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A mouldy window at a farm worker dwelling. SUPPLIED

Farm workers say they face hot, mouldy conditions, verbal abuse

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The sun may set, but for many seasonal agricultural workers, the exhaustion doesn't.

After hours in scorching fields, they return to sweltering, overcrowded housing — rest is almost impossible.

"You leave work tired and you're going back to work tired," Junior, a Caribbean farm worker, said in an interview with The Lake Report.

Fearing retribution, Junior would not give his last name or identify the farm at which he works.

In a town like Niagara-onthe-Lake, where agriculture thrives, many farms rely

Continued on Page 4

George will get royal treatment

Project managers will strive to minimize construction impact



Jon Taylor, a NOTL resident and co-chair of Govan Brown, says the construction management company will do everything it can to minimize impact on residents and tourism, while striving to hire local and create economic impact from the Royal George rebuild. RICHARD HARLEY

Richard Harley | The Lake Report

on Taylor never quite figured out how to retire.

After helping build
Govan Brown into one of Canada's top construction management firms, the Niagara-on-the-Lake resident stepped back — only to stay on as co-

chair and dive headfirst into local causes, charities and now, one of the town's most high-profile redevelopment projects.

Taylor is helping lead the charge on the Royal George Theatre rebuild, a project that brings national experience to a hyperlo-

cal challenge. His company, Govan Brown, has been awarded the construction management mandate for the three-year project, working alongside the Shaw Festival and Unity Architects.

For Taylor, it's personal — he lives just down the street.

"I would call it an increased interest in making sure that this thing goes well, not just from the Shaw's perspective, but from the community's perspective," he said in an interview.

Continued on Page 5

First draft of new official plan gets green light, resident input sought

Daniel Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

It's been six years since the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake was sent back to the drawing board after submitting its newest official plan for review and being told it didn't match policy plans laid out by the Ontario government and Niagara Region

Now, NOTL is in the home stretch of having a

new plan that'll guide how the town will grow and how its land will be used and, it hopes, one that the province will give a thumbs up to.

Niagara-on-the-Lake council approved the first

draft of a new official plan, bringing the town closer to the final version it hopes to hand in to the province by November. It's now available for public review and feedback.

Coun. Erwin Wiens told

The Lake Report that he's pleased with the progress.

"A lot of work needed to go into make it comply with provincial policy," he said.

"I'm very happy with it. I'm very happy that our timelines are still on track, that we can get this done."

In December, council told staff to prepare a new plan by October. The draft presented Tuesday is based on the 2019 version, with red-

Continued on Page 2



Curious about the new proposal for the Old Hospital Site?

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Councillors have mixed opinions on official plan

Continued from Front Page

line edits showing proposed deletions.

The goal is to update the 2019 document to meet current provincial and regional planning requirements, which the earlier version failed to do.

However, during council's meeting last Tuesday, councillors disagreed on how much the new draft differs from the 2019 version.

"I don't see too many major changes here," said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa. "We're definitely taking from the 2019 plan and using it to inform the new plan."

Still, Zalepa noted that staff have been asked to focus specifically on growth management and employment policies. He also said the level of involvement from Niagara Region is a significant change this time.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor disagreed, saying the draft includes major changes in some areas.

"There are some significant number of changes in some sections, such as the environment," she said, adding that she had not yet



Some of the main points in the draft plan include support for affordable housing, plans to manage new development up to the year 2051 and updated job policies to attract innovative and knowledge-based businesses in Glendale. FILE

reviewed the full volume of changes.

The plan identifies broad areas of focus: managing the municipality's population growth, employment and the economy, housing, agriculture, the environment, climate change, heritage, urban design and engaging with Indigenous communities.

It also outlines specific policies to protect rural

Thomas Elltoft*

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areas, guide development, measures to support affordable housing and manage land around the Greenbelt, the Niagara Escarpment and Niagara District Airport.

Other components address archeology, outdoor heritage and wildlife areas, infrastructure and municipal administration.

The town also has a plan to manage development and growth up to 2051.

Wiens said while every part of the plan matters, some issues draw more attention than others.

"What's probably of most importance to our residents is land use policies and density," he said. He also noted agriculture, transportation, roads and general planning were frequent concerns raised.

The town acknowledged in a staff report that it's still

consulting with others on the plan.

"Staff note that there are various ongoing inputs to the policy review, as well as review and input from other staff departments, agencies, interested parties, Indigenous communities, and the public," the report said.

The plan is supposed to be updated every five years, but the current draft comes after the process was

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*** Broker of Record

talled, Wiens said.

Council approved the previous official plan in 2017. A revised version was drafted in 2019 and submitted to the province, but it was never approved because it did not follow provincial and regional requirements for plan creation.

In the absence of an approved town plan, the region's official plan took precedence. That document was repealed earlier this year, leaving the responsibility to individual municipalities, including Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"We learned the first time from 2019 how important it is to get it right," said Wiens.

Town staff will revise the draft between August and October, with public open houses and a statutory meeting scheduled between September and October.

Once finalized, the plan will be submitted to the province, with a target date of Nov. 1. The province then has 90 days to review it.

Residents can submit feedback at jointheconversationnotl.org/officialplan.

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Weston Miller*

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Read more online at niagaranow.com

The Lake Report is covering more NOTL news than anyone else and more news than ever before. Every week there are stories we simply don't have room to print — but that still matter to NOTL readers. Head over to **niagaranow.com** to read more stories from this week, including:

- St. Davids Carnival pulls it off again for 62nd year
- NOTL to host MEGABike ride for breast cancer research Aug. 10
- Wedding, proposed hotel opens up years long issues between hotel owner and residents
 - LemonAID Day raises more than \$92K for kids to attend summer camp
 - Craft Beer Fest packs Irish Harp patio with Canadian pride
 - West Nile found in Niagara mosquitoes NOTL in the clear, so far
 - No rest between regattas for rising star rower Kennedy Bartel
 - Decision on new vacation rental rules delayed until October
- 'Quite underserved': New EarlyON site welcomed, but some say NOTL needs more child care
 - Destroyed Glencairn Hall to be torn down, few parts may be salvaged
 - Niagara Motors car show raises thousands for Red Roof Retreat
 - \bullet Speed limits on NOTL's rural roads to drop as low as 50 km/h
 - A mash made in heaven: New baked potato restaurant hits NOTL
 - 'There isn't enough': Parking issues frustrate locals and tourists alike in NOTL

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Chautauqua neighbourhood group says town dropped key planning promise

Dan Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The Chautauqua Residents Association is criticizing the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for what it sees as a glaring omission in the town's newly revised official plan.

The association's president says the town shouldn't have changed one part of the old draft of the official plan that said the town would develop a detailed local development plan for the Chautauqua neighbourhood in Old Town.

The town, meanwhile, says that while the wording in the new plan may look different, its dedication to the neighbourhood and creating a secondary plan for it hasn't changed.

In a letter sent last Wednesday, the association explained its issue with the new draft official plan, which council approved and is now available for public feedback and discussion.

The revised document will replace the 2019 version, which the Ontario government and Niagara Region rejected for not conforming to higher-level planning policies. The new draft is meant to address those concerns.

However, in its letter, the association points out that one part of the new draft that stated "Secondary plans will be developed for all or a portion of Old Town and Virgil, including the Chautauqua neighbourhood in Old Town" was stricken from the document.

Now, the current draft reads: "Other areas that will be considered for areaspecific plans or character area policies include the



The Chautauqua Residents Association isn't happy about a change in language from the town's 2019 official plan draft to the 2025 rough draft. Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said the complaint is a misunderstanding. DAN SMEENK

Chautauqua neighbourhood and the wartime homes in Old Town."

This comes after a section that states the town will prepare new secondary plans and review and update existing plans for the Queen-Picton corridor in Old Town, Virgil, the dock area, St. Davids, Queenston and Glendale.

"The residents of Chautauqua would like to know why the town has opted to remove their commitment," the association wrote in its letter, signed by its president, Weston Miller. "One that was made by the town based on years of consistent resident feedback and support."

The group welcomed the town's 2019 commitment to a secondary plan, Miller told The Lake Report, saying it was "what we've wanted for decades."

"So you can imagine our surprise and disappointment ... that that commitment had been removed completely and replaced with a line that said an areaspecific plan or policy will be 'considered,'" he said.

"So, they've completely removed the commitment, which is disappointing for At the heart of the issue for the neighbourhood group is Chautauqua's distinct history and identity within Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Located in the western part of Old Town, Chautauqua was the site of a summer camp in the late 19th century, based on the Chautauqua movement — an educational, religious and cultural initiative that brought speakers, musicians and preachers to local communities.

"We were sort of the original tourist destination in NOTL," said Miller. "There was a great need for people to come and reflect and educate themselves."

While the summer camp is long gone, the association says the neighbourhood remains unique. Its historical roots, low building density and distinctive "hub and spoke" street layout — featuring the circular Circle Street with straight roads extending from it — all contribute to its character.

"We're part of Niagaraon-the-Lake and we're so thrilled that we're from Niagara-on-the-Lake," said Miller. "But we have our own identity as well." A secondary plan would allow for a specific planning framework to protect that identity, he said.

Lord Mayor Gary
Zalepa said he largely
agrees with the association's concerns but
believes they may stem
from a misunderstanding
— the town still intends to
make a secondary plan for
Chautauqua, he said.

"Council affirmed as recently as last month in the official plan workshop that special areas such as Chautauqua and the Victory Home area, for example, are in need of special policies," Zalepa wrote in an email obtained by The Lake Report.

He said a conversation between the town and the association could have cleared up the confusion and called on the association to put out a "correction/clarification letter."

"It is unfortunate that the Chautauqua Residents Association chose to characterize the item like it has in their letter," he said. "We believe it misstates the council's direction."

While both the association and the town expressed their desire for a special plan for Chautauqua, Miller said the wording matters — especially for a place so deeply tied to his family's history.

"I grew up in the neighbourhood," he said. "I'm actually the third generation of my family in the neighbourhood ... This has been home for me for my entire life."

The town is aiming to submit the final draft of this new official plan by November to the province.

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Migrant workers say they face inhumane conditions

Continued from Front Page

on migrant workers each

Now, Canada's largest migrant-led coalition is sounding the alarm on new government changes to the nation's various temporary foreign worker programs that they fear could worsen their working conditions.

The Migrant Rights
Network, a cross-Canada
alliance of organizations of
migrants, released a report
at a virtual news conference Wednesday, outlining
current conditions and why
the federal government's
proposed changes to the
country's programs risk
making circumstances like
Junior's even worse.

Junior said verbal abuse and harsh living conditions are among the biggest challenges he faces — problems he's raised to the ministry of labour in Jamaica with requests to change farms, with no result.

"They keep on sending us the same form," said Junior.

"Everything that goes wrong with our boss, they always blame us and we always are the problem."

Junior has worked six years on the same farm and often sends money home to support his wife and young son.

"I'm trying to give him a better life than what I have," he said.

The coalition said most of the new proposed revisions reinforce employer control and low pay — a system that last year was compared to "modern slavery" by Tomoya Obokata, the UN's special rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery.

Employment and Social Development Canada is proposing an agriculture and fish program that would replace the four existing temporary foreign worker programs.

It includes six proposed changes, five of which the coalition raised concerns about: new stream-specific work permits, housing guidelines, pay deductions for housing, health-care provisions and transportation options.

The coalition began receiving discussion papers outlining each proposed change in May 2024, one by one. By March, it was told it had three months to review them.

It asked workers what they thought of the five troubling changes — and what changes they want for themselves.

"It's quite different from

what the government is proposing," said Syed Hussan, executive director of the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change.

"They have rejected it unquestioningly."

The coalition gathered the perspectives of 514 migrant workers with an average of six years of experience in Canada's temporary programs.

Statistics came from surveys with 322 workers, while quotes and insights were gathered through focus groups with 192 participants across seven provinces, including international participants.

"It was a good survey," said Junior, adding he appreciated it for helping his voice reach the media, the public and the government.

"More people can hear and know about the conditions that we are living in," he said.

Hussan said it's the only source of worker input informing the policy — "the workers are very clear" on what they need, he said.

"We now have to see if the government will continue down this road and implement these proposals or not."

End tied permits and permanent residency sought

Junior said tied work permits — which bind workers to a single employer — give farmers too much control, making it hard for workers to leave, a challenge he's experienced firsthand.

Bosses "can verbally abuse us and belittle us anyhow they want to," he said.

Junior said he has been blamed for crop failures, even when returning the following season.

"They say if we leave and come back the other year and the peaches die, they say it's because we do not prune the peaches properly," he said.

Being able to switch employers would give him more power, he said.

"We could have more chances to go to a different boss. At least they would know that we have some power that we can leave when we want to," he said.

Status for all is needed, he said.

"We would have more say in all the conditions we're living in and who we work for."

Tied permits make it harder for a whopping 93 per cent of participants to protect themselves and assert their rights, said the coalition.



Some migrant farm workers endure extreme heat, overcrowded housing and grueling workdays. In agricultural hubs like Niagara-on-the-Lake, demand for labour is high — but so are the risks. These images, submitted to the paper, show conditions inside undisclosed farm worker residences. SUPPLIED/MIGRANT WORKERS ALLIANCE FOR CHANGE

Are you a seasonal worker facing abuse, unsafe working conditions or substandard housing? We want to hear your story. Several sources have told us they're afraid to speak publicly, fearing retaliation from their employers. But staying silent protects bad actors. Our goal is to expose abuse, hold employers accountable and help foster a culture of respect for the farm workers who power our local economy. In some cases, we may agree to protect a worker's identity. To share your experience, call us at 905-359-2270

or email editor@niagaranow.com.

The federal government said stream-specific permits would give migrant workers flexibility to change jobs in agriculture and fish processing, fill employers' peaks in labour demand and refill their vacant positions more easily.

But the coalition said this would enable exploitation and leave workers stuck and powerless, since the proposed permits won't help them escape bad jobs.

The coalition's report stated that for a worker to find a new place to work, they would need to find another employer with an unfilled temporary foreign workers employer authorization and labour market impact assessment.

This is "highly unlikely," the report said, for several reasons, including that those who raise concerns about their workplace are often blacklisted by being immediately sent home or aren't called back to the program the next year.

Those individuals are often considered "problem workers" and struggle to find work in the same sector, the report said.

Plus, it added, for the workers to change jobs in the same sector, they'll need approval from their employers and their country's representatives, which means the worker has to "out" themselves to the employer.

Tighten housing standards, stop docking pay

The federal government proposed new housing guidelines and used terms like "adequate" and "reasonable" — language Hussan called deliberately vague and deeply concerning.

"In law, there's a huge difference between the word standards and guidelines — standards are enforceable," he said. "For example, minimum wage is a standard."

Not only that, new guidelines could allow employers to deduct up to \$1,074 monthly or \$12,892 a year from workers for housing costs, 0.5 to 30 per cent of their gross monthly income, before taxes.

Under current rules, employers can deduct no more than \$30 a week for housing.

Roughly two-thirds of workers reported poor or very bad housing, saying it should remain fully employer-paid and admitted they're afraid to speak out for fear of employer retaliation.

Junior said his housing regularly hits 35 to 36

inside than out. Before waking up early for his busy, hot workdays, he often doesn't fall asleep until it cools down around midnight or 1 a.m.

degrees Celsius - hotter

And while Junior works outside in the heat, he said his boss stays in airconditioning, yet refused to provide it for workers — just fans, which circulate the heat even more.

"He should be out here with us, experiencing this heat. But he's not," Junior said.

Community members donated an air-conditioning unit to Junior's farm on the weekend. "We should have (had) that AC sooner," he said, calling for more temperature control in worker housing.

Fair pay, stable hours and income protections needed

Junior — and 83.55 per cent of participants — said current wages aren't enough to support themselves or their families back home.

When it comes to anything beyond the basics, he said, "I like ice cream and I cannot buy it. I have to leave it alone."

Hussan said the federal government is "capitulating to employers who want to pay workers less."

"The rich want to get richer," he said. "This is supposed to be the government's response to complaints and criticisms that the system is enabling slavery."

"And they're not reforming it."

Current proposals fall short of true access to health care

While the proposed changes still require employers to provide private

health insurance during uninsured periods, the coalition said workers have no real power to access it.

Workers want immediate, public health coverage that's independent of their employers — something 79 per cent of participants demanded.

Junior said he wasn't given time off when he sprained his ankle. Instead, he worked through the pain for a month, increasing his daily dose of painkillers.

"So the pain could ease after I would work," he said.

Health-care access is "very touch and go," he said, all depending on the circumstance.

Real access, the coalition said, requires coverage from day one, paid sick days, safe and independent access to services and support for workers and their dependents back home.

Steep travel costs still on workers

The federal government is proposing several models to manage transportation costs, to "facilitate workers to change jobs, thus providing additional opportunities for workers, while also providing added flexibility for employers within the sector," said a federal discussion paper.

However, the coalition said all options stop short of mandating full employer coverage of worker travel and ignore that migrant workers lack control over travel and have to pay for flights, other transportation, food and accommodations while in transit.

Simple outings require Junior to bike about 40 minutes round-trip, he said.

Participants said they're unfairly burdened with travel costs, sometimes paying thousands out of pocket just to reach their job sites.

Survey respondents reported a median cost of \$880 per trip to Canada for travel and transportation, excluding airfare, which is paid by employers. Some reported much higher costs.

A copy of the coalition report can be found at migrantrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/
Controls-Not-Protection_New-Federal-Proposals-Set-to-Worsen-Migrant-WorkerCrisis-MRN-SubmissionJune-2025-1.

This story is the first in a series. A follow-up will explore the coalition's recommendations and further insights from Hussan on what meaningful reform should look like.

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Building firm co-chair has a personal interest in minimizing Royal George disruption

Continued from Front Page

Taylor has called NOTL home for years and has sunk his roots deep into the com-

In addition to his ongoing board role at Govan Brown, he serves on the boards of Red Roof Retreat and Let Pets Live, organizes multiple local fundraisers, volunteers with a group aiming to repurpose the old hospital on Wellington Street into a community hub, and holds a small stake in The Lake Report.

Now, his sights are set on transforming the aging Royal George Theatre into an accessible, modern space for performers and audiences alike.

Govan Brown was awarded the job through a competitive bidding process and is currently in the preconstruction planning and budgeting phase. The first visible signs of work are expected in October, when homes on Victoria Street are demolished to make way for a construction access route.

Taylor emphasized that access and vehicle staging will be kept off Queen Street to avoid disruption in the heart of Old Town.

"The construction will not materially impact Queen Street," he said.

"We'll have hoarding on Queen Street. It'll be nicely decorated and nicely maintained, but all the construction, all the vehicles, the access to the site will all be off Victoria."

Beyond the logistics, accessibility is one of the major driving forces behind the rebuild.

Taylor said the current Royal George is no longer functional — not just for audiences, but for staff, performers, technicians and backstage crew.

"If you've been in the theatre now, it's pretty limited in terms of those who have mobility issues. It's very difficult to get around."

The new building will be designed to meet Rick Hansen Foundation accessibility standards — some of the highest in the industry.

"It's really the cream of the crop," said Taylor. "Not just for the patrons, but for all the staff that work there — not just the actors, but all the technicians and lighting and stage personnel as well."

Govan Brown is also partnering with U.S.-based Global Infrastructure Solutions, which brings extensive experience with theatre builds, Taylor said.



Jon Taylor, co-chair of Govan Brown, says the company he helped build is committed to minimizing disruption during the Royal George rebuild. That includes clear, consistent communication with the public throughout construction. RICHARD HARLEY

As construction manager, Govan Brown will co-ordinate trades, contractors and consultants. Taylor said they plan to go to tender on major portions of the project and are encouraging local companies to get involved.

"Our preference will be to use local trades where possible," he said. "We want to make sure that there's economic benefit to Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Niagara region as a whole."

66 There will always be detractors no matter what you do, but if you listen to the vocal minority, nothing would ever get done."

> JON TAYLOR CO-CHAIR, GOVAN BROWN

Taylor said many capable local trades were already involved in the Artist's Village project, currently under construction on the former Upper Canada Lodge site. That project is about halfway finished and running more or less on schedule.

"I think it goes without saying, if the Shaw wasn't pleased, they sure as hell wouldn't have awarded us a more complex project in the theatre."

He said one of the most important goals now is to ensure transparency and minimize disruption something that begins with detailed planning and meaningful community outreach.

Govan Brown has hired a traffic consultant to help design a route and construction access plan based on seasonal traffic, road capacity and safety.

"All of that's being studied right now," Taylor said. "We'll come up with a plan and we'll communicate that via the Shaw."

He said a community liaison will be hired to help handle questions and feedback from residents and nearby businesses, while company staff will remain on site throughout the full threeyear construction period.

"We have to make sure that we do things safely, we do them with the least amount of impact to the community, and that we do so in a highly communicative manner," Taylor said.

"What I've been telling our team is we need as much community engagement as we possibly can - independent of what the Shaw is doing, which I'm highly supportive of."

He added that residents are often more understanding when they're informed in advance.

"People will be understanding if you tell them in advance and tell them what the impact is going to be. They'll be right pissed off if they're surprised by things."

Some residents have raised concerns about the scale or aesthetics of the new building. Taylor said many of those concerns stem from a lack of accurate information, something the Shaw and Unity Architects are actively working to address.

Updated design renderings — showing the full building from multiple angles — are in development and will be released

"And you know what, at the (open house), I didn't find people to be unreasonable in any sense. I think they had legitimate concerns, and some of it was through misinformation or lack of information."

"There will always be detractors no matter what you do, but if you listen to the vocal minority, nothing would ever get done."

Taylor rejected the suggestion that the project benefits only tourists.

"I live here. And yes, Queen Street is probably very touristy, but my life doesn't revolve around Queen Street any more than yours does."

"I believe that when you move into a town like this, where so many people come from somewhere else, that it's so important to earn the right to be here and be a resident."

"And I think that my wife and I have — probably more than most — really tried to get involved and make a difference here. And I sure as hell am not going to let the construction of the Royal George destroy all the goodwill that we've tried to build in this town."

He said the rebuild isn't just about bricks and mortar — it's about legacy, longterm impact and doing right by both the town and the theatre.

"It's not just about building a theatre — which will be fantastic — but it's about doing it with the least amount of disruption, to the town, to the businesses, to the tours, and to the residents."

"I'm really excited about the whole thing. I think it's going to be an amazing project."

Editor's note: In the interests of full transparency, we must acknowledge that Jon Taylor is a part-owner in The Lake Report newspaper, as noted in the story. He owns a small stake and does not have any input over the paper's content, editorial direction or political views.









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Saturday, Aug. 2 | 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. We are downsizing on 571 Charlotte St. in NOTL. Many good items.





NOTL native accused in Muskoka boat crash still in custody

Kevin MacLean The Lake Report

A former Niagara-on-the-Lake volunteer firefighter remains in jail after being charged last week in a serious boating crash in Muskoka.

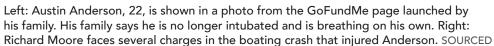
Richard Alan Moore, 39, a contractor who works with a Niagara Falls landscaping company, faces a slew of charges in the incident that injured co-worker Austin Anderson during an outing on Skeleton Lake in Muskoka.

Moore, who grew up in NOTL but now lives in Niagara Falls, has been charged with impaired operation causing bodily harm, refusing to provide a breath sample, failing to stop at an accident causing bodily harm and failing to comply with a release order.

Anderson was in the water when the boat swerved and struck him, causing what Ontario Provincial Police investigators initially called "life-threatening injuries."

OPP in Bracebridge on Tuesday issued a call for more witnesses to come forward and also said they are seeking video footage





that might help in their investigation.

On Monday morning, Moore appeared briefly in Bracebridge court by video link from the Central North Correctional Centre in Penetanguishene, Ont.

The court appearance was scheduled to be a bail hearing to determine whether Moore would be released pending his trial.

However, court was told that Moore and his father Alan were still in the process of retaining a lawyer to represent him in the Bracebridge case.

As a result, Justice of the Peace Cheryl McLean remanded him in custody until Tuesday, Aug. 5, for another possible bail hearing.

The Bracebridge incident is the just latest legal problem for Moore.

In June, he pleaded guilty to reckless driving in the death of 84-year-old Niagara-on-the-Lake cyclist Nestor Chemerika.

Moore left the scene after he struck down the senior while driving along East and West Line in July 2023. Chemerika died of his injuries 12 days later.

A sentencing date in that case has not yet been set. On the evening Chemerika was hit, about one hour before his pickup truck crashed into the cyclist, Moore was seen on security video at the NOTL Legion purchasing a pitcher of draught beer during the popular Thursday fish fry.

The video did not show him consuming any beer, however.

Moore, who was wearing a "volunteer fire department" T-shirt at the time, was a volunteer with the NOTL Fire Department for a few years.

He was forced to resign about six years ago over his attendance and availability to answer emergency calls.

Last Wednesday, in Superior Court in St. Catharines, Moore's defence lawyer suggested the sentencing in the Chemerika case could be delayed because of the charges his client is facing in Bracebridge.

"There's been a very specific personal development in the circumstances of Mr. Moore," Jeffrey Manishen said in reference to the Muskoka incident, "with the result that I'm going to seek his instructions on whether, as a result of that, he wishes me to make further submissions on sentence before Mr. Justice (Michael) Bordin."

Anderson's family says he is slowly but surely starting to recover and is now breathing on his own.

He was placed in a medically induced coma at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto shortly after he was airlifted there following the crash.

Anderson is from Keswick, near Lake Simcoe, but about a year ago, he and his family moved to Welland, his cousin Steve Anderson told The Lake Report.

Family members, including his parents, Erin and

Brennan Anderson, are staying in Toronto to be near him.

Austin Anderson has been working for GGS Niagara Landscaping Inc. in Niagara Falls. Moore, who has been a contractor specializing in concrete driveway installations, also does work for the landscaping firm.

Company owner Graham Boaretti last week confirmed that Anderson is an employee, but he declined to say more or to speak about Moore, noting, "We're letting the investigators do their work."

Anderson's family launched a GoFundMe campaign to help raise \$25,000 to support him in his recovery.

The largest single donation to the campaign is \$3,600, from GGS Niagara.

In a Facebook posting, Boaretti urged people to help the family and described Anderson as "one of my best friends."

As of Wednesday afternoon, the fund totalled almost \$21,000.

The campaign notes that if Anderson recovers, he could need specialized care.

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NEWS |

Brock students among victims in Queenston Road tragedy

Andrew Hawlitzky The Lake Report

Two of the three young people killed in a fiery single-vehicle crash in Niagara-on-the-Lake last week were laid to rest Tuesday, as grieving families and community members gathered for a funeral service in Niagara Falls.

The horrific crash and deaths of the young men - two of them Brock University students — have left members of Niagara's Muslim community mourning and concerned for their own loved ones.

Niagara Regional Police, citing privacy concerns, have refused to release any details about the fatal crash or say where the victims were from.

The Lake Report pieced together information about the victims and the circumstances of the crash through interviews with people in the Muslim community and elsewhere.

Sultan Siddique, 17, and







Moiz (last name and age not confirmed), Shaikh Faisal, 22, and Sultan Siddique, 17, were the victims of the fiery crash on Queenston Road last week. SUPPLIED

Shaikh Abdullah Faisal, 22, were buried at the Niagara Islamic Cemetery in Welland following Tuesday's janaza, or Islamic funeral prayer.

"They were very good, very helping people," said Imam Asad Mahmood, president of Mosque Aisha in Niagara Falls.

He said he knew the young men well and has spoken to the families of all the victims.

"Every time we had an event, they would come, they would set up the tables, they would feed people, they would clean up afterwards."

Faisal, a student at Brock University, also worked part-time at the Marotta Family Hospital in St. Catharines.

Siddique, who was driving, lived in Niagara Falls but his family lives in Kuwait. His father had purchased the vehicle for him last month while visiting Canada, Mahmood said.

The third victim has not yet been officially identified, though the body is believed to be that of their friend Moiz, a Brock student who was living and working in Waterloo for the summer. His last name has

not been confirmed.

Mahmood said Moiz drove from Waterloo to meet Siddique and Faisal at the Mosque Aisha parking lot on Sunday night, July

He joined them in Siddique's car for what would be their final fateful drive.

Around 3 a.m. on July 21, the vehicle appeared to be northbound on Concession 6, based on tire skid marks found at the scene.

However police are still investigating the details of the collision, including exactly what direction they were travelling.

It appears that as the car neared the Queenston Road intersection, it veered off the road, struck a tree and came to a stop in a roadside ditch. It then burst into flames, with the three young men trapped inside.

The car was badly damaged and took out several tree branches before stopping. By the time first responders arrived, all three occupants had died.

Mahmood said he heard from a friend of Siddique, who spoke with the police, that Faisal and Moiz died on impact, while Siddique survived the initial crash.

Police have not confirmed this detail or any other aspects of how the incident unfolded.

As of Tuesday, Niagara Regional Police spokesperson Stephanie Sabourin said the police service "has not positively identified the individuals involved in the fatal collision."

"Out of respect for the families and in accordance with privacy legislation, we

will not be confirming or releasing the identities of those involved — now or in the future — unless there is an investigative necessity to do so," she told The Lake Report.

Siddique and Faisal were identified using DNA provided by their families, Mahmood said.

The third body has not been released, as Moiz's parents are in Pakistan and have not yet been able to send a DNA sample to the coroner's office.

"Three children, young children. Regardless of if they're Muslim, but from any community, when an incident like that happens, everybody is very sad and very terrified for their children, their future," said Mahmood.

In a media release on Tuesday, police said the investigation remains ongoing and anyone with information is asked to call them at 905-688-4111, dial option 3, extension 1009504.

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Museum secures conditional \$500K pledge from town council for expansion

Dan Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake town council has approved a \$500,000 pledge over five years to support the NOTL Museum's Memorial Hall expansion — as long as its federal grant application is also successful.

Museum CEO and curator Sarah Kaufman said the funding would support creating a "community hub": improving accessibility for people with disabilities, expanding recreational programs, including for children, and increasing the number of items on display.

She emphasized the importance of expanding recreational offerings to ease pressure on the NOTL Community Centre, which she said is "very well used," based on her conversations with the town.

The proposed funding



NOTL Museum CEO and curator Sarah Kaufman pitches council last Tuesday to pledge of \$500,000 over five years to help with a \$2 million grant application. DAN SMEENK

would come from municipal accommodation tax revenue, according to the museum's submission.

The pledge is intended to strengthen the museum's application for a \$2-million federal grant for the same project.

The federal government accepts pledges, Kaufman said.

She noted the museum

applied for the federal funding in April and does not need immediate municipal funds — just a formal commitment to bolster the application.

"This is do or die for the museum," Kaufman said.
"If we don't get this (federal) grant, this project may never happen," adding the decision could come before September.

Kaufman said the museum is also seeking support from other donors across the Golden Horseshoe and at all levels of government.

Last year, the town financially supported the museum when it bought the Janet Carnochan House at 25 Castlereagh St., next to the main building.

The house belonged to Janet Carnochan, founder of the NOTL Historical Society, the museum's precursor.

Kaufman thanked the town for its help and said the acquisition saved the museum millions in renovation costs while preserving a historically significant site.

She told The Lake Report that it's a good thing that NOTL is decided to invest in their heritage.

"When you see places like Halton who are shutting down their heritage services ... it's a very kind of scary precedent that's being set there," said Kaufman.

"Somewhere like NOTL appreciates heritage so much. It's really great that the council is supporting this project ... because unfortunately it's not happening in other communities."

Kaufman also highlighted several features of the museum's collection, including what she described as the "best" War of 1812 collection in Canada, the largest Laura Secord collection in the country, and German machine guns captured at Vimy Ridge.

daniel@niagaranow.com



What events hosted by the NOTL Chamber contribute significantly to the local economic impact?

The NOTL Chamber not only supports its members through Business and networking events but also hosts Signature Events — the next is the Peach Festival Weekend — that culminates in our Shades of Summer Dinner happening in the heart of town!

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Visit <u>www.niagaraonthelake.com/shades-of-summer-2025</u> for more information.

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NOTL golfer fourth in Ontario Seniors Championship

Kevin MacLean The Lake Report

With his short game and putting firing on all cylinders, Niagara-on-the-Lake golfer Stephen Warboys finished tied for fourth in the Ontario Senior Men's Golf Championship last week.

Warboys, 72, was competing in the 70 and over division in the tournament played at Lora Bay Golf Club on the shores of Georgian Bay in Thornbury.

He and fellow NOTL Golf Club member Jim McMacken were among more than 100 players who qualified for the three-day, 54-hole tournament, which



included divisions for 55+,

In the 70+ division, the NOTLers were among 25 golfers who competed over the 5,937-yard par 72 layout, which is similar in

But only the top nine the first two days of play and McMacken (86-83) fell short.

Warboys (79-77-81=237) had much better luck and finished tied with Jim Gaiger of Etobicoke's Markland Wood, 10 shots behind division winner Tim Lee of Beverly Golf and Country Club near Hamilton.

After solid rounds of 79 and 77 Tuesday and Wednesday, Warboys was tied for sixth going into found last Thursday's final round.

"The Lora Bay course, which was in beautiful condition, was set up with tough pin positions every day and the final round started with a stiff Georgian Bay breeze blowing, making it an even more difficult test

than the first two days," he told The Lake Report.

He was able to hang tough and despite a triple bogey on his 10th hole he closed with an 81 and moved up two spots on the leaderboard to end tied for fourth.

Earlier, for Monday's practice round, he and Mc-Macken were paired with Ashley Chinner of Coppinwood Golf in Uxbridge. He was the eventual winner of the open division (55+).

Chinner, a former pro on the Korn Ferry tour (and winner of the Canadian PGA Championship tourney in 1996), is now reinstated as an amateur.

He was a pleasure to play

with, Warboys said, and

He did and finished at 8-under, five shots better than Mike Kray of Rattle-Snake Point in Milton. Niagara's Dave Bunker (Cherry Hill) was fourth at -1.

"It was very neat to play in a tournament that was so well-run," Warboys said, noting there was a live online scoreboard, regular pace of play checks, plus rules officials and spotters were everywhere.

The spectators and volunteers scattered around the course all added to the atmosphere and pressure of playing in the event, he added.

"Although my long game

and mid-iron ball striking

Stephen Warboys.

65+ and 70+.

length to their home club.

players made the cut after

his superb ball striking and diligent preparation was interesting to observe up close, suggesting he was going to perform well against the field.

left a lot to be desired, my short game was very sharp and I putted beautifully all week," said Warboys, a retired tennis pro.

> "Every time I played a bad hole, I reset and got back to business," he said.

"I was extremely proud of the way I competed and represented the club," he added, calling it "a fabulous, if somewhat nerve-wracking experience."

Women take on the pro in friendly shootout at NOTL Golf Club

Kevin MacLean The Lake Report

Hot weather and high humidity continue to scorch the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club but that didn't deter a half-dozen women from successfully challenging club pro Owen Howells in a friendly shootout

Members of the 18-hole women's league held their annual Beat the Pro competition in which the women dictate what club the pro can use on the short 110yard par 3 fourth hole.

Those who managed to get it closer than Howells included Carroll Baker, Val Chubey, Ginny Green, May Chang, Margot Richardson and Yolanda Henry. It was all in fun but the winners earned a small pro shop

In more serious play on Tuesday, Louise Robitaille's 82 won low gross, followed by Henry at 86 and Baker with 89. Sharron Marlow and Chang tied for low net with 70, followed by Baker (72) and Henry (73).

Baker also had the fewest putts, with just 29, Henry needed 30, and Lisa Allen and Marlow had 31.

Penny Green shot 47 to lead the Tuesday ninehole leaguers, followed by Carolyn Cochrane and Patty Garriock at 51. Low net shooters were Charlotte Kainola (35), with Cochrane, Green and Garriock all at 36.

Garriock also hit the longest drive on #3, Green was closest to the line on #6 and Cochrane sank the longest putt on #8.

In Monday's business women's league, Clair Forbes was low gross with a score of 43. Other winners were: Kim Breakspeare (longest drive #1), Marilyn Wallace (closest to the 150 on #2), Brada Cochrane (closest to pin #4), Beth Duc (longest putt #7) and Jill Davies (closes to the pin in two on #9).

In men's league play last Thursday, Jim Meszaros and James Grigjanis-Meusel were the sharp shooters with 1-under par 35. Michael Freel was low net

with 30.

Bill Daly made the longest putt on #2, Grigjanis-Meusel had the longest drive on #3, Richard Sammons was closest to the pin on #4 and Dave Anthony was closest on #9.

Gross skins, worth \$20, for birdies went to Doug Hernder (#1), Mike Eagen (#4), Ricky Watson (#5) and Joe Doria (#9). Grigjanis-Meusel scored one with an eagle two on the par-4 seventh hole.

Net skins worth \$95 were won by Quinton Spagnol

(#3) and Randy Busbridge (#7). Ted Wiens and Kurt Hamm missed their chances in the putting contest, so next week the prize will be \$600.

On Tuesday in the men's Woofs league, Peter Falconer was top dog with 39 and Nick Pollice was low net with 30. Busbridge won the hidden hole and Stein Hansen was closest to the pin on #4.

Next week, the Woofs will host the Legends Cup, a one-day tourney for men over 80.

Teen part of gold medal team at United World Games in Austria

Marlou Sotto Tiro Special to The Lake Report

Malea Viola, the granddaughter of the former lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Art Viola, was part of the U18 Team Canada that bagged the first place, gold medal during the United World Games competition held this summer in Klagenfurt. Austria.

"Gosh, I feel so happy that we've won, I never expected it," said 17-year-old Malea.

"It was a game of three and my team was quite nervous because we were playing at a large stadium."

The United World Games is considered the largest multi-sport event in Europe that attracts young athletes from more than 30 countries, intending to encourage sportsmanship and camaraderie, and promote cultural exchange through sports.

This year's games were held from June 19 to 22 — Malea's team beat Slovakia



Malea Viola with grandpa Art Viola. SUPPLIED

3-2 in the championship game on June 22.

It encompasses various sports, including basketball, soccer, volleyball, and

Since its inception, the games have attracted several athletes worldwide of various age groups and skill

Malea is a Grade 12 student at Fort Erie International Academy, a prominent private school in Fort Erie for grades 6 to 12

that nurtures future athletes. The school takes pride in its world-class education and has been a home to competitive international students.

At the academy, Malea is known for her athletic prowess where she won several interschool and regional sports competitions in Canada.

Like her grandfather, who is known to be resilient and dedicated to his work, Malea also has those character traits as she strove to be one of the best ball hockey

Her dream to become a proficient athlete came to fruition as she got her team the winning score.

"The right strategy and swiftness make a ball hockey player good with the game," Malea said.

To be a skilled athlete, one needs to have insurmountable endurance, strength and good communication skills to obtain effective teamwork, she said.



The Lake Report

OPINION



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Dave Van de Laar, Joanne Young and many
more members of the community.



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#38: Donate used furniture to those people being forced to leave their countries due to war (ie. Ukrainian refugees) and help them settle into your neighbourhood in any way you can.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock

"I'm going to make everything around me beautiful — that will be my life." - Elsie de Wolfe

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Car show for a cause

Ward Simpson, David Dick and Matt Habinski are all smiles next to a red-hot 1956 Chevrolet, one of dozens of classic cars that came out to Niagara Motors' annual charity car show on Saturday in Virgil. All the proceeds from the car show were matched and donated to non-profit organization Red Roof Retreat.

ANDREW HAWLITZKY

Editorial

Let's embrace change at the Royal George

Richard Harley Editor-in-Chief

When it comes to development in Niagara-on-the-Lake, someone, somewhere, always has something negative to say.

We know — shocking, right? In this town?

Sometimes, sure, the criticism is warranted. But other times, we're just firing at our own feet, tilting at windmills and lamenting changes that future generations will roll their eyes at.

Everyone's entitled to an opinion. And they're entitled to be wrong.

Because in this case, the criticism doesn't hold water.

The Shaw has bent over backward to be transparent, responsive and community-minded. They've opened the theatre doors to show the building's serious limitations — structural, accessibility-related and otherwise — and explained why it simply can't be saved. They're hosting a second open house, this one virtual, to give even more people a chance to weigh in.

And when residents said the initial design didn't suit Queen Street? The two Tims — artistic director Tim Carroll and executive director Tim Jennings — took that feedback seriously. They're revising the plan.

This week we also heard from Jon Taylor, co-chair



of the company overseeing the rebuild. A local himself, Taylor emphasized that minimizing disruption to neighbours, businesses and tourists is a top priority throughout the construction.

What more can we reasonably ask for? A major institution is doing things the right way — listening, adjusting, communicating and making real efforts to include the public in the process. That's not lip service. That's leadership.

The Shaw Festival is showing us what responsible development can look like. That deserves recognition, even if some of our columnists disagree.

Let's be clear: The views of our columnists are their own. Our editorial team doesn't dictate — or always agree with — what they write. But this paper does believe in platforming a range of perspectives, even the ones we find a bit out to lunch.

We encourage residents to learn about the Royal George project for themselves. Ask questions. Voice concerns. Reach out directly to Shaw executives — they are listening. They're reading this paper. They want your input.

The Shaw Festival isn't just another business. It's part of the cultural heartbeat of this town. It always has been. And if we get this right, it will continue to be — stronger, more inclusive, and more accessible than ever.

Yes, construction is disruptive. Jon Taylor didn't sugarcoat that. But the kind of change we're talking about here is not reckless or careless. It's thoughtful. It's necessary. And it's worth it.

Let's also be honest about the current Royal George. Sure, it has charm. But it's a logistical nightmare. The place floods. The accessible washrooms are in a separate building. The cramped bar area is hot, crowded and unpleasant. It's past its prime.

The preliminary drawings for the new theatre? They look good to us. The marquee nods to the original. The glass front is warm and welcoming — a contemporary touch Queen Street could use.

NOTL shouldn't be frozen in time. It can't be. Not if we want to maintain safety, accessibility and long-term appeal. A better theatre will enhance the experience for audiences and draw more visitors — visitors who spend money at our shops, restaurants and hotels.

Let's not pretend a new theatre is going to "kill the golden goose" of tourism. That's absurd. The tourists kept coming after the golden arches arrived. They'll keep coming past the boutique hotel and Dairy Queen. And they'll keep coming long after the new Royal George opens.

And when they do — when they fill the seats and spill out onto Queen Street, when the shops are busy and the restaurants buzzing — maybe then we'll realize the sky never fell.

But who are we kidding? In this town, someone will always find something to complain about.

Let's not make that our legacy.

editor@niagaranow.com



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Glencairn Hall wasn't built by Robert Hamilton Sr.

Dear editor:

In the article about Glencairn ("Town seeks to honour destroyed Glencairn," The Lake Report, July 24), journalist Dan Smeenk errs in saying that the Ontario Heritage Trust attributes Glencairn — built in 1832 by John Latshaw — to Robert Hamilton Sr.

Not so. He died in 1809. His mansion was damaged in 1812 during the Battle of Queenston Heights.

As I wrote in a letter to The Lake Report ("Letter: 'Diastrous' Glencairn fire took national historic site," April 22), Glencairn was built for John Hamilton (born 1801, died 1882). John was the youngest son of Robert Hamilton Sr. and became a successful businessman, legislative counsellor and senator, transferring his home (with wife Frances

MacPherson and children) and business to Kingston in 1844.

Robert Hamilton Sr.'s estate (land holdings) wasn't distributed to the four sons, three stepsons and daughter until 1823, when John was 21. Alexander (the third son) had Willowbank built by Latshaw in 1834.

Reginald and Jean Porter were the previous owners. Her book "Glencairn Hall:

A Grandfather's Legacy" is full of errors. Betsy Masson wrote a page of corrections to which I added many. The book is in the Queenston Library.

As I wrote before, I was surprised that the Porters had not installed fire sprinklers, as he had professionally restored Glencairn.

Elizabeth Oliver-Malone (Archives at Willowbank) Queenston

HARP_{pub} RIDDLE METHIS

This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style. Category: THEY COME IN PAIRS

Before cellphones, every kid wanted a pair of these rhyming handheld communication devices.

Last issue: TELE VISION

Clue: In a time-traveling vision, this character sees his father Ned as a younger man and learns a thing or two about Jon Snow.

Answer: Who is Bran Stark?

Answered first by: Jane Morris

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Bob Wheatley, Becky Creager, Jim Dandy, Jeff Lake, Wade Durling, Edna Groff, Lynda Collet, David Spencer

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

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The little town that wouldn't



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner Columnist

My dog-walking pal Sally Basmajian is a famous romcom novelist. She's an Old Towner. And a TikTocker.

Plus, (like many in the 'hood) she's shocked at the Shaw Festival and its plans to erect a hulking theatrical complex on Queen Street, which will slither around the corner and eat half a block of Victoria.

"You're likely not on TikTok," she wrote me (not), "so I'm sending a copy of a post I did today about the proposed theatre expansion." And Sally spared no punches.

"Where you have this graceful, frilly house," she said, standing before one of the five structures the Shaw wants to pull down, "will be a truck bay for the new theatre when it gets built. A truck bay. Imagine!"

The old Royal George may need to tumble and be rebuilt she says, "but there are right ways of doing things and just egregiously wrong ways of doing things."

At last count Sally's posts had been viewed 43,500 times

Well, she got a message from the festival's czar, Tim Jennings (I did, too). It's part of a repair campaign the organization has



Thousands of people have viewed Sally Basmajian's TikTok posts about the Royal George rebuild. SUPPLIED

underway to calm a tempest that was apparently never anticipated.

For some reason these folks thought everyone would be OK with a three-year-long heavy construction project in the heart of NOTL, creating a 51,000-square-foot, five-storey-high complex of stone and glass requiring multiple demolitions of heritage buildings, the erasure of housing units and the complete commercialization of half a block of one of the town's signature residential streets.

Part of the charm offensive is Robin Ridesic, who lectured me in person about the righteousness of the Shaw proposal. She's a festival director (and is charming).

Her key point — one her colleagues are making loudly now — is that the drawings Sally and many others reacted to are "only preliminary. We're open to change."

Well, many are concerned

approvals are being rushed ahead so the Shaw can meet a deadline for public funding. The impact of this on the community can only be imagined, since local politicians have thus far been mute.

"I wonder if you have any thoughts on the upset that this project will bring to the middle of our little downtown for a projected three years," says Richard Glushkoff.

"A project this size usually demands that there be permanent space for construction equipment and traffic control at the Queen Street site plus a lane reserved on Queen for construction site workers and supplies. The dust, noise and dirt will make NOTL a place not to visit until at least construction is over."

And while Shaw folks say they're building "for the next century," some people suggest that could be folly.

Like festival patron and New York resident Bill O'Neil. "I suggest Shaw has a much larger problem," he tells me.

"Look at the hair colour of the majority of their audience. Their programming, to a large degree, is not for folks under 50. Who in their 30s knows 'South Pacific'? (how many of them know where the Pacific is?). Who will come to this new museum?"

Growing is the sentiment our bucolic little oasis is, well, getting a tad tacky.

"Friends whose favourite visiting venue was once our town, have said they no longer come because the town is no longer charming," says Marilyn Bardeau.

"Instead of making the town more attractive to visitors, the overdevelopment is driving them away. How sad is that? People flock to Europe for old world charm, not to the newer sections of the towns. Just as they did to NOTL. Why can decision-makers not see this?"

Paulette and Keith Kennedy now regret moving here.

"We spent two years looking for the perfect place to live when we were in South Africa. Four trips to the U.S. and Canada finally led us to NOTL. We bought our house over the internet and moved in Nov. 1, 2018. We love the town, but the changes that have taken place in these few years have been quite shocking to us."

Well, Tim Jennings, I know you're reading this. And watching Sally. Are you listening.

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

garth@garth.ca





We welcome your letters

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 496 Mississagua St., NOTL.



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Why we have a heritage conservation district



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall Columnist

Back in 2022, the Ford government passed a draconian piece of legislation relative to heritage designations.

Bill 23, the so-called "More Homes Built Faster Act," required that Ontario municipalities were required to review all non-designated properties on their heritage registers and, if a notice to designate was not issued prior to Jan. 1, 2025 on a listed property, the properties would be removed from the register and could not be relisted for five years.

Further, if a property should be added to the register after Jan. 1, 2023, that property would fall under the same time limitation — that is, designate it within the two-year window or be delisted.

With a stroke of a pen,

the government placed an impossible deadline upon municipal heritage planners across the province to either designate or lose the feeble protection — a heritage review prior to approving a demolition permit — afforded to listed historically significant properties — essentially resulting in placing thousands of cultural, natural and built heritage properties at risk.

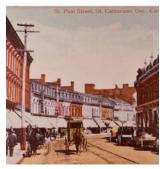
In virtually every municipality, the heritage staff reacted by developing a list of "priority" properties for designation, authoring the required documentation, while crossing their fingers that the property owners support the process.

However, in many jurisdictions, the sheer volume of important heritage assets which potentially stood to be lost was such that only a small fraction could be protected via Part IV designation.

The backlash from municipalities, heritage advocacy organizations and concerned citizens was loud and swift, pressuring the provincial government to, at the very least, extend the deadline.

And, in June 2024, the Ford administration succumbed to the voice of the people by extending the cut-

 \bigcirc



St. Paul Street, late 19th century. BROCK UNIVERSITY

off date to Jan. 1, 2027.

Still, for many municipalities (including Niagara-on-the-Lake), the extra 16 months will be nowhere near sufficient to accomplish the necessary protection of their treasured historic properties under Part IV designation.

But there is an alternative which a number of municipalities have chosen to pursue.

Namely, should a geographically defined area contain a concentration of heritage assets equal to, or greater than, 25 per cent of the properties contained therein, it is possible to create a heritage conservation district under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act — thereby safeguarding a group of important properties under a single umbrella.

To be clear, a Part V district does not prohibit development or change within

its boundaries.

Instead, it provides a measure of oversight regarding the type and form of any proposed alteration to property(s) in the district to ensure protection of the heritage assets — for greater clarity, see: "Arch-itext: The goals of the town's next heritage conservation district plan" from April 9.

This is the path that the City of St. Catharines elected to pursue in 2023 when the majority of its councillors voted on a staff recommendation to engage a consulting firm to conduct a heritage conservation district study within the boundaries of the city's downtown core.

It should come as no surprise to anyone who has ever visited downtown St. Catharines that the 25 per cent threshold was exceeded by a wide margin, with well over 100 properties found to be heritage assets.

Both the city's heritage staff and the consultants strongly recommended that council move forward to create a heritage conservation district.

Now, one would think that this story would end with council supporting the overture but, on the contrary, the councillors voted 7-4 against its creation. You see, a vociferous opposition was launched by the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, supported by the executive of Niagara Association of Realtors and other special interest groups.

As a collective, they raised every disproven hoary old myth regarding heritage designation — see "Arch-i-text: Addressing some urban myths about designation" from March 19 for some examples — to raise the fears of property owners.

Of course, what was failed to be mentioned is that heritage districts across North America have been proven to actually encourage the resurrection and development of healthy, walkable and vibrant commercial downtowns while creating a "hip" place to live in the lofts and flats spawned by adaptive re-use and augmentation of the heritage buildings.

Not to mention the boost in tourism revenues accruing to the downtown businesses.

And bluntly, because any heritage conservation district must have a comprehensive set of guidelines for development, when followed by a developer (or owner), it actually reduces and simplifies the timelines and "red tape" associated with any proposed changes within the district.

Furthermore, and contrary to St. Catharines
Mayor Mat Siscoe's worry
about contest before the
Ontario Land Tribunal, it is
highly improbable that such
a challenge would be successful, given (based on my
research) both city staff and
the consultants have fully
followed correct procedures
and conducted open consultation with the public and
property owners.

Circling back to our wee town, wherein the heritage conservation district study is in its second phase — to develop the conservation guidelines for the proposed district — and moving steadily toward completion.

The creation of an expanded heritage district in Niagara-on-the-Lake is long overdue and anxiously awaited by many residents.

Still, it will rest in the hands of our elected council.

I hope they have greater vision and understanding than their counterparts in St. Catharines.

Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage.

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Creating the new Royal George together

Tim Carroll Tim Jennings Special to The Lake Report

We want to begin with a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has taken the time to share your thoughts and feedback about the plans for the new Royal George Theatre.

Your voices are essential to this project, and we are listening.

Through your emails, conversations, community meetings and participation at our recent Open House, you've made it clear how deeply you care about the George — its character, its place in our downtown, and its future.

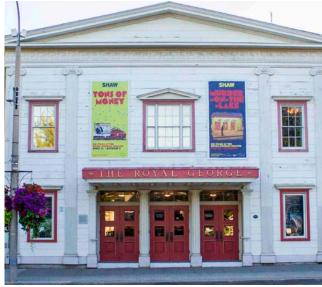
We've heard questions and concerns about the proposed building's size and appearance, the impact on the neighbourhood, and how decisions are being made. This is all useful feedback, and we are working to incorporate your insights into our next round of plans.

This theatre is not just a place to see incredible art — it's a cultural cornerstone in our community. A theatre of some kind has existed on that spot almost as long as Canada has been a country.

The Royal George supports our local businesses by bringing more than 100,000 visitors to Queen Street each year, generating over \$70 million in economic impact by itself of the total \$280 million in economic impact that the Shaw generates for our

We want to ensure that the new Royal George honours that legacy and strengthens it for generations to come.

One question we've been



Shaw Festival is hosting a virtual open house Aug. 6 and 7 to share plans for the Royal George rebuild as well as information about why the current theatre must be rebuilt.

asked is whether the new Royal George could be built somewhere else. Over the past 15 years, we've studied many locations. In 2014, The Shaw purchased the Anchorage Hotel property on the waterfront with this in mind.

But there was strong pushback from local merchants and the town, urging us to stay on Queen Street, where the theatre's presence is deeply rooted and so economically vital.

Hearing the community, and responding to that strong pushback, we sold the Anchorage site in 2017 and committed to staying on Queen Street.

Knowing that it would not be possible to rebuild the Royal George on its current footprint, we immediately purchased 178 Victoria and later, in 2022, 188 Victoria.

These buildings — like the current Royal George itself — are not themselves designated as historical buildings: all their interior heritage elements were

stripped out by previous owners, though of course they are part of the Heritage district.

The hospital site was also investigated a few years ago with the town and for a variety of reasons, from federally imposed height restrictions to various site concerns for our kind of building, to the Queen Street impact issues noted above, was not able to be pursued.

For several years, we have been supporting other community use cases for that site by the area's smaller non-profits and charities.

They see options for working with the town to make use of the spaces there to advance their own missions while leaving the site as a long-term community asset.

We want to acknowledge that the initial design renderings you've seen were prepared rapidly and specifically to meet tight zoning and massing submission timelines after provincial funding was confirmed on April 1, and before the summer meeting hiatus.

They were not intended as final designs.

We are now working to create updated site plans and building designs that reflect the input we've received from our public Open House, community groups, individual meetings with local residents and merchants, and ongoing conversations with the town and its heritage experts.

The next round of renderings will offer a fuller picture - complete with streetscapes, gardens, and trees — so you can better visualize the theatre as part of the community fabric, and we are committed to it being beautiful and as in harmony with its surroundings as it can be.

Once they are ready, we will hold another public event to share the updated design and plans that have been derived from the feedback.

In the meantime, we are committed to keeping the conversation open and we want to continue hearing from you.

If you have questions or feedback, please visit our website shawfest.com/ royalgeorge or email us at royalgeorge@shawfest.com to schedule a conversation with our team.

We believe the best Royal George is one we create together — a space that honours the past, responds to the present, and serves our community for the next 100 years and beyond.

Tim Carroll and Tim Jennings are the artistic and executive directors for the Shaw Festival, respectively.

Reducing tax on your savings and investments



BOTTOM LINE

Steve McGuinness Columnist

When we set aside earnings to save or invest, we want to maximize our returns. We must focus on our return after tax. So, let's focus on the basic tax rules applying to savings and investments.

The first rule of taxsmart investing is to maximize contributions to taxfree or tax-deferred plans. Aside from specific tax plans for home ownership savings, which we earlier explored (reference), there are two main types of taxadvantaged plans Canadians can maintain.

The first and older of the two vehicles is the registered retirement savings plan (or RRSP). Aside from income accumulating on a tax-free basis in an RRSP, contributions to the plan are tax-deductible.

The downside is that all withdrawals (both of original contributions and accumulated income and gains) are fully taxable.

When you contribute to an RRSP in your peak earning years and then withdraw in retirement (when your income will be lower), there will be a reduction in taxes paid, by moving into a lower tax bracket.

Annual limits apply to RRSP contributions. If you don't contribute the full maximum in a particular year, the unused contribution room isn't lost.

Instead, it can be carried forward to use in future years. The contribution limit for the year is the lesser of 18 per cent of earned income or a fixed amount, indexed to inflation. The fixed maximum amount for 2025 is \$32,490.

The second tax-advantaged savings/investment account is a tax-free savings account (or TSFA).

Unlike with RRSPs, TFSA holders do not

receive a tax deduction for the value of contributions. However, neither do they pay any tax on withdrawals.

Similar to RRSPs, income on contributions compounds within the plan free of tax. The current annual contribution limit is \$7,000.

If we withdraw amounts, our TFSA contribution room is restored. Our accumulated contribution room is monitored by the financial institution administering our plan.

Several potential plan changes have recently been proposed. Prime Minister Mark Carney's Liberals promised to decrease the amount older Canadians are required to withdraw from a registered retirement income fund, or RRIF, this year.

A RRIF is a successor plan to an RRSP. Planholders are required to "RRIF" their RRSPs by the end of the year they turn 71.

It makes sense for RRIF planholders to delay receiving the minimum mandatory withdrawal amount from their RRIFs this year, unless urgently needed, pending clarification in the next Budget.

In prior years, there were foreign content caps applying to RRSP investments. Although they've been abandoned, Opposition leader Pierre Poilievre has proposed larger annual TFSA contribution maximums (increased by \$5,000) for investing in Canadian properties.

However, the appetite for this change within the minority parliament is uncertain.

In 2023, 11.3 million tax filers contributed to an RRSP or a TFSA, with more affluent and older planholders contributing more. But anyone at any age can take advantage, if spending on consumable purchases is controlled.

In a future column, we will explore tax-smart investing outside of registered plans.

Steve McGuinness was

a senior adviser to major financial institutions during his Bay Street career and is now retired in Niagaraon-the-Lake. Send your personal finance questions to him at smcgfinplan@ gmail.com.

NOTLers tried to save Parliament Oak school

Dear editor:

Letter writer Lauren Bubnic deserves credit for believing "strongly in the right to a public education" ("Letter: NOTL needs public, not private, education options," July 24), but she is misinformed when she suggests that NOTL residents did not fight to try to save Parliament Oak Elementary School.

In fact, they did. It's important to keep the record straight.

Parents and families fought long and hard to keep public education in Old Town, including launching a costly and timeconsuming court challenge against the District School Board of Niagara.



NOTL residents protest outside the now-demolished Parliament Oak school in 2018, urging the town to buy it and keep it open as an educational insitution. FILE

The case by the residents' group called Citizens for Accountable and Responsible Education (CARE) went all the way to the Ontario Superior Court.

The school board spent more than \$170,000 of

taxpayers' money to fight NOTL families and close Parliament Oak school.

The school board won in court. The residents' group — and arguably, all NOTL residents — lost.

Royal Oak Community

School was founded shortly after to make sure that there will still be elementary education in Old Town.

It is also incorrect to depict Royal Oak as a "private school." It is a not-for-profit community school. This is an important difference.

Yes, Royal Oak does require fees, but all funds go toward the school and its programs. That is the only way to keep elementary education alive in Niagaraon-the-Lake's Old Town.

It would be great Old Town still had a public elementary school, but it seems our elected officials decided otherwise a long time ago.

> David Israelson **NOTL**



The future of 176 Wellington should reflect the best of us

Dear editor:

The land at 176 Wellington St. carries a deep legacy. In the early 1950s, families across Niagara-on-the-Lake gave what they could to build a hospital for their neighbours.

Their generosity was born out of hardship. After two world wars, communities understood the importance of places that could offer safety, care, and belonging.

The hospital they built still stands today. It houses the Royal Oak Community School and serves as a quiet reminder of what happens when a town decides to invest in its young people.

This building was never meant to be temporary. It was built with care, strength, and the belief that some places must last. For more than 70 years, it held the most intimate and transformative moments of life — births, recoveries, final goodbyes.

Generations of Niagara families were born here, healed here and passed on here. Before the hospital stood, this land had already borne witness to gatherings



The James A. Burton & Family Foundation has an interest in turning the old hospital into a hub. FILE/PAIGE SEBURN

of First Nations, to battles and treaties, to the shifting tides of war and peace.

The walls of 176 Wellington are layered with memory. They hold the echoes of care and conflict, of resilience and renewal. That history matters — and it deserves to shape what comes next.

Its resilience speaks to the foresight of its builders. They knew that infrastructure must endure, not only physical but also social infrastructure. They expected future generations to benefit from their efforts, to honour their legacy.

We are those generations. We now face a choice.

Built in the early 1950s through community fundraising and volunteer resolve, the hospital was a symbol of shared purpose. It looked after everyone, from young families to seniors, regardless of background or means. It was an anchor for those in need.

That spirit — of inclusiveness and mutual care — should guide us now.

The land itself is extraor-

dinary. Bordered by the Commons, Fort George, the Shaw Festival Theatre, and the waterfront, 176 Wellington sits in one of the most culturally, historically and ecologically rich locations in all of Canada.

Decisions made today will either preserve that legacy — or diminish it. In determining how this site can best serve our community, we must look beyond today's wants and imagine the needs of tomorrow.

We are not just planning for this generation — we are planning for the children who will raise their own families here 10, 30, even 50 years from now.

Places like Niagara-onthe-Lake need more than beauty to thrive. They need a strong community identity, year-round economic resilience, and a governance culture that welcomes participation from all sectors — not just the loudest voices or the most privileged.

A community only flourishes when all sectors are at the stewardship table. That includes farmers, teachers, artists, caregivers, seniors, youth, tradespeople, local business owners, and cultural workers, and everyone else who calls this region home.

These voices must be heard in meaningful ways — especially when we're talking about the future of one of the last publicly owned properties in the heart of town.

We must be careful with our community: seasonal wealth and picture-postcard charm can mask a deeper fragility.

When workers can't find year-round housing, when the economy tips too far toward seasonal tourism, when community institutions like schools are lost or hollowed out — the soul of a town fades. NOTL should avoid that path.

So, what do we build? We build something that makes sense here.

Something that celebrates this place, welcomes the public, and offers room for innovative education, culture, environmental learning and Indigenous storytelling. We invest in programs that keep the site alive all year — not just in the high season

We ensure that whatever rises at 176 Wellington is locally grounded and nationally significant — a place where residents of all ages can gather, learn, perform, celebrate and grow.

And above all, we protect it from being lost to shortterm thinking or exclusive development.

As someone who lives here and has chosen to give back to this region through our Foundation's work in the arts, education, and child equity, I know we are capable of extraordinary things when we act together.

Let's keep 176 Wellington in public hands. Let's honour its origins.

And let's rise to the opportunity that history and geography have placed in front of us — by creating something that truly reflects the best of us in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Jim Burton, Chair, James A. Burton & Family Foundation Ottawa







Don't wait for a coyote attack to take action | Our frustrations

Dear editor:

Ignoring whatever side Ms. Paige Seburn leans on the issue of her NOTL "coyote sightings" article in The Lake Report, the posturing of the Humane Society of Niagara and its senior manager, Cortnie Welychka, retains the consistent "company line" for such organizations whose data, not research, is singularly focused ("Too close for comfort: Residents encounter coyotes this summer," July 24).

For one example, Ms. Welychka's statement regarding the minimal danger of coyotes is obviously misleading. A school child would be aware of the obvious and serious danger of a coyote encounter, which is why the concern of many NOTL residents so easily challenges the credibility of Ms. Welychka's statements in the first place.

Her statement and position smack of the ethics of some data collectors, substantiating the all-toorequired criticism: "Lies, more lies and statistics."

NOTL is a town where people live and come to visit. Expecting residents and visitors to comprehend

why they should be put in danger by wild animals that are better suited to, wait for it, "the wild," is as preposterous as not employing speed limits or stop signs on our public roads to manage driving in our town.

Much like one might ask: "Should we wait to deploy traffic controls until a death, or sufficient deaths occur to support their deployment?"

One might also ask: "Should we delay the removal of the town's coyotes until enough pets are killed, or a sufficient transfer of rabies occurs, or a resident

or resident's grandchild is maimed or killed?"

Ms. Welychka's attempt to thrust responsibilities onto NOTL residents is as ridiculous as the effectiveness of placing an after-thefact 911 call regarding a sighting or an attack.

I would encourage the town to show some common sense and remove or cull every coyote on an ongoing basis to support our community's safety and to prevent any further ridiculous discussion on this matter.

> Mark Smith Old Town

are being ignored

Dear editor:

Your article so entirely expresses the sentiments of our resident taxpayers and has been addressed for years in your newspaper and at town council meetings (The Lake Report, "Speak out against short-term rentals," July 24).

All their frustrations have been ignored. Nothing will change — the residents have thrown in the towel and given up pissing into the wind.

They are leaving town getting out of Dodge. Witness the record number of homes for sale; they are not downsizing or relocating within NOTL. Why?

You should survey the

sellers, as I have done. They will give you the answer and often an earful — on how NOTL has already gone to the dogs.

I recall several articles in your newspaper during Betty Disero's tenure, where David Leveque was a very vocal advocate for the B&B crowd and short-term rentals. He once threatened to sue the town.

Finally, Garth Turner's article of July 10 says it all: "The NOTL dream died. So they left."

We all know the cabal who controls NOTL, and it's not the voice of the taxpayer.

> Sam Young **NOTL**

Gus the Wonder Dog and his coyote encounter

As far as coyote encounters go, the one I had in my backyard literally beat the odds.

Gus, my 14-pound, 13-year-old wonder dog, ventured into the dense hydrangea garden in my backyard.

Seconds later, a coyote popped out of the garden with Gus in hot pursuit. The coyote ran down a dead-



end walk at the side of the house, with Gus on his tail, followed by me screaming my head off. I was sure Gus was a goner.

I caught up to them at the end of the walkway, scooped Gus up (he wasn't the least bit afraid), and the terrified coyote bolted passed both of us and disappeared into the garden.

I was afraid he might still be lingering somewhere so called Niagara Animal Control. The young woman who came couldn't have been kinder or more thorough.

She checked every part of the property and declared the coyote gone.

My garden is well fenced, so the mystery is how the coyote got in and how he left. And the lingering fear was, would he be back?

No, she told me, once they have a human encounter, they won't return. I hope she's right ...

> Nancy Smith Old Town







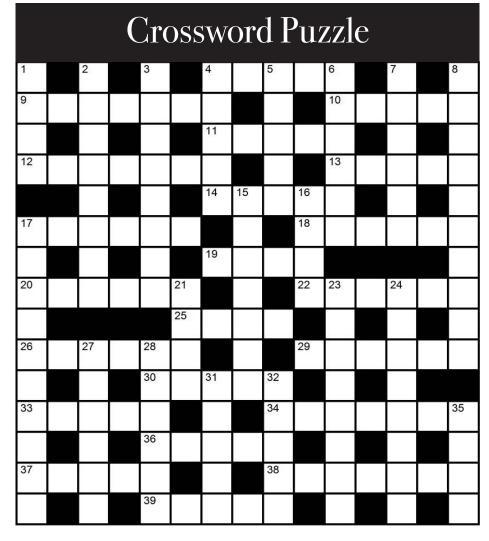
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- 11. Existence (5)
- 12. Difficult question (7)
- 13. Brusque (5)
- 14. Arcadian (5)
- 17. Sovereign's seat (6)
- 18. Shooting star (6)
- 19. Card dispenser (4)
- 20. Kidnap (6)
- 22. Small measure (6)
- 25. Republic between Iran and Syria (4)
- 26. Plot (6)
- 29. Far distant (6)
- 30. Hebrew patriarch (5)
- 33. Steeps (5) 34. Apprentice (7)
- 36. Seaport in NW Israel (5)
- 37. The last of a series (5)
- 38. Spire (7)
- 39. Preen (5)

Down

- 1. Helper (Abbr.) (4)
- 2. Asked (8)
- 3. Machinery repairer (8)
- 4. Cinder (5)
- 5. Wild rose (5)
- 6. Move back and forth (6)
- 7. Formal gesture of respect (6)
- 8. Group discussion (10)
- 15. World's southernmost city (7)
- 16. So be it (4)
- 17. Semiconductor device (10)
- 21. Fastens a knot (4)
- 23. Performs surgery (8)
- 24. Adults (5-3)
- 27. Paradise (6)
- 28. Accident (6) 31. Proof of being elsewhere (5)
- 32. Fastening device (5)
- 35. Ridge of rock (4)

Have some fun



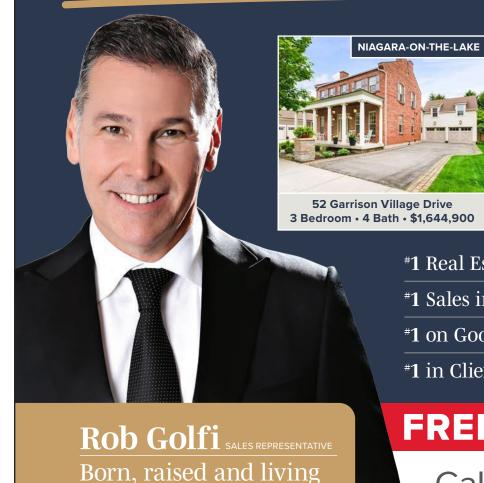
Last issue's answers

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Taxi! Taxi!

Until the 1920s, a horse and carriage was still the primary mode of transportation for many in Niagara. In some of the big cities, motor cars became prevalent even earlier. The horse and carriage featured here is certainly upscale, which leads us to believe that it was for hire. The Town of Niagara had a few livery stables, such as Michael Greene (and later Jack Greene) on King Street and Daniel Waters on Prideaux. Before the Queens Royal Hotel shut down, both Greene and Waters would have been busy shuttling hotel guests around town. In the off-season, they also had an agreement to remove vagrants with a one-way ticket to Toronto on behalf of town council. Maybe not in these nice leather carriages, though. In the background is the Times Newspaper office, a laundry and a clothing outfitter. Today, you would enjoy a sweet treat in this building at either Nina's Gelateria or the Olde Tyme Candy Shop on Queen Street.

Lake Report

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Harvesting sun-kissed and homegrown tomatoes



GROWING TOGETHER

Joanne Young Columnist

Where would this world be without tomatoes?

Think of all your favourite recipes that would no longer exist.

One of my favourite summertime lunches is just a simple tomato sandwich. It is not just for its scrumptious flavour, but also includes going out to my garden and picking a fresh tomato off the vine while it is still warm from the sum-

Harvesting tomatoes at the right time and in the right way ensures the best flavour and extends the

productivity of your plants. Here are some tips to help you harvest tomatoes suc-

When to harvest your tomatoes

Check daily: During peak season, tomatoes ripen quickly — check your plants every day.

Colour is key: Make sure the fruit reaches its mature colour before harvesting. Whether its colour is red, yellow, orange, purple or striped (depending on the variety), let the fruit fully ripen and colour up to ensure the best flavour.

Firm but slightly soft: Gently squeeze the tomato. A ripe tomato should feel firm but yield slightly to pressure.

Ease of detachment: A ripe tomato will easily separate from the stem with a bit of a twist.

How to harvest

Twist and lift: Gently twist the fruit until it snaps off. Don't yank or pull too hard — this can damage the

Use two hands: One to hold the fruit and the other to support the vine to avoid



In peak season, tomatoes ripen quickly, so check your plants daily, says Joanne Young.

breaking branches.

Use clippers: For stubborn stems or larger tomato types, use garden scissors or pruners to cut them off cleanly.

Leave a bit of stem: Leaving a small part of the stem (especially for cherry tomatoes) helps them last longer in storage.

Keep plants clean: Re-

move any overripe, damaged or diseased fruits regularly to prevent the spread of disease and encourage new fruiting. Do not let bad fruit sit on the ground at the base of the plants.

After-harvest care Keep out of sunlight: Store picked tomatoes in a cool, shaded area - not in direct sun.

Avoid refrigeration (if possible): Cold temperatures can reduce flavour and texture. Store ripe tomatoes at room temperature and use them within a few days.

Let them ripen indoors: If frost is approaching or pests are an issue, pick tomatoes early (at the "breaker stage" — just starting to colour) and let them ripen indoors.

Water at the base of the plant, or use a soaker hose.

Don't withhold too much water or the plants will continually wilt and become stressed, causing them to drop their blossoms and possibly their fruit.

Avoid splashing water on the leaves, especially in the evening, which can lead to

After the fruit begins to ripen, ease up on watering so the plant concentrates its sugars for a better-tasting fruit.

Catch potential diseases before they spread. Many diseases can attack tomato plants — fungal, bacterial and viral.

The best way to keep ahead of any diseases is to monitor the plants regularly.

As soon as you start seeing signs of any disease beginning, remove the affected leaves before it spreads throughout the entire plant.

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

An accessiblity challenge for our sweet little town



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson Columnist

What good news that Niagara-on-the-Lake council wants to make our village more welcoming to folks with mobility challenges. The Lake Report's Dan Smeenk has explained the process, which will have businesses installing temporary ramps outside single-step entrances.

We read that NOTL council broadly supported the initiative, and the committee of the whole endorsed it at their July 9

But let's think bigger, and really do the right thing.

We never miss an opportunity to call NOTL the prettiest town in Ontario occasionally expanding the hyperbole to "the prettiest town in Canada."

And daily, visitors to our Niagara wax eloquent about our downtown and residential street flowers. Attaboys all around to town staff and locals who annually plan and then plant

Perennials, annuals and everything in between — our local horticultural society provides the leadership, encouraging hundreds of citizens to add to the floral effulgence enhancing our streetscapes.

Perhaps we should aim higher and make the big commitment to become "Canada's most accessible town."

Yes, we have to be mindful of the historic character of Old Town, and require ramps to come in pre-approved colours that blend with their surroundings. Labels will not be permitted on the ramps.

How about a shoutout to Coun. Tim Balasiuk, who recommended using reflective material?

Let us grab the bull by the horns here. Local resident Pamela Turner Smith has advocated for greater accessibility for years, and now perhaps the time is nigh. She said the decision



The new StopGap ramp program is an opportunity for NOTL to become "the most accessible town in Canada," writes columnist Ross Robinson. SUPPLIED

marks a positive step forward.

I am downtown on Queen Street by the old Court House almost every day, and I see so many happy visitors. Many of them have mobility issues and find it difficult to enter so many local businesses.

It was way back in 1971, in the seaside village of Sconset on Nantucket Island, that I became aware of this issue. As a summer job — in fact, the summer job from paradise — I was managing the Porch

Restaurant on the Town Circle. For a second year, knowing when I had a good thing going.

I had studied the statistics regarding how many people, especially senior citizens, get around in wheelchairs. Before we opened the Porch that summer, we spent a very reasonable amount of money having a threefoot-wide, six-foot-long wheelchair ramp built and installed on the right side of the front steps of our restaurant.

Yes, we specialized in boiled lobster and Chef Ripper's New England clam chowdah.

An immediate success! We had hit a home run with our accessibility ramp.

Almost every evening, we had one or more guests in wheelchairs dining with us. And surprise, surprise, they were not sitting alone. Family members or friends were with them. And they told their friends about us. And they told their friends.

From a marketing perspective, we had created a unique selling feature yes, a USF.

Luckily, an accessible washroom had been installed in a prior year.

I will not even guesstimate how much extra business our accessible and friendly front steps brought us back in that memorable summer of 1971, but I can categorically state it was a lesson learned and never forgotten.

Now, a fairly fast 54 years later, I feel the need to ramble about accessibility.

Have a look around and observe how many people are stymied by steps and staircases. There has to be a better way.

Instead of getting bogged down in details, let's figure

Let us boldly proclaim NOTL's intention to become "the most accessible town in Canada."

Not only would this be much fairer for visitors, but think of the many mobility-challenged wouldbe employees who would suddenly be able to work

This week's edition of Ross's Ramblings has And they told their friends. definitely veered off course But let's think outside the

A lesson I learned in 1971 on Nantucket Island has stayed with me, and now the StopGap ramp has me hoping that our Niagara-on-the-Lake will seize the opportunity. Yes, so much to think about, so many details. Challenges to overcome.

Almost all great initiatives start small. Great oak trees always start out as small acorns.

I sincerely hope this Ross's Ramblings will help the StopGap ramp initiative gain traction. It would simply be the right move and would feel so good.

NOTL, the most accessible town in Canada.

ARTS (%)



Masterful 'Dear Liar' is one not to be missed

DEAR LIAR

(out of five)

Spiegeltent, two hours, one intermission, ends Sept. 27. By Jerome Kilty. Adapted from the correspondence between Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Created and performed by Marla McLean and Graeme Somerville.

Penny-Lynn Cookson Special to The Lake Report

Forty years of passionate correspondence took place between "Joey," George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) and "Stella," the renowned actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell (1865-1940).

Playwright Jerome Kilty's "Dear Liar" probes their complex relationship through their written words of love, professional collaboration and fascination with one another.

As a theatre and music critic, Shaw had followed Mrs. Campbell's career on stage, often with glowing but not always complimentary reviews.

Once he met her, it was love at first sight. Both had big egos, sharp wit and

intelligence. Conflicts, pain, disagreements, opinions, silences and friendship were complicated by their marriages to others.

Instead of the philosophical, social justice advocacy expected by Shavians, Shaw's written letters and conversations with the independent Mrs. Campbell reveal other surprising dimensions of his character and life.

"Why do you go on scolding me for the woman I am?" she wrote.

"I will forgive, bless, humour and adore you ... for you, I wear my head nearest the sky," he responded.

Shaw's wife, Charlotte Payne-Townshend, a wealthy Irish political activist, tolerated his infatuation and friendship with Stella Tanner. She nursed him when ill, assisted him by typing his plays and protected him from intrusions while writing in his backyard cabin.

Stella became a widow when her husband, Patrick Campbell, died in the British Army cavalry charge at Boshof, South Africa, during the Second Boer War of 1900.

She kept her married stage name and in 1914, without warning to a deeply



Marla McLean as Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Graeme Somerville as George Bernard Shaw in Dear Liar. PHOTO BY MICHAEL COOPER

wounded Shaw, married the younger George Cornwallis-West whose first wife was Lady Randolph Churchill, the American Jennie Jerome, mother of Winston Churchill.

Three years later, Mrs. Campbell suffered the loss of her only son, Alan Urquhart Campbell, killed in action in 1917 in northern France.

Shaw wrote numerous

plays specifically with Mrs. Campbell in mind including "The Apple Cart," "Caesar and Cleopatra" and "The Devil's Disciple."

But it was their collaboration on "Pygmalion" in 1914, and her originating role as Eliza Doolittle, that would be the most enduring success. Even at 49, Mrs. Campbell triumphed as Eliza in London and New York.

She continued performing and touring in the U.S. until the last five years of her life. Her opportunities declined with age and her refusal to accept lesser parts. At the same time, Shaw's plays and writings continued an upward trajectory to fame, including the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925.

Mrs. Campbell kept their letters close to her in a hatbox until her death in Pau, France, in 1940. Shaw had returned her letters but refused her appeal to publish them when she needed money.

He was concerned about the impact on his wife and on his reputation. They were published posthumously in 1952, two years after his death.

Marla McLean as Campbell and Graeme Somerville as Shaw provide a master

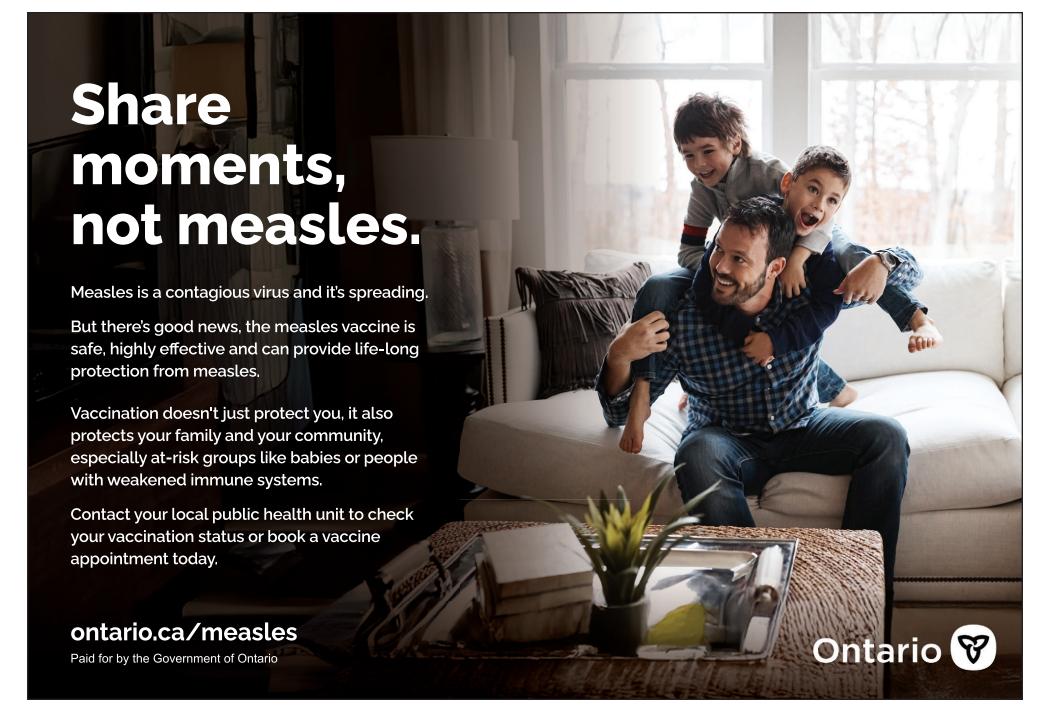
class of superb performance. They attain a depth of understanding, both emotional and intellectual, conveying the vulnerability, pain, intimacy, frustrations, affection and duelling nature of their characters.

They excel as they bring decades of experience as actors at the Shaw, educators at the National Theatre School and their real-life relationship as husband and wife. They inhabit their roles with tremendous insight and sensitivity. The focused pacing and dialogue are mesmerizing.

The intimacy of the Spiegeltent space and our proximity to the actors as they physically circle, bob and weave between their two desks and chairs works brilliantly. This is not a static read but a lived experience of minds and bodies in motion both intellectually and physically.

This new production of "Dear Liar," in the words of artistic director Tim Carroll, offers a "ginger up to the Shavian palate." It's a gourmet experience not to be missed.

Penny-Lynn Cookson is an arts and culture historian, writer and lecturer living in Niagara-on-the-Lake.



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