, ‘I wanted to choose to have my vacation here because I don’t support the current administration,’” said Williams.



People stroll through the Artistry by the Lake vendor market on July 1. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

Valerie Potvin from Crosswind Creations also had high praise for improvements to this year’s market, particularly the addition of a router to facilitate debit transactions.

“Before, we were literally running up the hill holding our phones trying to get a signal, and we lost sales because of it, but this year it’s phenomenal,” said Potvin.

Famous Toronto painter David Vasquez, who has sold works to the Canadian Museum of History and celebrities like Andy Garcia and Vanessa Williams, attended for his seventh year.

“I have so many clients here. Some bought paintings from me 10, 15 years back and still support me,” said Vasquez.

Painter Jill Sapiente from Smithville, Ont., who was

attending for the first time, praised the market’s organization but had one complaint: not enough coffee.

“Other than that, very happy, very happy.” Sapiente appreciated visitors’ feedback on her painting and reported strong sales over the Canada Day weekend.

Kuda Chiromo, a sculptor of serpentine and awarded NOTL’s Best Artist for Fine

Arts this year, emphasized the importance of local community support.

“A lot of people, they don’t really do it for the money, it’s for like the passion,” said Chiromo. “On top of that, they are local as well, so I think it’s just a no-brainer to support.”

Catherine Mangosing, a Virgil artist behind Moss+Method, crafts preserved-moss wall pieces

from reclaimed Niagara-on-the-Lake lumber.

“People have never seen moss art before and are curious whether it’s alive, but it’s preserved, so it doesn’t need watering,” said Mangosing, having sold most of her stock by the last day of the market.

“I felt like I was talking all day because the traffic was so steady.”

Paty Camacho of Paty en la Playa handles sales, marketing and even models for her family’s business, which turns repurposed curtains into boho beachwear.

“We don’t have a storefront — we just travel to festivals — but this show always brings people from everywhere and we love it,” said Camacho.

Williams said about 80 per cent of this year’s vendors had taken part before and there have already been emails to reserve a spot for next year.

With Canada Day falling on a Wednesday next year, organizers admit there is some trepidation about how to schedule the long-weekend market, but vendors say they are eager to return and see the Niagara-on-the-Lake community again.

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From left, NOTL residents Paddy O'Neill, Steve Beard, Bill Mori, Paul Kristofferson, Helen Barrett, Moose Mike Barrett and Chris Doyle gather to celebrate Canada Day at the Legion. PAIGE SEBURN

## Patriotism **alive and well** at Legion bash

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Patriotism came with a message at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124's Canada Day celebration, where "Canada is not for sale" shirts stood out in the sea of red and white.

"The country is way more together this year," said Dave Gorman, who wore the bold slogan alongside his wife, Carol.

The couple said this year's Canada Day felt especially meaningful, as recent headlines have focused on strained trade

ties and questions about national sovereignty.

The Legion tradition began in 2008 and has since become a staple of local pride, said Al Howse, president of Branch 124.

"It's become sort of a routine," said Howse.

He said Canadians celebrate the country year-round, but Canada Day offers a special chance to come together and honour it — even without grand displays.

"We're quietly confident," he said.

It was also a special day for Christine Parkinson, who marked her birthday surrounded by Canada Day

cheer on the Legion's patio. Celebrations ran from noon to 8 p.m., with "O Canada" sung at 3 p.m.

The event featured a DJ, live band, barbecue and drinks for sale. Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates also dropped by to take part.

"It's been a little hot, but it's the best day of the year — for Canada and for birthdays," said Parkinson.

She said she hopes the country continues to move forward and reach its full potential.

"Because I think we have a lot of charisma in this country," she said.

And no matter where

Canada is at, or how tense things might feel, she said she's proud.

"I'm always a proud Canadian," she said.

NOTL resident Paddy O'Neill used the day to reflect on Canada and its accomplishments — including life-changing discoveries like insulin.

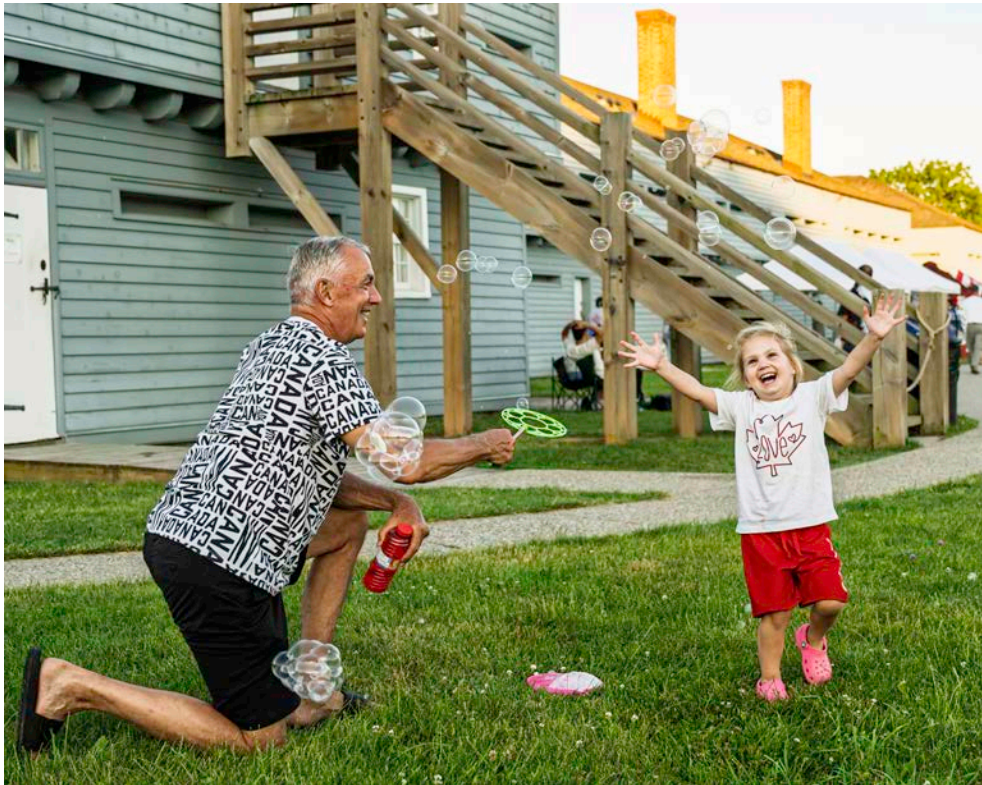
"All Canadian people," said O'Neill.

He called it a "lovely, hot day" at the Legion and said he was glad to mark the occasion.

Fellow NOTL resident Paul Kristofferson noted it was "a better turnout than last year."

[paigeseburn@niagaranow.com](mailto:paigeseburn@niagaranow.com)

## Fort George offers up **family fun** for July 1



Four-year-old Charlotte Paice is enraptured by the bubbles her grandfather, Bob Hart, is blowing, as they hang out together at the Fort George National Historic Site on Canada Day. There was plenty of Canadian pride and joy at the fort as people came out on Tuesday for a full day of celebration, featuring tours, the Fife & Drump Corps, cannon firing and a fireworks show in the evening. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



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# Wind phone brings quiet comfort to those grieving in NOTL

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Grief often leaves words unspoken — things we wish we'd said, moments we long to relive.

Now, in the backyard of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, there's a place where those words can finally be released into the wind.

Last Friday, NOTL Community Palliative Care Services unveiled a "wind phone" — a vintage, disconnected telephone that gives people the space to speak to loved ones who have died. There's no dial tone, no voice on the other end — only the soft, hollow sound of wind.

"This wind phone is our heartfelt gift to the community," said Bonnie Bagnulo, the palliative care group's executive director. "A place where healing and conversa-

tions can happen, even in silence."

Wind phones are typically placed in quiet, natural settings, and the NOTL library's backyard — beside the community garden and outdoor labyrinth — was chosen for its peacefulness. The unveiling was marked by a subdued, 15-minute ceremony, attended by about two dozen people.

The phone itself is a vintage-style candlestick model, selected for both aesthetic and durability after Bagnulo and her team considered a range of options — from plastic handsets to rotary and wall phones.

"We've chosen this one with weatherized veneer," she said. "Hopefully, it will withstand the elements."

The concept of the wind phone began in Japan after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, which left thousands dead and missing. A man who had lost a cousin



NOTL Palliative Care executive director Bonnie Bagnulo reveals the newly installed wind phone at the NOTL Public Library, where those grieving the loss of a loved one can have the opportunity to symbolically connect with them. DANIEL SMEENK

built a disconnected phone booth on his property as a way to stay close to those who were gone. Others followed — visiting, picking up the receiver, and pouring their hearts out into the breeze.

Since then, the idea has spread across the world, offering people a quiet, symbolic outlet for grief. In

Niagara, wind phones can now be found in Grimsby, St. Catharines, Lincoln, Fonthill — and now, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Bagnulo said her organization began seriously considering installing one in 2023.

"We started thinking about it a couple years ago, right after COVID," she

said. "It took us a while to shop for the phone, shop for the location and show exactly what this would look like for our community."

She contacted Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors to explore the idea and soon connected with Coun. Maria Mavridis, who helped bring the proposal forward. From there, Bagnulo worked with

Lauren Kruitbosch, associate director in the office of the CAO, as well as Kevin Turcotte, the town's manager of parks and recreation, and Debbie Krause, community engagement co-ordinator for the library. All supported installing the phone on library grounds.

NOTL Community Palliative Care Services has hosted other grief-related events before, including butterfly releases. But Bagnulo said the wind phone offers a different kind of comfort — one that's always available.


"We hope it's able to bring comfort, connection and a small measure of peace to those navigating a bereavement journey," she said. "Our volunteers said a wind phone is connected to nowhere and everywhere, all at once."

To learn more about wind phones or find other locations, visit mywindphone.com.

daniel@niagaranow.com

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# Museum lecture asks: Who won War of 1812?

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Who won the War of 1812?

That's the big question when American historian Donald Hickey and Canadian historian Ronald Dale meet for a panel at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum on July 12.

The discussion will be moderated by Marinus Zyta, host of the podcast Stories of 1812, and will explore the legacy and outcome of the war, fought between 1812 and 1815 by British subjects in what is now Canada and the relatively new United States.

Hickey, described by The New Yorker as the "dean of 1812 scholarship," is the author of "The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict," first published in 1989 and reissued for the war's bicentennial in 2012.

Dale, a Niagara-on-the-



Finnegan McConnell, left, and Patrick MacDonnell is costume as British soldiers at Fort George. The war they are re-enacting will be the subject of a discussion at NOTL Museum on July 12. DANIEL SMEENK

Lake-based historian, spent 38 years with Parks Canada, including time at National Historic Sites. His works include The Invasion of Canada: Battles of the War of 1812.

"My interest (in the War of 1812) started when I was 12 years old," Dale said.

While the topic may be contentious, the conversation is expected to be informative and measured.

"It's not a debate," said Dale.

Niagara played a pivotal role in the conflict, with several major battles fought across the region, including Queenston Heights, Lundy's Lane and Fort George.

"Niagara was a battlefield," Dale said. "More

people were killed during the Battle of Fort George than were killed in any other single battle, including World War 1 and World War 2, for the people of Niagara."

Still, historians disagree on who, if anyone, won the war. Hickey wrote in 1989 that it was "nearly unique in ending a stalemate on the battlefield."

The panel may not produce a definitive answer, but it aims to explore the historical importance of the question itself.

Dale said the war helped shape Canadian identity and is worth revisiting, especially now.

"That war is the reason we are not the 51st state," said Zyta.

The event begins at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, July 12. Tickets are available at notlmuseum.ca/whats-on. Admission is \$25 for museum members and \$30 for non-members.

[daniel@niagaranow.com](mailto:daniel@niagaranow.com)

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# Swimmers unaware of E. coli in water at NOTL beach

Continued from Front Page

Still, people at the beach can be seen paddleboarding, jet skiing and swimming in the water.

Some NOTL residents are worried out-of-town visitors won't know the lake isn't always safe for swimming.

"There are a lot of tourists in town, and they don't know that they might have an issue with the water," NOTL resident Katie Doe said.

But if there were extra signs placed on the beach, visitors looking for photo opportunities might become frustrated with the disruption of the view, she added.

Signs on the beach warning about E. coli levels are no longer the region's policy. Last Wednesday afternoon, officials had replaced the "Welcome to the beach" sign at Queen's Royal with the formerly used bright yellow signs warning people to avoid the water.

Then, by Friday, the yel-



Many swimmers are unaware that Queen's Royal Park beach is unsafe due to high levels of E. coli bacteria. Some argue the signage simply isn't adequate. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

low "warning" sign was replaced with the region's new "This beach is monitored" sign, which was still there when The Lake Report visited the beach on Sunday afternoon to talk to those hanging out there.

For now, the single sign overlooking the busiest part of the beach may not be drawing enough attention to deter tourists from taking a dip.

"We had no idea," said Rosa Skovrup, who is visiting NOTL from Denmark.

She said she and her friend, who is also on vacation, wouldn't have thought to check a website for water safety information before going into the lake.

The region might have to do more than put up a sign to keep other tourists aware of the risk, Skovrup added.

The Mayo Clinic says that

swallowing water with high E. coli content can lead to an infection that causes stomach cramps, diarrhea and vomiting.

E. coli is especially dangerous for children, seniors and those with depressed immune systems, the region warns on its website. In severe cases, the bacteria can lead to kidney failure. It is usually more severe in children than adults.

Nelly Senra, a beachgoer visiting from Brampton, Ont., said a flag system could resolve the issue, like those used at other public beaches warning about winds, strong currents or the presence of dangerous marine life, calling the lack of awareness of the E. coli "concerning."

"There should be more," Senra said. "You need to get the word out somehow."

She said she even took her six-year-old cockapoo, Mia, for a dip in the lake before realizing the potential risk.

However, she added that she doesn't have enough information about what exactly constitutes a dangerous level of E. coli.

"I just wonder, how unsafe is it?" Senra said. "What is an unsafe level?"

Lisa Cox, a spokesperson for Niagara Region Public Health, says when the region is testing a location's contamination levels, it takes five water samples from evenly spaced points along the length of the

beach.

Then, it issues a swimming advisory if the average E. coli level of the five samples is more than 200 E. coli per 100 milliliters, or if any single sample exceeds 400 E. coli per 100 mL.

Those testing also take samples from roughly the same spots each time the water is tested, she added.

The region tests Queen's Royal every Tuesday and Thursday from Victoria Day to Labour Day. Many factors, including heat, wind, larger numbers of swimmers and heavy rainfall, can all affect E. coli results.

Even though Senra wasn't planning on swimming while in NOTL, she explained the deterrent was that she simply isn't a swimmer, not the E. coli. But the same couldn't be said for the dozens of visitors on the lake.

As long as the summer heat persists, the lake's popularity may not dwindle until more awareness about the bacteria is raised.



## FORT ERIE RACE TRACK

### Wiener Dog Races - Sunday, July 13

food trucks | kid's entertainment | prize draws  
horse racing @ noon | dog racing @ 3 p.m.



# Meter Change Announcement

NOTL Hydro will begin upgrading electric smart meters that were originally installed in 2009. This year, approximately 2,000 meters will be replaced, with the remaining units scheduled for upgrade over the next two to three years.

A NOTL Hydro technician will make an effort to notify you prior to beginning the meter replacement via a simple door knock. Staff will have proper ID. The meter change process will result in a short power outage—typically lasting less than one minute. We kindly ask that you:

- Ensure clear access to your meter
- Save your work and prepare for a brief interruption if you're working from home
- Check and reset any clocks or alarms following the installation

Due to the high volume of meter replacements, it will not be possible to individually schedule appointments. Exceptions will be made only for customers who are registered with a medical alert. We ask that you refrain from calling to request a scheduled replacement.

There is no additional cost to you for the meter replacement.

[www.NOTLhydro.com](http://www.NOTLhydro.com)

Niagara  
on-the-Lake  
HYDRO





## Pro women curlers visit St. Davids Golf Club

Emma Miskew, Tracy Fleury, Sarah Wilkes and Rachel Homan, from Canada's Women's Curling Team, were in town for a visit and played a round of gold at St. Davids Golf Club in June. TEAM HOMAN/FACEBOOK

## Corcoran and Peters top in Business Ladies league

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Lightning forced cancellation of the early shotgun start for Monday's Business Ladies league at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club, but the late-afternoon groups were able to compete.

Bobbie Corcoran was the low gross winner, firing a 47. Last week's top shooter was Tracey Peters, who carded a 44.

Other winners this week were: Veronica Yeager (longest drive on #1), Gulshan Lalani (closest to the 150 on #2) and Corcoran, who sank the longest putt on #7.

Elizabeth Duc was deadly accurate, winning closest to



From left: Dorothy Booth, Bobbie Corcoran, Sheila Krause and Tonie Mori play a round of golf. SUPPLIED

the pin on both #4 and #9. Last week's other winners were: Sally Miller (longest drive on #1), Raula Paul (closest to the 150 on #2), Terry Diver (closest to the pin on #4), Peters (longest putt on #7) and Susan

DiFrucio (closest to the pin on #9). The Canada Day holiday interrupted the regular Tuesday nine and 18-hole women's leagues and the Woofs men's competition. But last Thursday's men's

league was able to hit the fairways.

League championship runner-up James Grigjanis-Meusel topped the leaderboard, with an even-par 36.

Reigning seniors champion Patrick Craig was right behind with 37.

Peter Chilibeck and Ron Planche took low net honours with 33.

Other winners were: Joe Interisano (longest putt on #2), Sam Ridesic (longest drive on #3), Ward Simpson (closest to the pin on #4) and Grigjanis-Meusel (closest to the pin on #9).

Stephen Warboys' birdie on #8 earned him a \$110 gross skin and Simpson took home \$190 for net skins on #4 and #8.

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to let us know of endowment plans



## Have an opinion you want heard?

Send a letter to the editor to  
[editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)

# A brief introduction

Hi neighbour,

My name is Elisabeth DeBoer, and I'm a local Niagara realtor who had the privilege of growing up in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I was part of the last graduating class of Parliament Oak, and this town shaped so much of who I am—its charm, community, and quiet elegance remain close to my heart.

A little about me: Growing up here, I spent countless hours shooting hoops at Parliament Oak, riding my bike up and down the Parkway, and enjoying gelato on warm summer days. These moments, small as they may seem, are woven into the fabric of who I am. This town isn't just a place—it's home, and I understand its rhythm, its people, and what makes it so special.

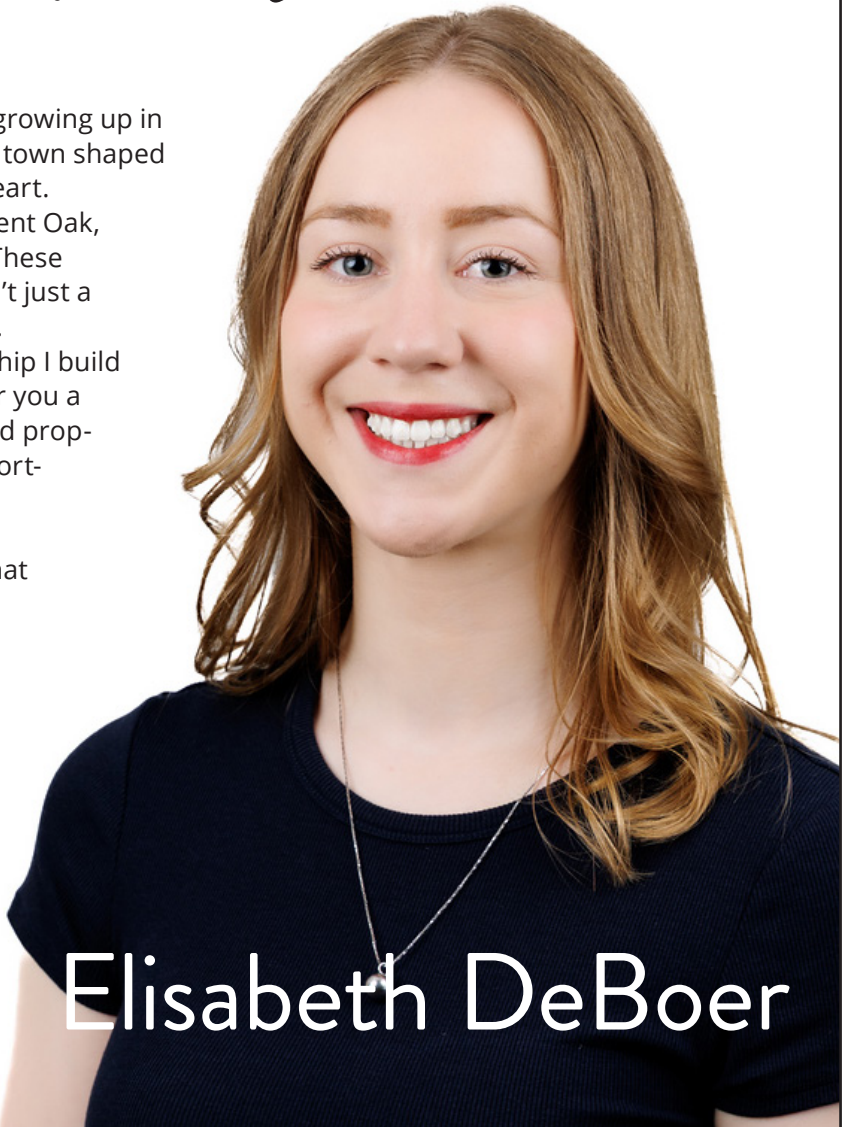
As a realtor, I carry that deep-rooted love for Niagara-on-the-Lake into every relationship I build and every home I represent. My approach is thoughtful and tailored—designed to offer you a sense of confidence and calm at every step. Whether you're preparing to list a cherished property or seeking your next sanctuary, you deserve a real estate experience that feels effortless, refined, and entirely focused on your needs.

You can often find me strolling through the streets of NOTL—if we cross paths, I'd be delighted if you stopped to say hello. I love connecting with neighbours and hearing what they envision for their homes and lives. Whether you're looking for trusted third-party professionals, design inspiration, or simply want advice on where to begin, I'm always happy to share what I know. Consider me your local resource for all things home.

Let's move you forward together. If you're thinking of selling, planning for the future, or just curious about your home's value, I'm happy to offer a conversation—no pressure, no obligations, just clarity and care.

P.S. I regularly host open houses and share market insights with locals. Let me know if you'd like to stay updated on listings and market trends.

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Elisabeth DeBoer





**Publisher:** Richard Harley  
**Editor-In-Chief:** Richard Harley  
**Managing Editor:** Zahraa Hmood  
**Editor Emeritus:** Kevin MacLean  
**Design & Layout:** Richard Harley  
**Advertising:** Megan Vanderlee  
**Contributors:** Dr. William Brown, Penny-Lynn Cookson, Patty Garriock, Maddy Gordon, Steve Hardaker, Andrew Hawlitzky, Brian Marshall, NOTL Museum, Ross Robinson, Julia Sacco, Paige Seburn, Dan Smeenk, Kyra Simone, Tim Taylor, Jill Troyer, Garth Turner, Dave Van de Laar, Joanne Young and many more members of the community.

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



Your Lake Report is the proud winner of 131 national and provincial awards for journalism and advertising excellence.

**BKind Grateful** #34: Leave a bowl of ice water on the curb for pets to cool off in the summer heat.  
With Bradley Hamilton

*This tiny column gives tips to help promote kindness in our lives and spread joy and happiness.*



**Contributed by Patty Garriock**

“A champion is defined not by their wins but by how they can recover when they fall.”  
- Serena Williams

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First World War relived at Fort George

Eight-year-old Jack Hill takes part in Fort George’s First World War re-enactment on June 22, standing on the sidelines as First World War honour guard re-enactors perform their funeral salute. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Editorial

Canada Day traditions, sounds and politicians

Richard Harley  
Editor-in-Chief

Canada Day in Niagara-on-the-Lake is, by any measure, a joyful affair. There’s music, Canadian pride in the air, local families and tourists side by side — and of course, that massive, show-stopping cake. For many residents, it’s a cherished tradition. And for visitors, it’s one of the most memorable and charming glimpses of what our town has to offer.

So why are we settling for “good enough” when this event could — and should — be an extraordinary showcase of our civic pride? Let’s start with a simple fix: sound.

Our town crier, for all his enthusiasm, continues to shout over crowds without the aid of a microphone. It’s a choice that might suit a small street corner — not a national celebration drawing thousands.

The result? Confusion, awkward silence and a collective shrug from the crowd. No one could hear the national anthem. Nobody laughed at the crier’s lines. Even the singer, who tried to use a guitar amp,

was drowned out. And placing the amp outside the amphitheatre? That’s not just poor planning — it’s physics-defying. It’s embarrassing.

We wrote about this more last year after 2024’s Canada Day parade, too (“Editorial: We love ya, Canada Day. We just can’t hear ya,” July 4, 2024).

We’re not talking about a budget-breaking fix. We’re talking about a basic sound setup for one of the most visible public events of the year — attended by residents, visitors from across the country, and tourists from around the world.

And it’s not an isolated issue. This is the same problem that’s plagued events like Remembrance Day, year after year, until a local electrician finally volunteered to fix it.

We need to stop relying on volunteers to salvage our civic events. Niagara-on-the-Lake should be investing in Canada Day — and demanding that groups like Friends of Fort George have access to the tools they need to make it exceptional.

Which brings us to the cake.

Why, in one of the richest municipalities in Ontario, does baker Catherine O’Donnell need to fundraise to pay for a Canada Day cake?

This cake is not just a treat. It’s a draw. It’s the centrepiece of a major tourism event, and one of the most photographed, talked-about features of the year. It’s marketing gold — the kind of thing our municipal accommodation tax should be funding.

Yet somehow, it falls to Catherine and her team at Willow to scrape together donations while town leaders pose for photo ops, smiling with forks in hand.

If you’re an elected official who stood there cutting cake this year, here’s a challenge: table a motion to use MAT funding to pay for it next year. Otherwise, maybe don’t pretend this cake — and everything it symbolizes — is something the town actually supports.

We’re proud to say The Lake Report raised \$1,200 for this year’s cake through local business support and a special section in our June 26 issue. We’re grateful to those who chipped in. But

let’s be honest: we shouldn’t have to do it.

And one more thing — about the cake itself.

We love Willow’s creativity, but can we please, next year, make it actually Canadian?

This is Canada Day. That means no more Disney castles, Willy Wonka scenes or American movie themes. Let’s celebrate us.

Terry Fox. Canadian wildlife. Hockey. Inukshuks. Rich Indigenous history. Colourful currency. Anne of Green Gables. Poutine. Butter tarts. Peanut butter. There’s no shortage of fun, nostalgic, patriotic themes that would still wow kids — and inspire pride in adults.

This isn’t about nitpicking. It’s about recognizing that Canada Day in NOTL isn’t just a party — it’s a platform. A chance to show the world who we are, and how much we care about this place and this country.

So let’s turn up the volume. Let’s fund the cake. And let’s make it proudly, loudly, unapologetically Canadian.

We can do better. So next year — let’s prove it.

editor@niagaranow.com



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## Not losing any sleep over vandalized speed cam

Dear editor:

I just finished reading your article on traffic cameras being vandalized in NOTL for a second time ("Down it goes, again: Traffic camera beside Crossroads vandalized a second time," June 19).

It's hard to feel any sympathy for the region when it comes to this issue.

Regardless, they are a

cash grab! Plain and simple.

As someone who was once issued a ticket from one of these cameras on York Road in NOTL, it's hard to feel bad that these were vandalized. I'm not advocating for destruction of property. I'm just saying I won't lose any sleep over this.

Queue the angry bootlickers who will argue: If you

don't like speeding tickets, then don't speed! Look, we're all humans and we make mistakes from time to time.

But if your argument is that it's for safety reasons, I have one simple question for you: Why not install several speed bumps to prevent any vehicle from building up a significant amount of speed in school

zones and/or heavily populated areas?

Oh, that's right. They don't generate income. Nice try, though.

Just another example of the rich getting richer & the poor getting poorer. And they wonder why food bank lineups are getting longer each year.

**Yousaf Shaikh  
Glendale**

## Shaw's 'Fat George' plan seen as tragedy by many



### THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner  
Columnist

The town clerk should prepare. She's about to get slammed.

Shaw Festival's 600 employees plus its 350 volunteers are being instructed to flood local politicians with templated emails and letters in support of tearing down the Royal George Theatre and replacing it with an \$85-million Fat George complex. Five buildings will be demolished. Construction will grind on for three years. Half an Old Town residential block will be industrialized. Iconic Queen Street forever altered.

Shaw's leadership is biting back at critics who believe erecting a five-storey-tall, 51,000-square-foot building with loading docks, rehearsal hall, event spaces and a café is, well, seriously over the top. "Rebuilding the theatre is something we've spent many years planning and developing," the Festival says, "so we're thrilled that it's finally happening. Niagara-on-the-Lake deserves a world-class Royal George Theatre, and we're determined to deliver just that."

But the Royal George is not being "rebuilt" as the Festival keeps branding it. The century-old structure is being erased. Its replacement will be far larger,

taller, wider, glassier and, some fear, wildly out of touch with what's made NOTL special.

Immediate neighbours are apoplectic. Business owners and operators in the hood are calling it "obscene" and "tone deaf." The nascent NOTL Residents' Association labels this, "an enormous new construction in the very heart of the Queen Picton Heritage District and needs to find better architectural symmetry with the surroundings."

The group supports the Shaw (like most of us), but worries this monster, funded in part with \$35 million in Ontario tax cash, could become another wedding venue, while looking like a Mississauga outlet mall. "Art is the celebration of imagination, creative talent and innovation and there is a need to modify the building's currently stark architectural aesthetics with an eye to art itself exclusive of basic engineering standards."

Shaw says it has worked and planned harmoniously with neighbours. They say phooey.

On Canada Day, these neighbours petitioned the province to stop this theatrical complex. "Approval of the current plans as presented will have an irreversible impact on the historic landscape of the town," they say to the minister of tourism.

"We have additional concerns regarding the tourism flow during the three plus years of construction, the long-term impact to local identity, integration with existing small businesses and overall community cohesion, which are also



A demolition/zoning change notice in front of a Victoria Street residence.

worthy of additional review and discussion."

The immediate property owners and businesses ask for protection under the Heritage Act, for oversight of the project funded by the unusual Ontario grant and to prevent any demolition or approvals until existing heritage laws and goals are adhered to.

"We have the moral duty to protect Niagara-on-the-Lake Heritage District from irreversible and precedent setting change."

But the Shaw pushes forward. Last week boss Tim Jennings and artistic director Tim Carroll took space in this paper to say, "Since the site plan for the rebuild of the Royal George Theatre became public last week, we've been overwhelmed by messages of support, encouragement, and excitement from across the community."

Then Melissa Novecosky, associate executive director, urged Shaw volunteers to get involved, telling them: "We've been overwhelmed by messages of support, encouragement, and excitement from across the com-

munity ... Thank you to all of you who took the time to write to Premier Ford and Lord Mayor Zalepa last year to show your support for The Shaw. Your efforts made an impact ..."

Now festival employees are being directed to download a form letter, sign and forward it to the town's clerk prior to the July 8 approval meeting.

The letter begins: "As a resident of Niagara, I am writing to express my support for the rebuild of the Shaw Festival's Royal George Theatre." And then this instruction: "[add a sentence or two about why are you excited about the rebuild of the Royal George and how you believe it will benefit you, your family & community. Think about things like a need for accessibility, environmentally sustainable building, and space to meet and gather together to enjoy theatre.]"

Meanwhile, back on Victoria Street and along Queen there is palpable fear that a hulking glass, concrete and fake-stone structure will spell the beginning of the end of heritage conservation.

"Old and unique is what brings people here," David Jones, owner of 124 on Queen Hotel, tells me. "I don't care what's wrong with the damn theatre — there's nothing \$35 million can't fix to save that building. Give me a break."

Alas, poor George, they don't wish to save you. Shaw wants a showstopper.

*Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.*

[garth@garth.ca](mailto:garth@garth.ca)



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.  
Category: WE STAND ON GUARD

The motto of this service branch is  
Semper Paratus, "Always Ready."

Last issue: IN THE FRUIT BASKET

Clue: Rainier, Montmorency, Maraschino.

Answer: What are cherries?

Answered first by: Lynda Collet

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Susan Hamilton, Sue Rautenberg, Jane Morris,  
Margie Enns, Bob Wheatley, Tuija Johansson,  
Randie Topps, Becky Creager, Howard Jones,  
Bob Stevens, Margaret Garaughty,  
Claudia Grimwood, Katie Reimer, Esther VanGorder,  
Bruce Horak, Jeff Lake, Nancy Rocca, Jim Dandy,  
Sheila Meloche, Wade Durling, Marla Percy,  
Sylvia Wiens, David Spencer, Jane Andersen,  
Catherine Clarke, Sylvia Wiens, Michelle Gallacher

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

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[notlhortociety.com](http://notlhortociety.com)

### TICKETS

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# A call to reconsider the Royal George proposal



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

Over the past couple of weeks, I've been reflecting on a conversation with my late brother-in-law that took place about 45 years ago. To provide some context, he spent 15 years in the mid-20th century "treading the boards" on stages across England. Although he had achieved considerable success as a character actor in Britain, he felt called to return home. Back in Canada, he became involved in the country's growing theatre scene and was a regular cast member in several CBC productions. In the early 1970s, he transitioned into radio, where his daily broadcast became one of the most listened-to commentary programs on the West Coast. One evening in the late 1970s, over a fine bottle of

wine, I asked him why he had left the theatre. John took a moment, staring at the smoke curling from the cigarette in his fingers, and replied, "I did not leave the theatre, I left the theatre industry." He continued, "An actor constantly strives to forge a direct connection with their audience — that electrifying embrace which occurs when the people in the house fully commit to participating in the expression of your art. It's addiction that you feed with every performance to each new audience and it doesn't matter what the venue is — it could be large or small, elaborate or simple, because it's not about the stage, it's all about creating a relationship with the people." "That is what the theatre industry does not truly understand ... They think it's about the building and the paraphernalia — the staging, so to speak — which is the furthest thing from the truth. A cast which, show after show, captures their audience will fill the seats of a production held in a cow barn." "When the actor's art becomes the equivalent of, or secondary to, the building, the gadgets, the seating, the lobby and



A rendering shows the elevation of the proposed Royal George rebuild. SOURCED

the money, then theatre becomes an industry." He concluded, "I left the industry." I've been mulling over that conversation and wonder what John would think about demolishing the 110-year-old Royal George and replacing it with a proposed building in which the "lobby" space is larger than the theatre's public area. The plans also include two floors with public lounges — one with a terrace — a restaurant and an undefined multi-purpose room. In short, a building in which the theatre itself is a relatively minor component. Now, let's set the musings aside and address specifics in the proposal. We begin with the facade and fly tower. Verbal descriptions of "height" can be difficult to visualize without reference points. The proponents suggest the pediment on the new facade will be only about three feet taller, and the new fly tower about five feet taller than what currently exists. What they fail to illustrate is how those additional three feet affect the street view at human scale. Within the context of the current streetscape, this modest height increase would create a visually dominant feature that disrupts Queen Street's architectural rhythm. As for the claim that the fly tower is "a slight bit" taller and set farther back to mitigate visual impact — that might be valid if the tower's proportions were consistent with the current one.

However, using the scale included in the submitted drawings, I conservatively estimate the proposed tower is at least three times the width of the existing structure. This significant increase in horizontal mass, combined with the five additional feet in height, would create a looming dark backdrop on this stretch of Queen Street. The claim that the structure will be visually screened by tree cover during the six months when leaves are present — peak tourist season — is also questionable. I've taken photographs from several angles and remain unconvinced. And what happens when the leaves fall? In 1986, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake created the Queen-Picton Heritage District to protect and preserve Old Town's historical character. This application risks undermining the district's founding principles by demolishing three 19th-century buildings and significantly altering the streetscapes of both Queen and Victoria streets. It also raises questions about how many minor variances or special bylaw provisions will be needed to enable this development. Once this precedent is set, how will the town defend its bylaws on issues such as lot coverage and building height? Will other developers, who have previously adhered to existing zoning, be left with a legal challenge opportunity? In a previous column, I referred to this proposed design as a "behemoth" ("Arch-i-text: Analyzing the Shaw's future plans for the Royal George Theatre," The Lake Report, June 19). And it truly is. Respectfully, I urge the proponents to reconsider. There are so many better alternatives worth exploring. Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage.



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# First World War returns at Fort George’s weekend re-enactment

Maddy Gordon  
The Lake Report

Fort George jumped from 1812 to 1914 last weekend for its annual First World War weekend, featuring 26 demonstrations and educational sessions.

Demonstration re-enactors came to NOTL from across Canada and the U.S. to participate in the commemorative event.

Special events coordinator Pete Martin said the event draws a crowd because it’s different from what Fort George is known for.

“We’re at an 1812 site and we’re proud of that [...] because it’s a big part of our history, but once a year we want to talk about Camp Niagara,” Martin said.

Fort George was damaged during the War of 1812, but became part of the training ground that was Camp Niagara by the time of the First World War.

Unlike Fort George, though, Camp Niagara’s evidence exists in various nearby buildings. Martin said the training ground took up a big part of the space that is now Old Town.

“One weekend a year



First World War re-enactors depict an honour guard salute while Rev. George Wells watches over the ceremony at Fort George on June 21. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

we tell that story,” he said, referring to the transition from Fort George to Camp Niagara during the First World War.

One re-enactor, Richard Moncrief, travelled from Virginia to participate in the event. He says the lack of public education surrounding the Great War motivates him to travel and share his 30 years of research.

“It’s fascinating to me what Canada did in both world wars, particularly the Great War,” he said. “So

any opportunity to share my research and information, it’s worth the trek.”

Moncrief was dressed as a training instructor for the event, indicated by the yellow armband on his left arm. He said armbands are significant in both the British and Canadian military.

As a training instructor, Moncrief’s involvement in the biggest demonstration of the weekend was overseeing soldiers navigate barbed wire and shoot from behind wooden barriers on the field.

The demonstration also included the depiction of a casualty. The wounded soldier was bandaged on the field before being brought back to the medical tent in an ambulance. Visitors interested in the treatment of a casualty also watched a surgical demonstration.

“You have to know what happens if most of the men in the rifle section get killed or wounded. Everyone has to react to that,” Moncrief said. “It’s a very chaotic environment.”

An important element of

a First World War medical team was the matron, or the head nurse of the hospital. Susan Spencer, a historical re-enactor, travels from B.C. to NOTL every year to take on the role.

The matron could be likened to a traffic director, according to Spencer. Rather than being involved in the hands-on medical work, she would have been directing others where to go.

Like Moncrief, Spencer said Fort George offers a unique chance for the First World War to be commemorated, even if just for one weekend a year.

“There’s not that many World War I events out there,” Spencer said.

“When you think about World War I warfare, it’s not like 1812, where you’ve got opposing forces on a battlefield. In World War I, you’ve got trenches,” she added, explaining the difficulty in recreating the event.

This year, Spencer said she noticed an uptick in visitor engagement, specifically in asking questions about the history.

“It’s been really rewarding for us,” she said. “[Visitors have] stopped and talked

and asked questions, and we’ve talked about family history.”

“We learn as much from them as they can from us,” she added.

Despite the heat, the event at Fort George attracted a large crowd, giving both regular visitors and new faces a chance to watch demonstrations saved specifically for this event. This includes the training session and subsequent surgical demonstration.

While standard presentations, such as musket firings, were performed, First World War-specific displays were put on. For example, there was a military medical fashion show and an education session about the Polish army at Camp Niagara.

A parade was also put on to conclude the weekend.

For Martin, the eight months of planning are worth the work because of the importance of bringing this history back to life.

“It’s to tell these stories of these amazing men and women who were here and went overseas. We want to remember those people and make sure they’re not forgotten.”

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# Tawny Ridge Estates given green light for 12 new homes

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

With the first part of the Tawny Ridge Estates residential project for St. Davids given the green light by the town, some are looking forward to seeing more family homes being built in the neighbourhood, while others say St. Davids isn't ready for more development.

Niagara-on-the-Lake council approved the first phase of the development, 12 single-family detached homes on Tanbark Road, last week, with the next stage a proposal for 74 residential units of mixed-density housing, including apartments, townhouses and single-family homes.

"The benefit (of this proposal) would be 12 single-family homes in town, which would be exactly the demographics that St. Davids would support," Coun. Adriana Vizzari, who lives in St. Davids, told The Lake Report.

"Young families are mov-

ing in. This is a great opportunity for single-family homes."

The specific area for the development is close to the intersection at Warner and Tanbark roads at the north-east corner, and around Chestnut and Tulip Tree roads in the south.

Vizzari said it's important not to mix up phase one and phase two, as they are two different proposals.

Some St. Davids residents have opposed both parts of the proposed development.

An open house in 2023 about the proposed project brought 20 to 25 residents from the neighbourhood, letters and emails from 10 people and a petition.

Regarding phase one, residents have voiced at least one major concern, particularly about whether the drainage system can handle the now-approved development.

Stormwater infrastructure concerns have been growing in St. Davids, evident last summer when heavy rains caused several houses and



The first stage in development plans for a new residential area called Tawny Ridge Estates includes the construction of 12 single-family homes along Tanbark Road.

backyards in the community to flood, leading to many calls for the municipality to upgrade its stormwater

management system.

Coun. Gary Burroughs asked about this in council on June 17.

"How is each property's stormwater being handled?" asked Burroughs. "Is there a storm drain on Tanbark?"

Kip Voege, a local resident, sees this as a make-or-break issue for this development.

"All development projects in the St. Davids urban boundary should be put on hold until sewage and stormwater issues have been properly resolved," he said.

Darren MacKenzie, the town's manager of public works, responded to Burroughs' question by saying that there is a stormwater pond in Sparky's Park that stormwater would go into.

Vizzari asked about the age and condition of the stormwater system at Sparky's Park during the meeting, wondering if it would be able to handle new building construction in the area.

"We've never had any issues with Sparky's Park

as opposed to capacity issues or flooding or things like that," said MacKenzie. "We're required to inspect the pond annually."

Burroughs asked council why there were unconventional council practices happening to get the project through.

"Why are we getting planning reports going through general and general reports going through planning?" said Burroughs. "I'm confused."

Bruce Zvangia, the town's interim chief administrative officer, said it was to move the process along faster. He added that they would be willing to take direction from council if they want stricter rules on that.

Burroughs also raised concerns about how regularly the site around the construction would be cleaned. Kirsten McCauley, the town's director of community and development services, said it would be cleaned "regularly."

Vizzari asked what would happen with a report about

the stormwater drainage issue, as well as for a timeline to get information out to a consultant.

MacKenzie said it would take three weeks to get the proposal to a consultant, and about two to three months for the consultant to review the information the two gives them.

With the second phase, residents have also complained about the proposed construction of mixed-density homes. Only low-density housing has been approved so far.

A draft plan for phase two of the project was approved with conditions in January 2024. NOTL communications coordinator Marah Minor said, "No further approvals related to satisfying those conditions have been brought forward at this time."

"The owner has three years from draft plan approval (Jan. 30, 2024) to clear conditions and register the subdivision agreement and plan."

[daniel@niagaranow.com](mailto:daniel@niagaranow.com)

# Skip the towel: New jet boat offers more dry seats for passengers

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake visitors often juggle tight itineraries packed with wine tastings and sightseeing. Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours is making it easier to add hitting the rapids to the plan without needing a change of clothes before heading to the next winery — now with twice the dry seats to go around.

The company has launched a second climate-controlled Freedom Jet vessel, five years after introducing the first, giving more guests a choice: Stay dry inside a glass-enclosed dome or get drenched up front in the open-air seats.

"We call it the Freedom Jet, because you're free to get wet or you're free to stay dry," said company president John Kinney.



The newest addition to Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours' fleet, called the Freedom Jet, lets passengers choose between staying dry or getting soaked in the splash zone. SUPPLIED

Kinney declined to share the exact price tag but said the new vessel was a multi-million-dollar investment.

Giving guests unobstructed panoramic views of the Niagara Gorge, the new boat has 50 interior

seats and 12 exterior, fully exposed Power Row seats at the front.

The idea began in 2000, when the company introduced the Jet Dome — a sleek, fully enclosed boat.

"We decided that it was

time to up that," Kinney said, adding that the old model offered limited sightlines.

So, the company upgraded the concept five years ago, with the first Freedom Jet, featuring tiered theatre-

style seating and the option to ride wet or dry.

"We said: Here is the upgrade. Here's the evolution of this program," Kinney said.

Modelled after the SM18 (Sauter Moutons 18) Freedom Jet, this second dry-and-wet vessel marks the 10th addition to the company's overall fleet. The other eight vessels are called Wet Jets.

The second boat responds to growing demand from visitors, Kinney said, who seek the thrill of the Niagara River's class-five rapids without throwing off their carefully-timed day in wine country.

That's why, Kinney said, the company tries to make vessels as accessible as possible to the breadth of visitors, "which has changed quite a bit in the 33 years" it has operated.

He said the town now

attracts a more diverse and younger crowd, many drawn by the wine industry, weddings, festivals, corporate events and other local offerings.

"It fit into what people were doing in all of Niagara-on-the-Lake," he said.

Kinney said climate-controlled seating comes with a longer jet boat season, with tours running as late as Dec. 3 last year.

"Our intentions are to do more of that," he said, adding the goal is to operate as a three-season business.

For thrill-seekers, the new vessel delivers, with 12 front-row seats in the splash zone. For those staying dry: "It's quite the show, watching the waves and the guests in those wet seats interact," Kinney said.

Booking details, costs and available dates can be found at [whirlpooljet.com](http://whirlpooljet.com).

[paigeseburn@niagaranow.com](mailto:paigeseburn@niagaranow.com)

# NOTL author comes home to promote book on mental health

Jill Troyer  
The Lake Report

Author Jocelyn Pepe was born and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and she's returning next week to promote her new book "Claim Your Brain" at the NOTL Public Library.

The book is a practical guide to mental health, based on a model she developed through her work coaching executives, teams and individuals.

"I wanted to share my research, education, and coaching experience with a broader audience. I wanted

the model to be more accessible to more people," she said.

Pepe draws on both her professional background and her own mental health journey, which she shares in the book.

"My journey felt like I was feeling my way in the

dark, piece by piece, so the model I created is a whole person approach," she said.

The book "bridges academia and the real world," she added.

"It's useful for everyone, whether you want to elevate your quality of life, or deal with anxiety and

depression."

"Claim Your Brain" was published by UpLevel, a company owned by Christie Mann. Mann and Pepe are longtime friends who grew up together in NOTL.

Pepe will be at the NOTL Public Library on Thursday, July 10, from 6 to 8 p.m.



Jocelyn Pepe.



# Mariah Reese and her family named NOTL's 'standout neighbours' by town

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Mariah Reese never expected her family to be recognized as Niagara-on-the-Lake's standout neighbours — but to someone who knows them, the honour couldn't be more fitting.

To celebrate Good Neighbour Day, June 21, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake invited residents earlier this month to nominate someone who makes a difference in their neighbourhood.

Nominations were accepted by the town's communications department until June 19.

"It was very touching," said Mariah of learning that her family were chosen.

Living just outside Old Town, Mariah heard about the nomination through a text from nominator Michelle Reynolds, who put forward Mariah, her husband Robert and their children, Sebastian, Saxon and Skielor, after seeing the contest on the town's Facebook page.

Mariah runs a private Facebook group, Joyous NOTL, which has almost 2,000 members and aims to spread positivity and connection across the community.

"There's a lot of people that have made friends because of the group," she said.

Reynolds saw that impact — and much more.

"I am writing to wholeheartedly nominate Mariah and Robert Reese, along with their family," wrote Reynolds in her letter to the town, which she shared with The Lake Report.

"They embody the true spirit of community and are more than deserving of this recognition."

Surprised and host-



Joyous NOTL's Mariah Reese, with husband Robert. Their family was named the town's "standout neighbours" for outstanding acts of kindness. JULIE SAGGERS

ing guests at the time of Reynolds' text, Mariah said she felt undeserving, feeling that many others — including Reynolds — deserved the recognition.

"I do a lot of stuff for (the Facebook page), but it doesn't seem like I do enough to win something like that," she said.

She pointed instead to her husband, Robert.

He's the kind of person who steps up without being asked, she said. When they lived on a street with many older residents, he once cleared every neighbour's driveway during a snowstorm.

"The world is a much better place because of Robert," she said.

And although Mariah may not feel she's as deserving of the recognition as others, she's experienced what it means to be a good and appreciated neighbour.

One particular moment with a neighbour stuck with Mariah during the COVID-19 pandemic: A stranger stopped her while she was walking through town.

"And they're like, 'Excuse me, are you Mariah Reese?'" she said.

She assumed the neighbour was going to say something about her well-known son.

Instead, Mariah said the woman thanked her for creating the Facebook group, saying it had brought real positivity not just to her, but to the whole community.

At a time when other local Facebook groups were full of negativity, she told Mariah, this one helped shift the tone.

"She was like, 'Ever since your group has started, I can see the softening of the other groups,'" said Mariah.

As part of her efforts to spread positivity, Mariah also started Joyous NOTL bracelets — green bands meant to signal friendliness and openness to conversation.

The idea came from Mariah listening to how one of her neighbours felt, often walking her dog alone and wishing there was a simple way to show she was open to chatting with others.

"At this point, I think I've given away probably 500 or 600 of them," she said, adding that she regularly hears from people who've made new connections as a result

of them.

She also makes "cheer baskets," which are small care packages to lift people's spirits. When she hears about neighbours going through a tough time, she and her sons bake treats, make cards and deliver the baskets to their doors.

"We call them cheer baskets to kind of cheer people up," she said.

The baskets began during the pandemic but Mariah still does them today and she said, years later, people still reach out to thank her for a gesture that reminded them: Someone in town cared.

A neighbour once told Mariah, "It really turned my whole view around, that there was someone in town who was looking out for me," she said.

Mariah said to be recognized in a kind town like NOTL, where neighbours always look out for each other, was especially meaningful.

That kindness is something she is thankful to receive back, too. One winter, while her husband was away, a neighbour quietly shovelled their driveway without being asked, a small gesture that captured what being a neighbour in this town is all about, she said.

When it comes to being a good neighbour, keeping things positive goes a long way, Mariah said.

She suggests starting with a smile and a simple compliment, like noticing someone's yard work or home. "Then you take it from there," she said.

It's that simple, genuine approach that makes a difference, Reynolds said: "Mariah and Robert have an incredible ability to bring people together," she wrote in a direct message.

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## Church gives 21-rose salute to Maj.-Gen. Sir Isaac Brock

The new rose garden at St. Saviour's, the Brock Memorial Church, has 21 roses planted in honour of Maj.-Gen. Sir Isaac Brock, conceived and executed by church member Peter Kretz with roses selected by members of the parish. Rev. Janet Cashin blessed the garden on Sunday, June 29, during the church's Canada Day celebrations. JANE RUSCH

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- Across
- 1. Husky (7)
  - 5. Highest (7)
  - 9. Complete (6)
  - 10. Opening (8)
  - 11. Shades (10)
  - 13. Restraint (4)
  - 14. Unsullied (6)
  - 18. Foretells (8)
  - 19. Fleet commander's vessel (8)
  - 21. Chaise longue (6)
  - 23. Having no money (4)
  - 24. Writing materials (10)
  - 28. Large amount of electrical power (8)
  - 29. Stoppage (6)
  - 30. Profound (7)
  - 31. Nervous (7)
- Down
- 2. Member of the Indian majority (5)
  - 3. Unpaid (5)
  - 4. 8th letter of the Greek alphabet (5)
  - 6. Lay out too much (9)
  - 7. Motherhood (9)
  - 8. Table napkin (9)
  - 10. Fabulous story-teller (5)
  - 12. Permit (3)
  - 15. Eve of All Saints' Day (9)
  - 16. Source of sweetness (5,4)
  - 17. Recipients of one of St. Paul's Epistles (9)
  - 20. Braid (5)
  - 22. Fuss (3)
  - 25. Relative by marriage (2-3)
  - 26. The dark (5)
  - 27. Achieve (5)

Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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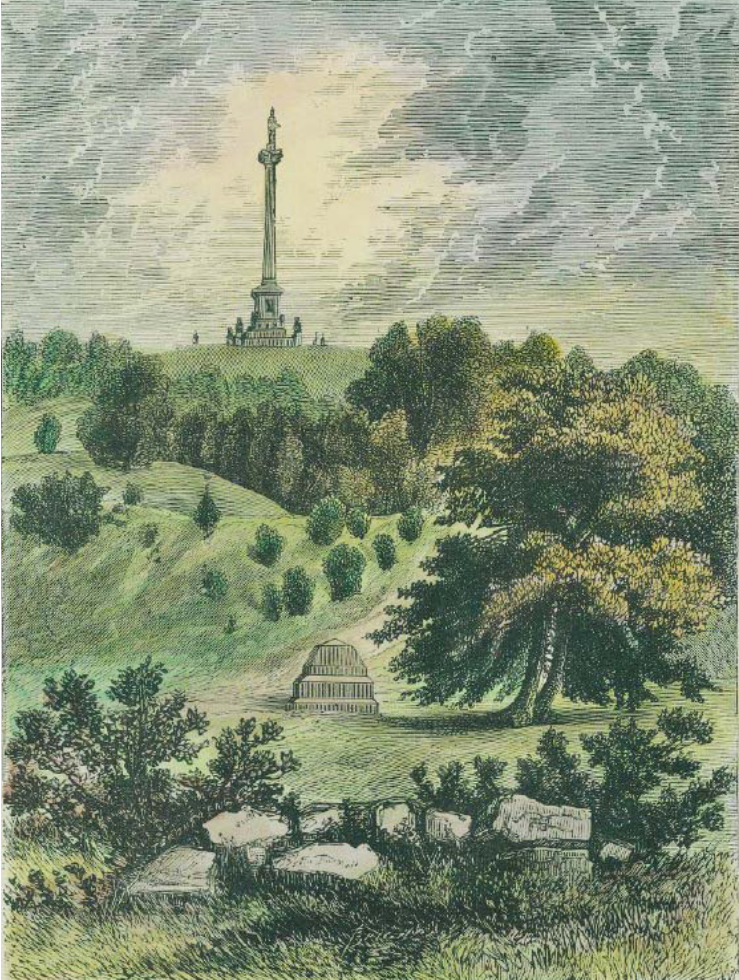
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Brock's Monument,  
1881

This wood engraving by John Charles Dent (1841-1881) portrays the popular Queenston monument which honours Maj.-Gen. Isaac Brock for his leadership and contributions to the war effort in 1812. It also commemorates the first major engagement of the war to happen in Niagara. The War of 1812 was a key step towards building our nationhood. Not only did we defend our borders from our neighbours to the south and distinguish ourselves from them, but we also demonstrated to Britain that the settlers here in the colony had true grit to defend our homes. We are fortunate in Niagara-on-the-Lake to have many of the most rare and unique 1812 collections in Canada at our very own museum, some of which are currently on display. We are open daily throughout the year, so make sure to come in and have a peek.

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# On the **cutting edge** of a hedge



**GROWING TOGETHER** 

Joanne Young  
Columnist

This past weekend, while celebrating Canada Day (yay Canada!), I spent the weekend visiting my mom, who lives just west of Stratford. A visit wouldn't be complete without doing some gardening for her.

The biggest task for the weekend was to give her 30-year-old privet hedge a good haircut. Over the years, we have been pruning it at least three times per year. So, you could say that it is not my first stab at it.

Many deciduous shrubs can be used for hedging. Basically, there are two different forms a hedge can take.

We typically think of a hedge being kept trimmed to maintain a certain shape or height, so a more formal style. For a more relaxed or informal look, you can also let the plants grow into the shape and size that they want to be.

Some shrubs that are often used for hedging, whether formal or informal, are: Privet, dwarf burning bush, dwarf lilacs, bridal wreath spirea, forsythia, ninebark, blue arctic willow and weigela.

In this article, I am going to focus on pruning a privet into a formal hedge. Pruning deciduous hedges properly keeps your plants healthy, neat, and encourages dense growth.

Here are some essential tips for pruning hedges correctly.

**Tools you'll need**

You may need a couple of different types of pruners for the job. The main one is sharp hedge shears (longer blades) or an electric or battery-operated hedge shears. The hand-held bypass shears make a cleaner cut than the electric or battery-operated shears.



Throughout the growing season, you can lightly shear your hedge up to three times per year to maintain a formal shape.

I know, though, that can mean a lot of extra work and muscle power, cutting it by hand. The electric or battery shears, which do make the job go quicker, have two blades that go back and forth very quickly and tend to tear the stems instead of doing a clean cut.

These torn stems will not heal as quickly as the clean cuts made by the hand shears. If you have a long hedge ... I will forgive you for using power hedge shears.

You may also need a pair of secateurs or loppers for larger stems.

**General pruning tips**

**Late winter or early spring before new growth**

The first thing to do in early spring is to prune out any dead, diseased or damaged branches.

Also, remove any branches that are crossing closely or heading through the shrub the wrong way.

Late winter or early spring is the best time to rejuvenate an older hedge. Especially if it is overgrown, sparse or has a lot of dead wood building up in it, late winter or early spring is also a good time to cut back drastically

(down to one and a half to two feet from the ground).

New growth will emerge from the ground or from lower down off old stems. If you have a flowering hedge, prune after flowering if they bloom in spring, or prune in early spring if they bloom in summer.

**During growing season**

Throughout the growing season (April to September), you can lightly shear the hedge up to three times per year to maintain a formal shape.

Frequent light trimming encourages fullness. Never remove more than one-

third of the hedge at one time.

**Shape matters**

Make sure that the form of the hedge is wider at the base than at the top (A-shape). This ensures that sunlight will reach all parts, reducing bare spots at the bottom.

A flat or slightly rounded top is easier to maintain. You may want to use string lines or stakes to maintain straight edges and uniform height.

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

# Out-of-town eyes made me open mine to **Black history**



**ROSS'S RAMBLINGS**

Ross Robinson  
Columnist

Not that long ago, on June 8, 1800, our Niagara library opened as the first circulating library in Upper Canada, established to diffuse knowledge among subscribers. It is still up to us to be curious and to occasionally venture out of our cozy comfort zones.

Knowledge cannot be diffused if we don't consciously try to learn, and our Niagara-on-the-Lake is a veritable treasure trove of Canadian history. So much has happened right here in our region, mainly because lakes and rivers were once the highways of continents. Our Indigenous people used to travel by water.

This Ramblings has not

been written to encourage or scold, rather simply to relate how a chance encounter can lead to shocking and interesting knowledge.

In our world today, only rarely are we surprised. But it happened on an otherwise uneventful day, as I rode my bicycle to the Avondale at Mississauga and Mary.

I was passing the very wee graveyard that features a historical plaque mentioning the Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground. Reading the plaque and taking photos were four cyclists, all wearing the flashiest of fairly skin-tight, effulgent spandex gear with logos for this and that. All four of them fit the classic cycling tourist demographic: middle-aged, and fitter than most of their peers. With nice calves.

Out of habit, I stopped to ask them if they needed directions or if they wanted suggestions of any sort. They were grateful, and told me they had just fluked upon this quiet gem. They had no idea about Niagara's Black history, and had just been doing a bit of research on their smartphones.



The Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground, once known as the "Negro Burial Ground," is where the former parishioners of the Niagara Baptist Church are buried, some of oldest members of NOTL's Black community. FILE

We chatted briefly about our town's Coloured Village, the Solomon Moseby affair in 1837, and how the Niagara Baptist Church had relatively recently closed in 1878. Chloe Cooley's dramatic escape in 1793 really got their attention.

"Not that long ago," we agreed — which is, coincidentally, the theme of my daily free walking tour. We know so little of our history, and so much of it is instructive. As a people, we have an amazing tendency to forget what we don't want to remember.

And not to learn about things we don't want to know about. Or that might make us uncomfortable.

How many of us know much about why our town became known as America's attic after the American Civil War? During the war in the 1860s, local leader William Kirby had encouraged some of his Confederate Army buddies to come to this area on the west side of the Niagara River to dodge the danger of being charged with treason.

He had been writing them letters — not phoning

them, texting them or sending emails. "Come up to Canada and lay low for a few years," he quilled.

Several of his pals rented nice houses in our town for three or four years. Naturally, some of their friends and habits followed them.

The next day, I googled "Black history in Niagara." At the top of the search engine ranking was an article by Jacqueline L. Scott from the University of Toronto, "Searching for Black History in Niagara."

So enlightening. So shocking. And so educational. Please check out this story and delve into this important part of our history. His story, and her story. It's not that long ago, and most of us know so little.

Now, please permit the Rambler to challenge you to do a shallow dive into an area where most of us have never been. Let us forget about our seemingly impossible-to-understand present world and the tragic human conflicts that rage on in so many areas.

May I respectfully ramble and suggest it is usually a

refreshing exercise to let our minds wander to the past. So much to learn from those who were here before us. To put our confusing and shocking current world situation on the back burner for a while and to think back to our mean and cruel history.

Very close to the historical plaque at the Niagara Baptist Church Burial Ground is a plaque explaining the Upper Canadian Act Against Slavery of 1793. Local resident John Graves Simcoe, who had such an appropriate name for someone connected to history, was visionary and fearless in his efforts to rid the world of this horrible social structure.

He endured the wrath of his peers and physical abuse from his opponents.

To ramble repetitively, this is not old stuff. Not that long ago, things were happening that were changing the world as we knew it.

Be daring and be curious. Delve into the amazing Black history in the Niagara region.



# Hype and hope in the battle against Alzheimer’s disease

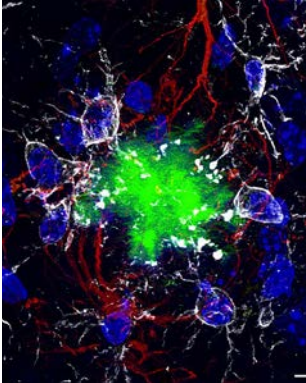


**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

In my June 12 column, I highlighted the biphasic nature of the course of Huntington’s disease. There is an initial long asymptomatic period, which lasts several decades. This is followed by the development of symptoms and signs, and steady progression thereafter to death. Such a course suggests a long period during which dysfunctional changes and losses of neurons accumulate, before passing a threshold beyond which pathophysiological changes accelerate and can no longer be masked by surviving nerve cells. In the peripheral nervous system, clinical findings related to motor nerve cell

losses suggest that losses of motor nerve cells of up to 50 per cent may be masked by compensatory changes in the remaining cells in, for example, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, known as ALS. Translated, that means that by the time symptoms first develop in ALS affecting, for example, hand muscles, roughly half the related motor nerve cells may have been lost — irretrievable by any treatment. Roughly similar correspondence between cell numbers and symptoms probably holds true in Parkinson’s disease and affected systems in other neurodegenerative diseases. Clearly, the best way to treat neurodegenerative diseases would be as early as possible, before significant cell dysfunction changes and losses of neurons develop. That’s become the recent rationale for treating Alzheimer’s disease as early as possible, even well before the first symptoms and findings become evident. The latter goal has become possible with the use of positron emission



Beta-amyloid plaque being covered by microglia and astrocytes in Alzheimer’s brain. WIKIMEDIA

tomography (PET), measurement of biomarkers in the cerebrospinal fluid and genomic studies, especially for patients with family histories of dementia. But there’s a hitch. It sounds great to treat as early as possible, but the drug had better be not only effective, but safe and free from troublesome side effects in patients who are clinically well. That’s a high bar to achieve. The trouble is that for decades, Alzheimer’s has been stuck with the amyloid hypothesis. In this model, the primary cause of the disease is thought

to be the accumulation of toxic breakdown products of amyloid precursor protein (APP), such as beta-amyloid, with until recently, little attention paid to the accumulation of tau protein within nerve cells. Instead, almost all the effort in the last few decades has gone into the amyloid wing of the hypothesis and the development of monoclonal antibodies designed to target beta-amyloid but not tau. Since 2021, three drugs designed to target beta-amyloid were approved. The first aducanumab (2021) was mired in controversy and the other two, lecanemab (2023) and donanemab (2024), were marked by lacklustre clinical performance. They certainly cleared the brains of affected patients of much of their beta-amyloid, but the sticking point was whether lecanemab and donanemab slowed clinical progression of their dementia in ways that were clinically obvious. Charlotte Teunissen, a neuroscientist at the Amsterdam University Medical

Center, was quoted recently in Nature as stating, “A 30 per cent decline (in the rate with which cognition declined) does mean something — the difference between being able to have meaningful conversations with your children about their lives, or not.” Maybe so, but the results of the cognitive studies were not impressive and reason enough for many to be skeptical of the claims and more than sufficient reason to develop more promising approaches. One obvious approach is to treat patients with antibodies to not only beta-amyloid but tau as well. That’s a long overdue and promising approach and the subject of ongoing trials are also underway to treat people with laboratory but no clinical evidence of Alzheimer’s. That also makes sense to me. More promising may be clean sheet approaches based, for example, on the hypothesis that the accumulation of beta amyloid is an epiphenomenon of the disease, not the cause. For example, Ralph

Norris, a New York University professor, suggests that Alzheimer’s disease may be caused by dysfunction of lysosomes in neurons. Lysosomes are cytoplasmic organelles responsible for enzymatically digesting food taken up by the cell and breaking down worn-out components in the cell, such as amyloid protein. Dogging the field on Alzheimer’s disease are recent claims of fraud by Charles Piller in his 2025 book, “Doctored: Fraud, Arrogance, and Tragedy in the Quest to Cure Alzheimer’s” and the related book review by Carl Elliot in the highly regarded journal Science, entitled “A scientific field, misled: Fraud undermines Alzheimer’s disease research.” These are not easy days in Alzheimer’s disease, and such a tragedy if the accusations turn out to be even partially right. Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.





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