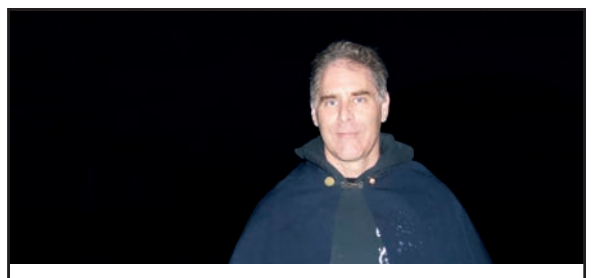
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Spooky night at Fort | Page 11

Vol. 9, Issue 44 | Canada's most-awarded community newspaper | November 5, 2026



Analysis: Data shows Goettler had widespread support

Michael Ennamorato
Stephen Ferley
Special to The Lake Report

The 2026 municipal election results have been officially certified and final tallies can now be examined in detail by polling station and by online versus in-person participation.

An analysis of the results overall and at this level of detail allows us to make some observations that have some bearing on voter attitudes and the mandate conferred to Niagara-on-the-Lake's new council.

First of all, it should be emphasized that NOTL residents spoke loudly and clearly. Voter turnout is typically strong in town and this election was no exception.

In fact, at 52 per cent, turnout was five points higher than that recorded in 2022, which is impressive for a municipal election anywhere in Canada. No doubt, wider acceptance of online voting and the convenience it affords may have had something to do

Continued on Page 3

Nightmare on Annmarie

One husband's Halloween display just keeps getting bigger and bigger



All sorts of ghastly ghouls and peculiar creatures were out roaming Niagara-on-the-Lake on Saturday night. Halloween was a big hit in Virgil, including 25 Annmarie Dr., where the Pumariega Sabaters have been upping their decoration game the past few years. Here, a few trick-or-treaters in the neighbourhood are excited to hit the neighbourhood in search of candy. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Shannah Pumariega Sabater said asking her husband, Miguel, to tone down the Halloween decorations would be like asking him to put his shoes on backwards.

"It's his nature," she said.

The family's home on Annmarie Drive in Virgil is an annual showstopper during spooky season, and this year, the volume was turned up even louder.

The display featured a collection of animatronics and decorations the family has amassed over the past decade, along with several new pieces. A skeleton band in the family's garage entertained children with music as they stopped to collect their treats.

"It was really busy," Pumariega Sabater said. "There were about 300 kids."

The family began preparing for Halloween at the start of October, but the most intensive work began two weeks ago, when the Pumariega Sabaters took time off work to focus on decorating.

"I think that the idea of having the time off really made the smaller things that might have been missed really work out for us," she said.

The process takes time and involves considerable handiwork. Miguel Pumariega Sabater said he built the wooden structure around the

Continued on Page 6



Miguel Pumariega Sabater has no interest in taking his Halloween decor down a notch — even if it takes a month in advance to execute his vision for Halloween night. JULIA SACCO


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Goettler pledges more open town hall, action on flooding

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake lord mayor-elect Vaughn Goettler says residents should see a change in how town hall communicates, with recorded council votes, clearer expectations for answering questions and fewer roadblocks to getting information.

Alongside that promise, he is putting infrastructure and flood prevention at the top of his agenda — including a call to pause development while assessing whether the town's infrastructure can accommodate it.

In an interview with The Lake Report, Goettler said he has already met informally with incoming councillors to discuss how they will work together.

"Residents must believe that we are a different council because we're open, transparent, and we're communicating that," he said.

Goettler said councillors agreed to resume using the town's existing electronic voting system so votes are recorded. He wants those records readily available to the newspaper, allowing residents to see how their representatives voted.


Mayor-elect Vaughn Goettler and wife Lauren. FILE

He also wants councillors and staff to put away cellphones and smartwatches during council meetings, saying their attention should be on the discussion rather than messages from one another or people outside the room.

"We need to have a council that has open discourse and agrees to disagree where needed," he said.

That includes arriving prepared, having read meeting materials and being willing to ask questions when something is unclear.

To help councillors manage lengthy agendas, Goettler wants executive summaries that explain the key issues while allowing members to consult the full documents for more detail. He said he has not yet discussed that proposal with staff.

His transparency commitments extend beyond the council chamber.

Goettler said residents and reporters should be able to obtain information without routinely having to file freedom-of-information requests. He wants to identify barriers with town administration and establish clear expectations for responding to inquiries.

Returning a phone call within 24 hours was one example he offered, describing it as both reasonable and courteous.

"It makes people feel they're not being ignored," he said.

However, Goettler stressed he has yet to learn the town's internal processes. Specific response standards, including timelines for freedom-of-information requests, would need to be determined, communicated and followed.

He acknowledged there will be occasions when an employee is away or information is unavailable.

"But that should be the exception, not the norm," he said.

Goettler also wants staff to know council supports them in communicating with the public. Employees should feel able to do their jobs without fearing that an honest mistake will leave them without support, he said.

He suggested recognizing successes, even with something as simple as pizza after a week in which every call was returned within the established timeline.

The aim, he said, is to build a workplace where people feel engaged and take pride in serving the community.

On infrastructure, Goettler said his first task is to understand the scope of the town's problems, develop a plan and begin addressing them in stages.

"Infrastructure has to be right at the very top of the list. I am really committed to no more flooding," he said.

"We can't fix it in a day or a week or a month, but we can understand it very quickly if we put our resources to understanding it."

That assessment would include conversations with Niagara Region and questions about whether infrastructure can support further development.

He pointed to grinder pumps in St. Davids as an example of equipment whose capacity needs to be examined. If the infrastructure cannot accommodate what is proposed, he said, development should not proceed.

He called for "a healthy pause on development" while determining what existing or new infrastructure can accommodate.

Since the election, Goettler said he has received an outpouring of congratulations that has left him feeling both excited and aware of the responsibility ahead.

He said mayoral rival Erwin Wiens called on election night and offered his help. Outgoing Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa also reached out that night, and the two spoke the following day.

Both were gracious and supportive, Goettler said.

His own message to residents who backed another candidate is that they have just as much claim on his attention as those who supported him.

Those voters had good reasons for choosing someone else, he said, and he wants their input.

"I'm still here to lead for you, and to have a council and a staff that delivers for you," he said.

Goettler said neither council nor staff has the luxury of carrying grudges against residents.

People who ask questions and seek answers are engaged in their community, he said.

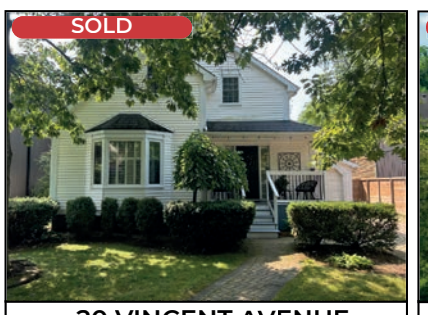
"They're residents who make a difference to the town. So they're all my constituents."

editor@niagaranow.com

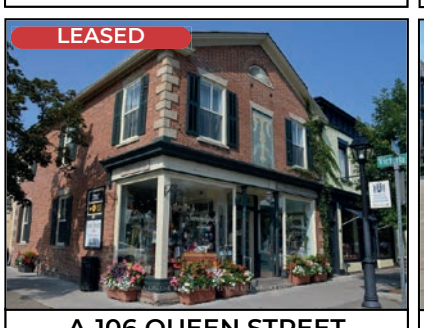
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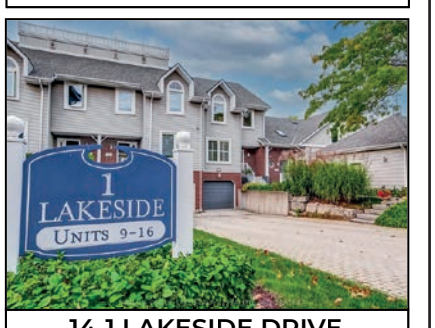

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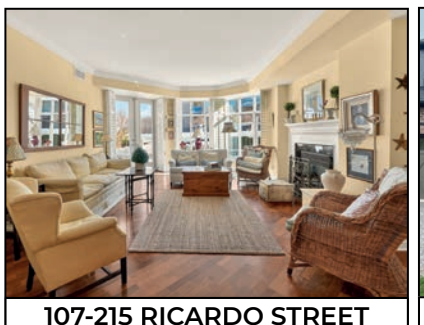

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Refusal of strong mayor powers sets tone for co-operative council

Continued from Front Page

with that.

Just over half (51 per cent) used the online option. However, it is also quite possible that many residents were more motivated to vote than they had been in the past and were engaged with the election earlier on.

This may have elevated participation rates and, with more people having already made their decision, could have driven wider use of the early online voting option. The important thing, though, is that a large portion of eligible voters engaged, thereby supporting the democratic process and legitimately empowering the new council.

And on the mayoral front, there was a clear winner, with Vaughn Goettler capturing 55 per cent of the overall vote (versus 31 per cent for Erwin Wiens and 14 per cent for Andrea Kaiser). Not only were the winds of change prevailing, but there was clearly strong endorsement of Goettler as the champion of change.

His lack of elected political experience may have been a benefit here. Despite her long history in local politics, Kaiser was only able to generate tepid support. And, as it turned out, her candidacy did not introduce a vote splitting factor, particularly given that Wiens, as a distant second, had an insurmountable gap to bridge.

While Goettler generated strong support overall, in a municipality such as NOTL composed of several distinct communities, the geographic distribution of his support has a strong bearing on shaping his mandate.

Analysis of the election results by polling station gives us some sense of how the vote varied by community. Though imperfect (after all, residents did not have to vote at the polling station closest to their place of residence), the polling station results are certainly a credible surrogate of support at the community or village level.

Here we find that Goettler dominated in the communities with the most extensive heritage assets to protect (Old Town and Queenston) garnering the support of roughly three out of every five voters in these villages. However, he was also highly competitive elsewhere.

Wiens achieved a narrow win in Virgil (44 per cent versus 41 per cent), but only managed parity with Goettler in Glendale (each at 41 per cent).

St. Davids has a unique mix of high-profile concerns related to large-scale development, flooding and the tie-in to infrastructure capacity, not to mention the ongoing roundabout drama. Goettler came out on top here — 46 per cent to Wiens' 40 per cent.

Additionally, Goettler dominated within the online voting community (56 per cent versus Wiens and Kaiser at 30 per cent and 14 per cent respectively).

While the online results are not broken down by community, the geographic pattern evident among those voting in-person coupled with this dominant online showing strongly suggest Goettler achieved broad cross-community support among online voters as well.

The good news is that while overwhelming endorsement in Old Town and Queenston took Goettler over the top, he and his platform have a strong base of support everywhere. This gives him a solid mandate to act on behalf of the municipality as a whole.

There are differences in outlook and priority from one community to the next, but they are certainly not insurmountable. There is enough commonality to avoid polarization.

With regard to the councillors, it is telling that the incumbent candidates who voted in favour of the highly contentious Parliament Oak development were soundly defeated along with Wiens. And this withdrawal of support was not limited to Old Town.

In fact, with one exception, neither Maria Mavridis nor Adriana Cater Vizzari met the top-six threshold for electoral success at any of the in-person polling locations or among online voters.

The exception was Cater Vizzari in her home community of St. Davids, where she managed to take third spot. That is a resounding defeat for both of them given the incumbent advantage typical in municipal politics.

By contrast, the incumbents who have arguably been the most consistently supportive of residents and demanding of developers (Gary Burroughs and Sandra O'Connor) were rewarded at the ballot box.

Burroughs, with his long history of public service, was evidently not perceived as representative of the "old guard" but, instead, seems to have added additional impetus, propelling him to the position of deputy lord mayor.

Tim Balasiuk did not benefit to the same degree as these two, though he consistently held on to the sixth and final spot in all communities, with the exceptions of Virgil (second) and St. Davids (seventh).

Among the newcomers (and Andrew Niven is included here since this was his first election following a short, appointed term), all vowed to be resident-first and vociferously supported the primacy of the official plan and democratic principles generally.

Given what was observed on the ground, one of the key determinants of success or failure among these candidates might be traced to simply getting out early with a strong backing organization to knock on doors and articulate a well-honed message.

Niven, Weston Miller and Steve McGuiness fall into this category, with the first two also likely benefiting from previous community leadership experience.

Among those newcomers who were less successful, Nicholas Colaneri stands out as being in serious contention especially in communities outside of Virgil. Given his relative youthfulness, this bodes well for future attempts he might make to secure public office.

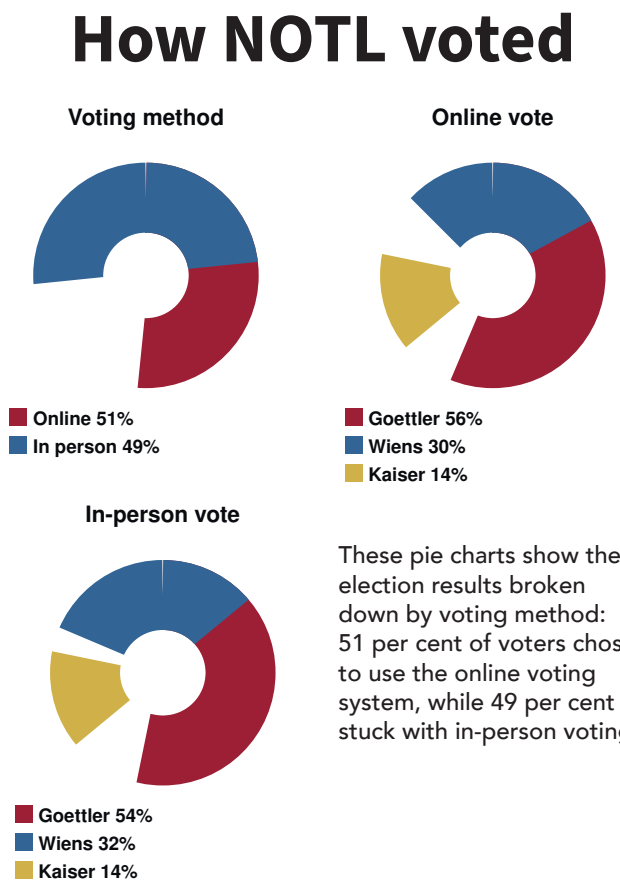
What we seem to have, in the end, is a new council that embodies the balance of experience and fresh ideas needed to responsibly take a new direction.

With no guidance from tools such as exit polls, we have no data to measure voter breakdowns by age, gender, income or other demographics, but the magnitude and geographic breadth of the Goettler majority clearly points to a strong mandate to represent NOTL in its entirety.

The presence of Burroughs and O'Connor on council should provide the new lord mayor with the well of experience he will need to draw upon as a novice in governance.

His rejection of strong mayor powers sets the stage, at least, for co-operation, compromise, consensus and teamwork. This is what the people want — and the people have spoken.

NOTL residents Michael Ennamorato and Stephen Ferley are experts in research and statistical analysis. Ennamorato is a social geographer and former president of TNS Canada. Ferley was president of Canada's Print Measurement Bureau.



These pie charts show the election results broken down by voting method: 51 per cent of voters chose to use the online voting system, while 49 per cent stuck with in-person voting.







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Volunteer co-ordinator on the Steve McGuinness campaign, Anita Barber, brought these signs to his party on election night, ready to celebrate his win. SUPPLIED

The election is over. What’s next for NOTL’s six councillors?

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Two fewer councillors. A new lord mayor. And a $13-million infrastructure funding gap that isn’t going away.

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s incoming council has plenty on its plate before its members even take their seats Nov. 24.

But if there’s one thing several of the town’s newly elected councillors agree on, it’s that NOTL has already given up enough to keep the province from forcing it into a larger municipality.

“I’m done with sacrificing,” returning councillor Tim Balasiuk told The Lake Report.

He voted to reduce council to six councillors from eight earlier this year, hoping the move would show the province NOTL was willing to make changes to avoid amalgamation.

Now, he’s questioning what that accomplished.

“Ultimately, it’s not going to change very much,” he said, noting the town has nonetheless “lost two voices at council.”

He’s not alone in his frustration.

Deputy lord mayor-elect Gary Burroughs, who opposed the reduction, said he doesn’t believe it made a difference.

Newly elected Weston Miller went further, warning that the town shouldn’t make permanent changes to please a provincial government that won’t be around forever.

“Doug Ford’s not going to be premier forever,” he said.

Fellow newcomer Steve McGuinness also questioned the reduction, arguing that cutting two councillors saves relatively little money and should not have happened without more public input.

Sandra O’Connor, who finished second in the council race, agreed that the town has sacrificed enough.

So, if giving up more isn’t an option, what’s the plan?

For McGuinness, that means finding ways to share services and cut duplication without surrendering NOTL’s independence.

Andrew Niven also supports exploring shared services and partnerships with neighbouring municipalities, but doesn’t believe amalgamation would solve NOTL’s financial problems.

“We can find efficiencies and work together without necessarily giving up our independence or what makes NOTL unique,” he said.

And when asked whether maintaining NOTL’s independence could ever become too expensive to justify, the councillors were largely united.

“No, never,” McGuinness said.

Balasiuk was equally firm, saying he would “fight tooth and nail” to preserve the town’s autonomy.

Burroughs also said no, pointing to NOTL’s distinct heritage, agricultural lands and community identity.

Miller couldn’t name a price that would change his mind.

“I would have to think about that more deeply,” he said, calling the town’s independence essential.

O’Connor said the costs would need to be studied before drawing conclusions, though she questioned whether NOTL could preserve its unique identity if governed alongside other municipalities.

Niven didn’t directly address whether independence could become too costly, but said he doesn’t believe amalgamation would solve the town’s financial challenges.

“I strongly believe Niagara-on-the-Lake should remain independent and I don’t believe amalgamation is the answer to our financial challenges,” he said.

On the controversial Parliament Oak hotel approval, all six incoming councillors expressed opposition or concerns when asked how they would vote if the same application came forward today.

A $13-million problem, and who should pay

The town needs roughly $13 million more each year to properly maintain and replace its infrastructure.

But none of the councillors interviewed were eager to put that burden on residents’ property tax bills.

McGuinness wants developers to shoulder more of the cost.

“We should have the highest development charges in the region because we are the destination of choice in the region,” he said.

Miller also wants the town to finish reviewing what developers pay before considering higher taxes.

Balasiuk is looking to tourists, suggesting the town revisit how it spends money collected through its municipal accommodation tax.

He pointed to roads that take a beating from visitors as an example of where tourism dollars could help.

Niven also wants to review how the town spends its accommodation tax revenue and consider delaying or spreading out infrastructure projects.

“There may be difficult decisions ahead, but before asking residents to pay more, we need to make sure we’re managing their money as effectively as possible,” he said.

Burroughs and O’Connor want more help from the provincial and federal governments.

O’Connor said drinking water, sewage and stormwater systems should come first, while Burroughs warned that municipalities can’t keep absorbing more responsibilities without the money to pay for them.

“We need help,” he said.

What residents could actually see change

Some promises might take years. Others, councillors say, could happen almost immediately.

Miller wants electronic voting introduced at council meetings, so residents can see exactly how their representatives vote.

O’Connor agrees. She also wants council to formally declare that casinos aren’t welcome in NOTL.

“We should have a motion stating that we do not want casinos in Niagara-on-the-Lake,” she said.

Burroughs wants resident advisory committees restored and says the town needs to move faster on the former hospital property and its long-awaited short-term rental restrictions.

Balasiuk is pushing to give the town more time to protect heritage properties before provincial designation deadlines arrive.

McGuinness has his eye on the 2027 budget, arguing that taxes have risen too quickly over the past four years.

Niven wants council to establish a strategic plan early in its term, while continuing discussions about the Queen Street patio program and the updated tree bylaw, both of which he supported last term.

Several councillors say rebuilding trust with residents will be as important as any single decision.

Working with new, business-minded boss

Lord mayor-elect Vaughn Goettler won on a promise to run the town more like a business.

His new colleagues aren’t entirely sold on that description.

McGuinness and O’Connor say business practices can help with budgets and management, but a municipality isn’t supposed to turn a profit.

Miller agrees that the town’s primary job is serving residents.

Niven sees room for better financial discipline, but says running a municipality requires more than a business mindset.

“We have to remember that we’re providing public services and looking after a community, not running a business,” he said.

Burroughs, a former Oban Inn owner, sees similarities between running a business and managing the town, particularly when it comes to building a team, but also stressed that a municipality’s ultimate goal is to serve residents.

And although he’s served as lord mayor before, he says he won’t be telling the political newcomer how to do his job.

“I’m there to give my — not advice — my opinion, if asked,” he said.

For now, Burroughs says his first priority is getting the new council working together, something he believes will determine how much it can accomplish over the next four years.

“The residents put us there. So let’s keep in touch.”

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

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Business owners have message for council

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



Is there such as a thing as too many tourists? Some people who own stores in downtown NOTL so. FILE

As Niagara-on-the-Lake's newly elected council prepares to take office, Queen Street business owners have some requests for managing tourism: better crowd control, restrictions on temporary vendors and no pedestrian-only Queen Street.

Tourism NOTL has its own priorities, including public Wi-Fi in the heritage district, better signs and transportation improvements.

The organization, which parted ways with the NOTL Chamber of Commerce a few months ago, plans to present its 2027 business plan to the new council in January. Meanwhile, the chamber is developing its own strategic plan to guide its priorities as an independent organization.

Among those calling for changes are Bill and Lisa Pullman of It's All Fun & Games, a Queen Street shop selling games, puzzles, ice cream and other treats.

Their first request for the incoming council concerns vehicle access to the historic downtown.

"Do not make Queen Street pedestrian-only," they said in an email to The Lake Report.

The business owners said closing the street to traffic would block access to driveways, make deliveries nearly impossible and push vehicles onto residential side streets, while eliminating already limited parking spaces.

They also oppose temporary businesses, such as food trucks and pop-up shops, operating in the heritage core in direct competition with established storefronts "who already pay high taxes and rent," they said.

Their third request was for the town to address and initiate a provincial program that allows eligible property owners to get a municipal property tax reduction, between 10 to 40 per cent, called the Ontario Heritage Property Tax Relief program.

Other Queen Street businesses are raising different concerns.

For Darren Michlik, who owns Great Things, a high-end women's clothing boutique at 80 Queen St., with his wife, Sharon, too many tourists are visiting during the busy season.

The couple opened the store in 1996 and have watched the town change over the past 30 years. Michlik wants the town to better manage crowds and consider how they affect local businesses, residents and visitors staying for longer periods.

"We just find there's too many people coming in high season," he said.

The couple's clothing business has evolved to cater to customers seeking higher-end products, many who spend several days in town visiting restaurants, hotels, shops and spas, he said — sometimes spending $10,000 to $20,000 over a three- or four-day visit, he estimated.

"We follow the rule that 10 per cent of the people that visit the town account for 90 per cent of the spending," he said.

But Michlik worries that heavy day-trip traffic can detract from the luxury experience those visitors are seeking.

"They make it difficult for the high-rollers to enjoy because it gets so busy at times."

Michlik and his wife are lifelong residents who live about a five-minute walk from their store. He said they've watched the effects of overcrowding extend beyond Queen Street into residential neighbourhoods, including through short-term rentals.

"We get it at home and in the business," he said.

Nonetheless, Michlik said, tourism remains vital to his business, which he said has seen a welcome increase in American customers this year.

"Americans came back this year and supported us big time," he said. "We love Americans."

Robin Ridesic, the Exchange Brewery's owner, is open to expanding pedestrian areas as part of a broader plan to protect the town's heritage.

"I have a lot of faith in this new council preserving and supporting the heritage of our community," Ridesic said.

She hopes to see a meaningful heritage tax rebate for businesses and a heritage district plan addressing issues such as patios and expanded pedestrian areas.

"Our heritage is what makes us an attractive destination for visitors and needs to be protected — for the benefit of both our businesses and our residents," she said.

Kathy Weiss of Tourism NOTL said the destination organization wants the new council to focus on making tourism more beneficial to the community.

"Successful tourism is about more than attracting visitors," she said. "It's about ensuring that tourism delivers lasting economic benefits while managing its impact on our community."

Among the organization's priorities are better parking, transportation and visitor services, including clearer signage to help tourists find their way around, and public Wi-Fi in the heritage district.

Weiss said Wi-Fi would particularly help international tourists who may struggle to use the town's digital parking payment system without Canadian mobile data.

Tourism NOTL also wants council to move forward with the town's upcoming wayfinding signage strategy to make it easier for visitors to find their way around.

Another priority is encouraging tourism outside the busy summer months and across all five of NOTL's communities, helping businesses benefit from visitors throughout the year.

Weiss said the organization is also investing in research to better understand visitor spending, travel patterns and tourism's impact on local infrastructure.

"Ultimately, our goal is not simply to attract more tourists," Weiss said. "It's to build a stronger visitor economy that supports our businesses, strengthens our community and contributes positively to the quality of life that makes Niagara-on-the-Lake such a wonderful place to live, work and visit."

Meanwhile, the NOTL Chamber of Commerce is preparing to set its own priorities following its separation from Tourism NOTL.

"We are now focused on looking ahead," said interim executive director Terry Dow in an email.

Dow, who said she is looking forward to working with the new lord mayor and council, said the chamber has been establishing its direction as an independent organization and ensuring it continues to serve the local business community over the long term.

She said she will be in a better position to discuss the chamber's priorities once its board completes that "strategic planning process."

While their individual priorities differ, business owners are looking for municipal decisions that account for the realities of operating in one of NOTL's busiest tourism areas.

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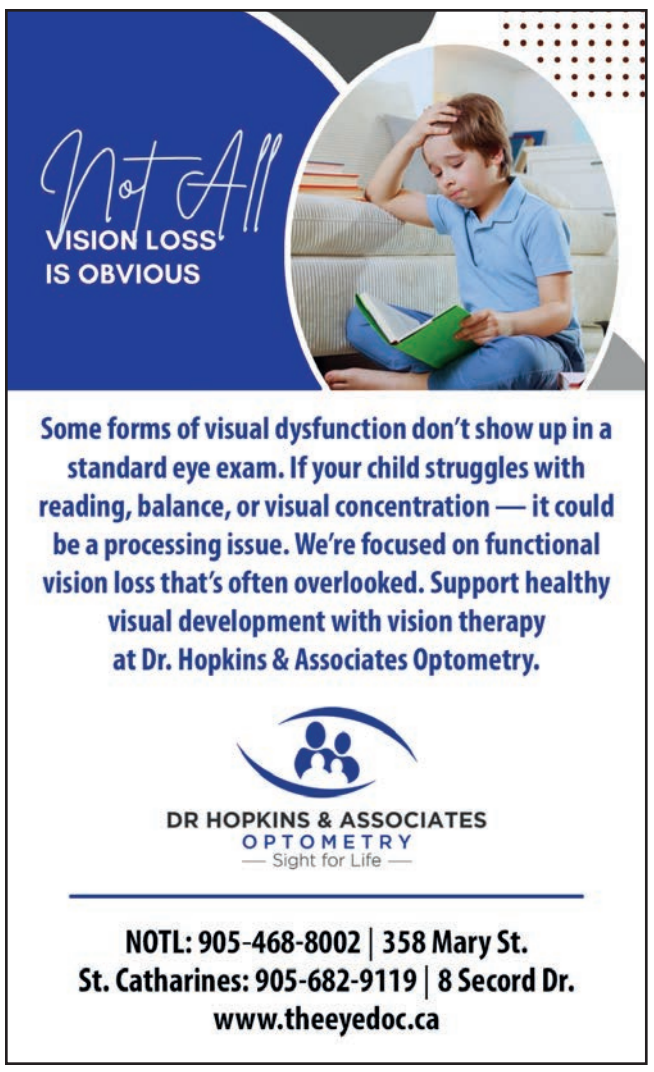
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Halloween decorations represent freedom for father who left Cuba

Continued from Front Page

garage in a couple of hours. He also hand-taped pipes for a fog machine.

All the hard work is worth it to see the looks of shock and surprise on neighbours' faces, Shannah Pumariega Sabater said.

"It's a labor of love, it really is."

In 2023, Miguel Pumariega Sabater spoke to The Lake Report about his childhood in Cuba, where Halloween decorations were strongly discouraged and could even be punishable by law.

"When I grew up, if you had any (decorations) you would go to jail. Anything that has to do with North American traditions, you go to jail," Pumariega Sabater told The Lake Report.

Since then, Pumariega Sabater has dedicated time to making Halloween memorable for the community and his two sons, Miguelito and Diego.

The family keeps its Christmas decorations to a minimum, choosing an elaborate Halloween setup over other luxury expenses.



Over at 25 Annmarie Dr., Miguel Pumariega Sabater's elaborate and spooky decorations have been a main attraction in the neighbourhood for several years. He's been a Halloween enthusiast since coming to Canada in 2012. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

"You don't need to be rich to do anything like this. No. You just have to plan yourself," he said.

Next year, the family hopes to make the display even bigger and better — if possible.

"I'm going to try to see if I can expand it," Miguel Pumariega Sabater said. "I'm going to see if I can convince my neighbours."

juliasacco@niagaranow.com

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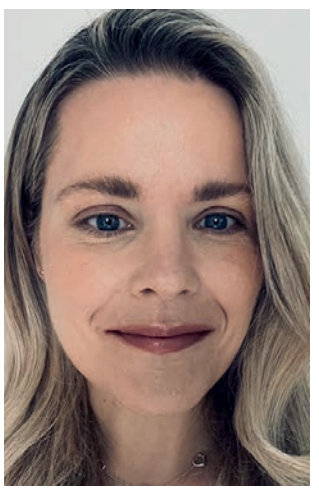
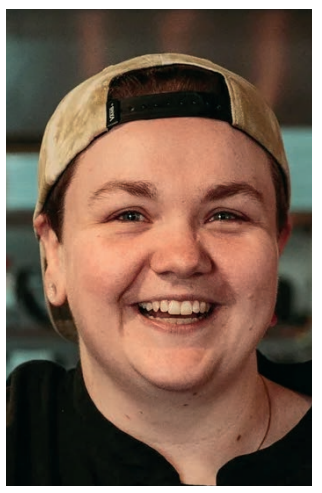
The Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association (NOTLRA) entered the 2026 municipal election with three objectives: helping residents make informed choices, increasing voter participation, and strengthening accountability. The results speak for themselves. Thanks to the engagement of residents, volunteers, and candidates, **voter turnout at 52.4%** was significantly higher than 2022 **and well above** the average of 37%.
Community volunteers recorded and published candidate election videos, creating a permanent public record that residents can revisit to evaluate commitments and performance. The YouTube videos were **viewed more than 1,100 hours.**

Election engagement is just one part of **our ongoing work.** We remain focused on the issues that matter most to residents and on **helping shape** Niagara-on-the-Lake's future. Over the coming term, the Association and its volunteer committees will continue advancing the issues residents identified as most important:
• Responsible growth and stronger planning controls to address the pressures of runaway development through implementation of the Community Planning Permit System (CPPS).
• Fiscal responsibility and **transparent budgeting** to ensure taxpayers receive value for every dollar spent.
• Climate resilience, including flooding mitigation and urgently needed upgrades to stormwater and wastewater infrastructure.
• Protecting **quality of life** through attention to seniors, youth, tourism management, traffic, parking, and neighbourhood livability.
We look forward to working constructively with Council, staff and residents while continuing to provide an independent voice for the community.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association
notlra.com/joinus

NOTLers among finalists in Women In Business Awards

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

From left, Antonia Mantonakis, Brock professor, is a finalist for the Excellence in the Public Sector Award; Katie Houghton, Willowbank's executive director, for the Excellence in the Not-for-Profit Sector Award; and Rachel Schalk, head chef at Bricks & Barley, for the Excellence in the Trades Award. SUPPLIED

Four women connected to Niagara-on-the-Lake are finalists for a set of annual awards that celebrate women in the world of business, entrepreneurship and non-profit.

Katie Houghton, Willowbank's executive director, Antonia Mantonakis, a Brock University professor, Rachel Schalk, a head chef in Virgil, and Kimberly Legros, owner of Brunch Beverages, are up for four separate awards part of the Women In Business Awards, hosted by the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce.

Houghton, the executive director of the School of Restoration Arts at Willowbank in Queenston, is one of six finalists for the Excellence in the Not-for-Profit Sector Award.

Students at Willowbank take part in a three-year diploma proram that teaches them about heritage conservation for homes, buildings and other cultural resources. The school operates as a non-profit and is located in the Willowbank Estate, a National Historic Site.

Houghton has been at Willowbank since 2022 and executive director since March 2025 — she says she's fortunate to work alongside a dedicated team.

"The opportunity to positively influence people and places is a privilege," she told The Lake Report via email. "I am proud to play a role in strengthening Willowbank School of Restoration Arts and its unique approach to heritage education through the hand, heart and head."

Mantonakis, a professor of marketing at Brock University, is among six finalists for the Excellence in the Public Sector Award. This year marks 20 years since she started working at Brock.

When she's not at the university, she's at home in NOTL, raising her two children, who attend Crossroads Public School.

She says she's "very honoured" to be a finalist for the award and said looking back on two decades at Brock, and all the ways both the institution and she as a professor have changed, has been incredible.

"So much has changed with how we interact with students, how we teach students, how we influence students and how learning takes place," she siad. "It's been a great change because one of the things that I really champion at Brock is experiential learning and getting involved in the community."

Over in Virgil, Schalk runs the kitchen at Bricks & Barley on Four Mile Creek Road. She's been working at the restaurant for five years and has been in the culinary world since graduating from Niagara College's culinary management program in 2014.

Before Bricks & Barley, she worked at Tabor Manor, a long-term care home in St. Catharines, cooking for and serving its residents. She started working there after COVID-19 hit and wanted to help out while restaurants were closed.

Once they began reopening, she wanted to return to the culinary industry and ended up at Bricks & Barley, which opened in 2019 and managed to survive the pandemic closures.

"It's a great restaurant, and it's been really good," she said, adding that her favourite part is mentoring co-workers who are new the working in a kitchen — it's a stepping stone on the path to her long-term goal of becoming a cooking instructor.

Legros, the owner and founder of Brunch Beverages, a line of low-sugar, low-alcohol cocktails, wine spritzers and ciders, is among five women nominated for the Entrepreneurship Award. She started her business six years ago during the pandemic.

"Building a small business comes with plenty of challenges, determination and a whole lot of work — making this recognition even sweeter," she wrote on Facebook.

The Women In Business Awards are set for Friday, Nov. 6 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Sheraton Fallsview Hotel in Niagara Falls, where the winners of the competitive award categories will be announced.

To read the full list of finalists, or register to attend the ceremony, visit gncc.ca/councils/women-in-niagara/wibas.

zahraa@niagaranow.com

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Join me at Inauguration on November 24 and at the first Council in Committee on December 8 as we begin a new era for our town, together.

Paid for by the Campaign to Elect Vaughn Goettler © 2026





Arts Collective exhibit mixes mediums

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report



The NOTL Arts Collective gives local artists a space to support each other and give feedback. A number of works by members of the collective are on display at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre until the end of November. JULIA SACCO

Flowing water, fields of flowers, abstract works of eclectic hues, saturated genre paintings and stained-glass arrangements — the artists of Niagara-on-the-Lake may have different muses and mediums, but as part of the NOTL Arts Collective, they come together with the shared experience of being passionate creatives.

On Sunday, the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre welcomed the NOTL Arts Collective for "Common Ground," an exhibition featuring the work of local artists, which debuted Nov. 1.

The collective includes professional artists, curators and galleries and represents the highest level of membership at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre.

The exhibition features works by 12 visual artists, the majority of whom live in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Julie Forrester-Clark said the collective gives artists an opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals.

"We feel quite lucky to have been introduced to each other and we've developed wonderful friendships."

Members often exchange ideas and offer feedback on one another's work, she said.

"If we meet, we can bring a painting and say 'What do you think of this?'" she said. "If something's wrong with it, we can figure it out."

Although NOTL's scenery provides inspiration, when it comes to its community, Julia Kane said, it could offer more support for those working in creative fields.

"I don't think Niagara-on-the-Lakes focuses on the arts, or the visual arts per se. We've got lots of other things going on artistically, but not visual arts."

The collective is a good starting point for building support for visual artists, Kane said — and she's grateful to be a part of it.

Darren Cranfore, who works primarily with charcoal and oil paints, said the collective has helped him continue developing his artistic skills.

"It's hard to find people who you connect with, to bounce ideas off of," he said.

"It's a nice way to get some ideas across to each other and bounce things around. So that's what's important to me, because I don't have an outlet other than the collective to share."

Cranfore said Niagara-on-the-Lake's surroundings help him relax and foster his creativity.

"I'm just grateful for this place. I just come down here, it's always beautiful, it's always gorgeous. Any time of year."

"Common Ground: NOTL Arts Collective Group Exhibit" runs until Sunday, Nov. 29 in the Hummel Family Room at the Pumphouse.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



‘Ghost Radio Theatre’ a welcome return to the heyday of radio dramas

GHOST RADIO THEATRE: SPOOKY STORIES FOR SMALL SPIRITS & HAUNTINGS FOR ADULT GHOULS
****
(out of five)

Shaw Artists’ Village.

Penny-Lynn Cookson
Special to The Lake Report

For those of us who grew up listening to radio, it took Halloween and the Shaw’s communication, outreach and education department to remind us of what we have been missing. That missing something has been using our ears and imaginations to focus and visualize stories, settings, characters, nature, the life of others and to feel wonder and share laughter while listening to radio.

During the golden age of radio, the 1930s through to the 1950s, there were spooky stories such as “The Shadow,” where the main character was invisible and where not seeing a ghost in a haunted house was as terrifying as seeing one.

“The Inner Sanctum,” sponsored by “Carter’s Little Liver Pills” opened with a creaky door. Boris Karloff, a.k.a. “Frankenstein,” was a frequent performer. Raymond, the host, promised thrills and chills and signed off in a menacing voice saying, “Pleasant dreeeeeams, hmm?”

Once on air, the radio drama was not just a play with sound effects; it was a drama that included dialogue, conflict, action, plus music and sound effects. Did we ever wonder how those sound effects were created? Who knew there were singing bowls, tuning forks, frog and cricket rasps and a variety of whistles, from sambas to owls and ducks to choo choo trains? We were about to learn.

About 30 adults and a sprinkling of children participated in how to create a live on-air spooky story for small spirits. First, we learned we would read signs held aloft by Jess Gorman. Next, we made rainsticks to shake from cardboard tubes filled with coiled aluminum foil, rice and plastic bits then sealed with taped paper at each end. On cue, we created the sounds of rain.

While stomping our feet we intoned “Double, double, toil and trouble, thunder clap and cauldron bubble.” We made whoosh sounds for magic spells and squishy sounds for slimy worms. A metal sheet was shaken to create thunder. Blowing through a straw into water created bubbling. A small wooden door, which the kids loved crawling through, gave the requisite knocks and slams. The crunching of celery emulated the cracking of bones.

Jenette Meehan and Sydney Alexander presented the narration and Matt Ratelle provided support intros and outros. There was much laughter capped by Halloween cupcakes.

In contrast, the evening presentation of a haunting for adult ghouls, began with a simple set of a chair and table radio topped by the sponsor’s bottle of bourbon, two glasses and the suggestion of easy at-home listening. We sat and listened to the mystery coming from the radio. It became a test of our ability to listen, focus and visualize a story.

Unsure of what next, we trooped into an adjacent area where we witnessed the same story, written by Jess Gorman and presented “on-air live” at their mics by Pragna Desai, Warren Bain and Sydney Alexander. We became more engaged because we saw the emotion, uncertainty, fear and panic on the faces of the characters as they became entangled in a terrifying web of the unknown.

Mary and Charlie are lured to a solitary house once part of a thriving village community. This house is occupied by Stella, who relates the strange story of a young woman, named Clara, suspected by the villagers of being a spectre. She is thrown into a well. Her cries for help are ignored. No one saves her.



Sound effects, performed live on stage, were a big part of making a radio drama feel real. At the Shaw’s “Ghost Radio Theatre,” screams of horror were provided by foley artist Jess Gorman. PENNY-LYNN COOKSON

Blue mushrooms sprout and grow around her well of death and spread into the gardens and fields. Once eaten by the villagers, they and the entire village disappear. Will Charlie and Mary survive? The discomfort of our own desolate extinction threat looms.

The exact timing, coordination and collaboration required of the narrators with Jess Gorman, Sabrina Merks and Matt Ratelle was critical and admirable. More radio history would have been an enlightening plus. What became apparent was what we have lost through our current obsessions with online tech and social media.

For children, lunch at home once meant listening to the soaps of “Ma Perkins” and “Pepper Young’s Family.” There were variety shows such as Edgar Bergen with his puppet Charlie McCarthy as well as vaudeville’s Amos and Andy. How innocent they seem now.

There were cowboy shows with Roy Rogers singing “Tumblin’ Tumbleweed.” The big bands of Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway and “The Kate Smith Hour” kept our parents dancing. What was New Year’s Eve without Guy Lombardo and His Royal Canadians playing “Auld Lang Syne”?

What about the mystery and detective stories of Raymond Chandler’s Philip Marlowe and the hair-raising chills of Charlie Chan solving crimes helped by #1 and #2 sons and, brought to you by Feen-a-Mint, The Famous Laxative Chewing Gum “used by millions”?

Why not forget doom-scrolling and return to radio? Who knows, it might just bring about a new golden age.

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

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Costumes at the Commons



Families came out to Clayfield Commons the afternoon of Halloween to take part in the Children's Costume Parade, hosted by the Market at the Village. These four were declared winners in the costume contest: Stephane Aubin, who looks ready to sail the high seas, Anteia Lewis, 7, appearing regal in her Belle costume, 18-month-old Fitzpatrick Perlstein, who just might be NOTL's new Grape King, and Lennon Pepe, 7, showing there's no such thing as too much pink. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

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The human side of the paranormal at Fort George

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report



For more than 30 years, Kyle Upton's been taking visitors through the hallowed halls of the Fort George National Historic Site every October, sharing stories of some of lives who once a part of the battalion defending this fort — and tales of those who've felt their presence long after they left this Earth. JULIA SACCO

Beyond its wine, agriculture and natural beauty, Niagara-on-the-Lake has a darker side.

Every spooky season, the Friends of Fort George explores the town's relationship with fear and death through ghost tours at the historic fort.

Kyle Upton, a ghost tour guide, began leading the walks in 1994.

Of all the places he has explored for paranormal activity at the fort, Upton said he feels the strongest connection to the soldiers' barracks.

"They say that history is something you don't get until you've lived some of it," Upton said.

The barracks give visitors a chance to connect with the happiness, sadness and suffering experienced on the grounds.

"When they come in, it clicks and they look around the room and they go 'This was a home,'' Upton said.

"Every name that is on those bunks from 200 years ago had that commonality of human experience."

Some of those souls from centuries ago still make appearances during the tours.

Peter Mitchell led Sunday night's group. Since starting work at the fort in the 1980s, Mitchell has had his own paranormal experiences and heard plenty of stories from others.

One recurring story involves six-year-old Sarah Ann Taylor.

During the tours' first year, a woman who claimed to be psychic told Mitchell about a little girl with shoulder-length blonde hair wearing a chemise.

"The little girl walked down those stairs, sat for a spell on the stairs and then watched the group, then continued to come down the stairs and took up a position beside the guide," he said.

The woman said the girl's name was Sarah Ann. Later, a ghost tour group exploring St. Mark's graveyard earlier in its trip discovered a tombstone bearing the name "Sarah Ann Taylor."

The group told the Friends of Fort George that the headstone identified her as the daughter of Troop Sgt.-Maj. Tracy of the King's Dragoon Guards.

Over the next few years, Sarah Ann's description came up repeatedly.

"People kept asking, 'Well, who's that little girl walking down the pathway there without shoes? Where are her parents? Who's the little girl over by the cottage? Who's the little girl over by the officer's quarters?'" Mitchell said.

Sarah Ann appeared again during Sunday's tour.

Lynn Pearson of Port Robinson said she was familiar with the paranormal, having lived in a 172-year-old house for quite some time.

At the end of Sunday's tour, Pearson approached Mitchell to tell him she had seen Sarah Ann.

"She just kept kind of peering around — I could see her between the pickets," she said.

Pearson said the experience was pleasant and did not particularly unsettle her, as she had encountered spirits before.

"The gentleman who built our house, he used to be in our house when we first moved in," she said. "We would hear him, you know, walking on the porch. He was smoking cigars."

Pearson said the smell of cigars disappeared after she asked the spirit to stop smoking.

The ghost tours at Fort George are sold out for the Halloween season, but return in the spring and summer.

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SPORTS

NOTL's Margot Devlin conquers NY Marathon for 14th time

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report





Left: Margot Devlin took this selfie that shows some of the runners at the start of the 2026 New York Marathon. In all, more than 61,000 people participated. SUPPLIED Right: With another successful run added to her collection, Niagara-on-the-Lake's Margot Devlin holds her medal from Sunday's NY Marathon. SHAUN DEVLIN

Slow and steady finishes the race and that's always been the story of Niagara-on-the-Lake marathoner Margot Devlin's running career.

On Sunday she completed the New York City Marathon for the 14th time. In all, she has done more than 20 marathons.

"Well, I made it," she told The Lake Report afterward her latest conquest. "I wasn't first, but I wasn't last, so job done."

With more than 61,000 people competing, she finished in 58,879th spot, according to the marathon's official results.

Running in the 70 to 74 age group, Devlin was 103rd of 127 participants.

But for the veteran marathoner, who trains on the streets of NOTL, it's never been about what place she finishes. It's about finishing the race. Period.

Her time for the 42-kilometre run was 6 hours 50 minutes. "I am slow but I did better than last year, so I am happy," she said.

Her husband Shaun accompanies her to races to cheer her on and provide moral support.

With one more New York finish, Devlin will qualify for membership in a very exclusive group, the Streakers Club.

Sponsored by the New York Road Runners, the club is open solely to those who have completed 15 or more Big Apple marathons.

In addition, on future race days members are able to warm up in a heated tent on Staten Island, sheltered from the elements. That's also where celebrity participants hang out before the race.

Actress Jennifer Connelly and former NFLer Tiki Barber were among the more famous runners who took part this year, Devlin said, though she didn't spot either of them.

"One year Ethan Hawke was in the security line with me but they whisked him off to the VIP tent," she added.

The atmosphere for the New York race is always electric, like a mammoth street party, as thousands of people line the route.

"There were two million spectators cheering us on. It was bigger and noisier than ever before," she said.

At one point along the way, people were offering vodka shots to runners. "A woman running beside me downed two shots. I hope she made it to the end. I didn't see her again."

The finish line is uphill in Central Park, which was "brutal after all the hills we ran. New York is quite hilly." But the long treks across the city's bridges and their elevation can be even tougher, she noted.

Along the route, quite a few "counter-terrorism officers with very large guns" were out this year, but "we never heard if there was a threat of any kind," she said.

With New York race number 14 "done and dusted," now the training starts for her next big race.

Along with a record 100,000 other runners, Devlin plans to compete in the London Marathon for the eighth time next April.

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Join in for Remembrance Day ceremony

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

Things are quieter these days over at Niagara-on-the-Lake's branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Organizers are now working from a trailer outside its King Street building following August's flood.

Branch 124 is organizing the town's Nov. 11 ceremonies in Old Town and Queenston and running its poppy campaign despite extensive damage to its main floor.

"We're still doing all the stuff the Legion does at poppy time, even though we don't have an operational building per se," said board member Chrystal Haverstock.

The Aug. 2 storm left more than a foot of water inside the building. ServiceMaster crews moved in after the water receded, removing damaged drywall, flooring and the bar. Restoration will begin once the Legion's insurer completes its damage assessment.



The Legion's Remembrance Day ceremonies are Nov. 11 at 11 a.m. at the cenotaph on Queen Street and 1 p.m. at the Niagara Township Cenotaph in Queenston.

"We mostly have an empty shell now," Haverstock said. "The furnace and water heater have been replaced and all the materials for disposal have been removed from the clubroom. The last phase of the tear-down will be the cleaning of the entire main floor."

The Legion initially moved its daily operations to the building's second floor. Haverstock suggested bringing in the trailer as the poppy campaign began, making its temporary office easier for visitors to reach without crossing the damaged floor and climbing stairs.

The second floor is now mainly being used to store poppy wreaths for the ceremonies.

"We're actually doing better than you'd think," she said. "I'd say we're pretty organized with the challenges at hand, doing better than I thought."

In Old Town, the annual parade of legionnaires and others in uniform will take place on Queen Street before participants gather at the clock tower cenotaph.

Haverstock expects Polish First World War re-enactors to participate, commemorating the soldiers who trained at Camp Kościuszko in Niagara-on-the-Lake from 1917 to 1919.

The ceremony includes two minutes of silence at 11 a.m., followed by the laying of poppy wreaths.

Participants normally take a break for food and refreshments at the Legion between ceremonies. With the building closed, they will instead meet at the NOTL Community Centre before heading to Queenston.

The Queenston ceremony begins at 1 p.m. at the Niagara Township Cenotaph, which honours local men who died in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War.

While the logistics have changed, Haverstock said the meaning of Remembrance Day remains the same.

"Niagara-on-the-Lake is a war town," she said. "Many people that fought and perished through the three wars are commemorated on that cenotaph, and the families still live in town. They're honouring their family members."

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The beach in ... November?



Visitors stroll along the waterfront path at Queen's Royal Park in Niagara-on-the-Lake as autumn leaves blanket the shoreline and the park's white gazebo overlooks Lake Ontario. DAVE VAN DE LAAR





Halloween ghost walks sell out every spooky season in Old Town

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report



A guide who goes by the Black Widow stands on Queen Street outside the construction site where the Royal George Theatre, one of the walk's haunted stops, stood until it came down this summer, to make way for a newer, modernized theatre. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

Visitors from as far as Kincardine and Buffalo, N.Y., followed a lantern-carrying guide through Old Town on Halloween night this year to hear ghost stories about what some believe to be Canada's most haunted town.

Shirley Stark, who has worked 13 years at Ghost Walks' Queen Street shop, said October is the company's busiest time of year. More than 200 people joined the walks every Friday and Saturday night in October, she said.

Stark said Ghost Walks didn't come up with the reputation. She first heard it from a group of Irish seniors whose cross-Canada tour book called Niagara-on-the-Lake the most haunted town in the country.

Since then, more and more visitors have repeated the claim to her.

"It wasn't us that made that up," she said. "I don't know how they determine that, whether it goes per household or per square foot."

Stark believes the haunted reputation traces back to the town's first settlers, who lost everything twice. They were Loyalists who sided with Britain in the American Revolution and fled their homes in what is now the United States, she said.

American troops who had occupied the town burned all but three of its buildings when they left on Dec. 10, 1813, according to the U.S. National Park Service.

"Some of the people who originally built it were still alive and still had to rebuild it," Stark said.

Battles at Queenston Heights in 1812 and Fort George in 1813, both inside today's town limits, killed more than 150 soldiers. Many of the stories guides tell on the walks come from that war.

Several guides led groups through Old Town on Halloween night. One guide, who goes by "The Black Widow," stopped her group at the Olde Angel Inn, where she told the legend of Capt. Colin Swayze, a British officer said to have died in 1813 when American soldiers bayoneted the cellar barrel where he hid.

The guide said the captain's ghost would frighten guests for two weeks at a time, then go quiet for months. The inn's owner eventually noticed the frights began each time the British flag outside went out for dry cleaning, which took two weeks. The inn now keeps two flags so one is always flying — the guide said the captain has been calmer since.

Guests often report drinks flying off tables at the inn, including a beer on Oct. 30, Stark said.

Stark once wondered whether a British spirit was picking on American beer, so she started tracking which drinks went over. The first drink to go flying after that was a glass of local wine, and the next was a glass of water.

In late October, a honeymooner who described herself as sensitive to spirits found the Prince of Wales Hotel too eerie to sleep in, staff said. The couple had booked three nights there but moved to another hotel.

"I've never ever heard of anything bad happening to anybody," Stark said.

Guests and employees often stop by the Queen Street shop to describe strange things that happened to them in town. Some bring photos they say show ghosts.

Stark said she doesn't want a town this historic to be known only for its ghosts.

"They want to hear about the real people behind it all," she said.

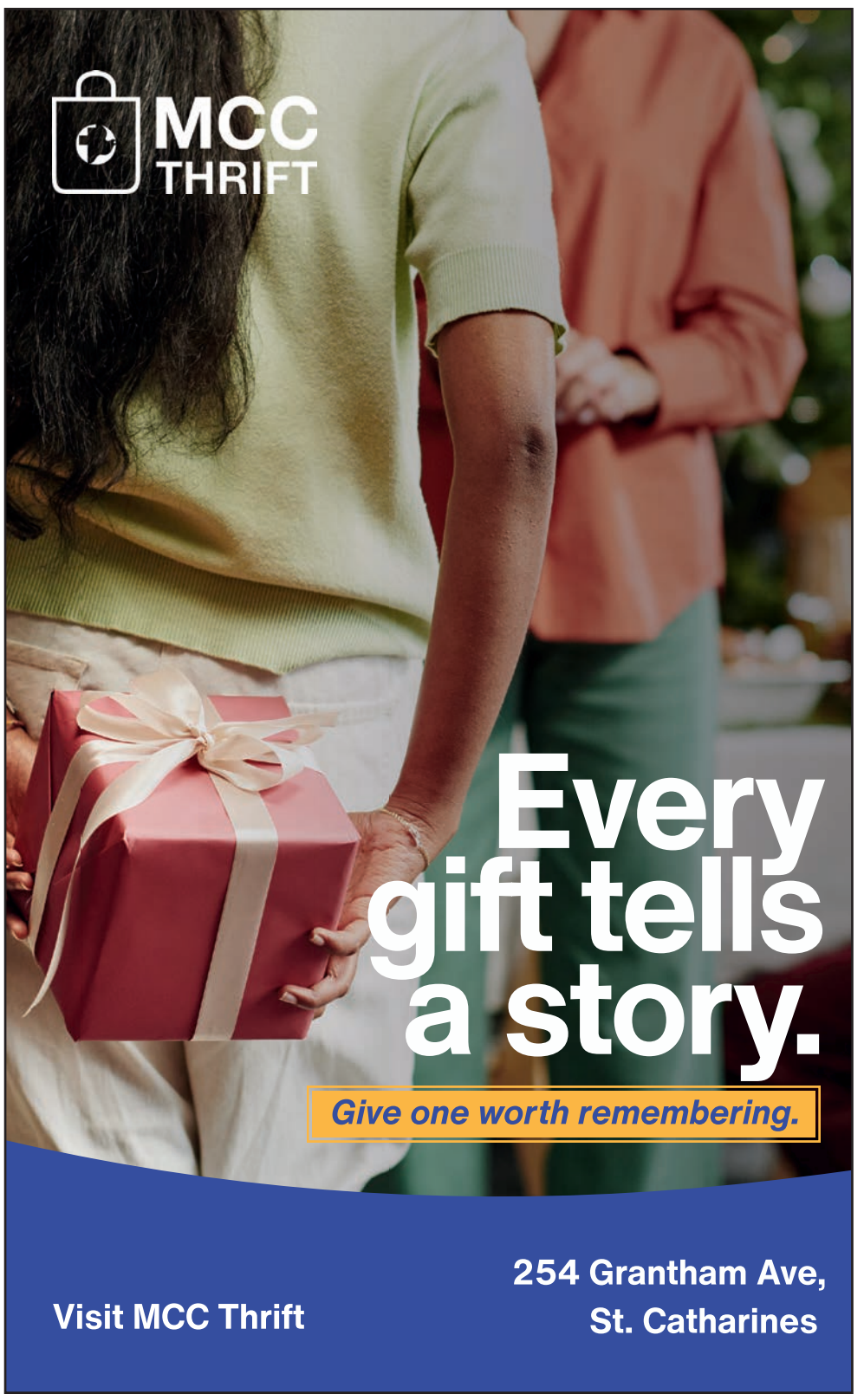
The Royal George Theatre, one of the walk's haunted stops, was demolished this summer to make way for a new theatre set to open in fall 2028.

"It's a travesty," Stark said. "We'll never see it again."

Guides now explain the history of the prior building next to the construction site for tourists who never saw the old theatre.

The 90-minute walks will continue every night until Nov. 7, then on Fridays and Saturdays through December.

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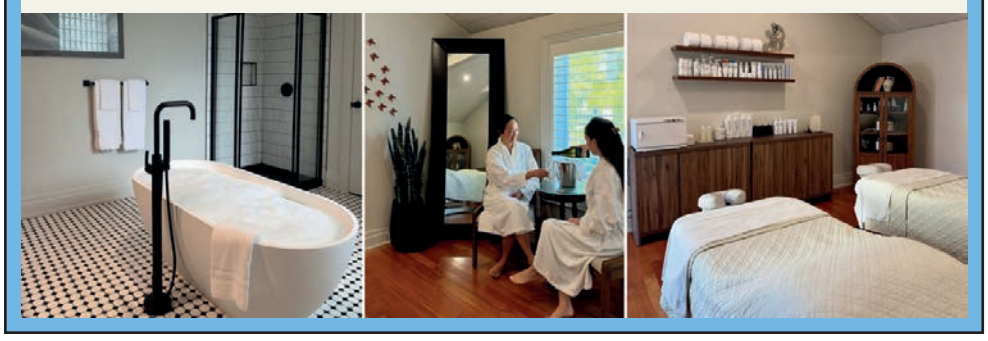
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The Lake Report

OPINION

TLR

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- C.S. Lewis

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Hear ye, hear ye

Town Crier Tom Pekar addresses visitors gathered outside the Courthouse, where a cascading display of handcrafted poppies honours veterans and those who served ahead of Remembrance Day. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Editorials

NOTL embraces easy, efficient online voting

Kevin MacLean
Editor Emeritus

Congratulations to Niagara-on-the-Lake for again having the highest voter turnout in Niagara Region for last week's municipal election.

More than half of all eligible voters — 52 per cent — cast ballots, up four percentage points from 2022, when Gary Zalepa defeated Betty Disero. But it was down from the amazing 59 per cent who turned out in 2018 when Disero beat incumbent Pat Darte.

This year, for the first time, voters could make their choice via the internet and it is an option that was broadly embraced.

In all, some 51 per cent of all votes were registered online.

While some remain skeptical about the practice, nearly 5,000 people in NOTL chose it.

Kudos to the outgoing council for approving the measure in 2025 and to the staff of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for making it work.

Several municipalities, including Niagara Falls, couldn't bring themselves to adopt online voting. Yet.

They should. It is fast, efficient and seamless. And it appeared to help speed up the results.

One thing it doesn't yet tell us, though, is which NOTL neighbourhood online voters reside in.

That's something perhaps the Town of NOTL can refine in time for the next election in 2030.

A neighbour chooses change – and hope

Kevin MacLean
Editor Emeritus

Hope.

Eighteen years ago, when a young man named Barack Obama inspired Americans to install the first Black president in the White House, the word "Hope" on posters and T-shirts and elsewhere encapsulated the feelings and dreams of many around the world.

We don't normally comment of American affairs, but what happens in the nation just a few kilometres from the shores of Niagara-on-the-Lake affects the lives of all Canadians, something we've seen first-hand.

As with Obama in 2008, perhaps the results of Tuesday's mid-term elections in the United States will similarly inspire and help end the gong show that has been the second Donald Trump administration.

Unfortunately, knowing what Trump and his mindless sycophants will actually do remains an unpredictable and dangerous game.

This week, the idea of nuking Iran was alleged to be on the table post-election as a possible option for the U.S. military, a move that would have untold consequences for all mankind.

If, in fact, it has been considered by Trump, that would be a horrific but somehow unsurprising bookend to what has been one of the saddest and most unsettling periods in American history.

What we do know for sure is that historians will not be kind to Trump or his enablers.

Ever since he was first elected in 2016, but especially over the past two years, we have witnessed a litany of criminal and ethically abhorrent choices that have made the once respected United States a pariah in the eyes of many around the word.

We have all seen his ridiculous treatment of Canada, his shameless internal corruption and grifting, the use of ICE and its Nazi-like tactics, his constant lying, racist and demeaning behaviour toward anyone different or who questions him, his faux-Christian pandering and demanding of allegiance to himself and his bloated ego. And that's just a partial list.

His behaviour gave permission to many Americans to follow suit — as many did and still do, mindlessly worshipping at the altar of Trump.

But the results of Tuesday offer at least a glimmer of hope.

The election of so many Democrats thanks to the blue tsunami that swept across America could help reset and re-establish some civility and stability in that embattled country. If the Democrats don't blow it.

While millions still chose to support Republican candidates, often because "we always vote red," thankfully millions more repudiated Trump's leadership and the candidates who chose to align themselves with him.

For the Senate, Michigan elected Abdul El-Sayed, Texas chose James Talarico, Georgia opted for Jon Ossoff, South Carolina went with Dr. Annie Andrews, New Hampshire picked Chris Pappas, Iowa elected paralympian Josh Turek. And there are plenty more.

In governor races, Texas chose Gina Hinojosa, New Mexico picked Deb Haaland, Georgia installed Keisha Lance Bottoms, Ohio elected Dr. Amy Acton and Iowa went with Rob Sand.

All are relatively young, energetic Democrats. And many of them won despite enduring racist, petty, lying and virulent attacks by Republicans who simply had no better answer.

Like New York's Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (often just referred to as AOC), they may be key to the future of U.S. political leadership.

Some of them, like Ossoff and AOC, already have been talked about as future presidential candidates. Time will tell.

But, in the meantime, they all offer much-needed hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel after the calamitous years of Trumpian rule.

Hope won't undo all that Trump has wrought. But it's a start.

kevin@niagaranow.com



LETTER OF THE WEEK

Thanks for keeping electorate informed

Dear editor:

I am writing to express my sincere appreciation for The Lake Report's outstanding coverage and community engagement during the recent municipal election.

While political campaigns often focus heavily on traditional door-knocking, the reality of modern local politics is that the true heavy lifting happens where the community actually congregates to discuss the issues.

The Lake Report provided that vital forum. By listening to the community and printing the letters to the editor that supported the incoming lord mayor and councillors, your publication gave a powerful voice to everyday residents.

Combined with the active discussions across local digital and Facebook communities, your coverage achieved a massive reach, landing directly in local households and businesses. That local reach is precisely what informed, engaged and mobilized voters who might otherwise have been missed.

Thank you for your dedication to robust local journalism, for providing a platform for grassroots perspectives and for the behind-the-scenes work your team did to keep our community informed throughout this election cycle.

Judith Barnes
NOTL

Rich, old and feisty. Our new sheriff



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

I probably mentioned losing my mind a couple of times, getting elected and ending up in Parliament.

Wow, I thought as I first walked into that chamber. An MP. The national agenda. This is big.

The aura was reinforced one day as I wandered down a corridor and the prime minister — cocooned in his entourage — spotted me. He called me over to meet the former president of Russia, a bear of a man who had just stood on a tank outside the Kremlin to thwart a military coup and hasten the fall of the Soviet Union.

He pumped my hand thinking I must be important. And I felt so.

Then my office staff called with an urgent problem. Constituents back in the riding were calling that winter day to report a major problem: snow had not been adequately plowed from the north hill. So, what did I intend to do about it? My credibility hung in the balance.

It was a reminder of what matters to folks. Russia and foreign policy are irrelevant when your car's stuck. The level of government that matters most is the one you live with every day.

This brings us to that election we just had.

It was a corker. The new mayor siphoned off 55 per cent of the votes, smoking the heir apparent who had been second-in-charge. All the reoffering councillors that had voted to erect that giant hotel in the middle of a residential 'hood were punted.

The only candidate who had promised to hit the brakes on development won big. All the politicians running for re-election who had opposed the monstrous new build on the main street (the Royal George complex) were successful.

That was a clear message: stop. Two hulking tower cranes in this little place are two too many.

Well, what now? As lord mayor, Vaughn Goettler has a heap of expectations on his shoulders. Here are some of his answers to my direct post-ballot questions.

Q: You promised people you'd hit the brakes on new development. Will you?

A: People want me to have a healthy pause on development. They think things are moving too quickly without regard for the consequences. For me, that's problematic. And for the community.

Q: Are you against the new hotel and condo development on the Rand Estate?

A: Absolutely. I just don't know why we have to come back at it again. It just doesn't make sense to me.

Q: Airport expansion — a hard no?

A: Well, not on improving it, but a hard no on expansion, until residents of this town tell me they're dying for an airport. So far I heard that from, literally, only three people.



The soon-to-be lord mayor of NOTL, Vaughn Goettler.
GARTH TURNER

Q: Was it wrong for town staff, not elected people, to make basic decisions about the Parliament Oak hotel and Royal George projects? Was there enough oversight before approval?

A: The exiting council created a void, abdicating their responsibility. Staff filled that void. They assumed a role that was too big because council wasn't doing it. This should not have been done.

Q: What should happen to the old hospital site? A tourist parking garage or community space?

A: We have to save community space for the community. The economics of that parking garage will never work.

Q: How will you stand up to the region and the province with its expansive Niagara Strategy to double tourism?

A: I'll meet with all the mayors in the area to oppose amalgamation, and I plan to lead that fight. I'm not opposed to tourism, but if we try to squeeze too many more golden eggs out of it, we may just kill that goose. People come here for what it is, not for it to look like Mississauga. In fact, they're leaving there to come here. We can't forget it.

Q: What do you say to those who feel we now have a rich, old guy from the Old Town in charge?

A: Yes, I'm well-off. I am old, and I can't change that. But the town gave me a mandate and I'm here for everybody. I will prove to them there's much more substance to me than being an old rich guy.

Q: Are you concerned that unelected staff members who don't live here are running the place? Do you agree with CAO Nick Ruller telling staff they can't talk to me?

A: As I said, they filled the void left by the last council. Yes, that concerns me. Staff has to work for council, to make it the best it can be — they should help us make the best decisions, not make them for us. We have to get the game rules right, including freedom of information and transparency. We all need to be accountable. Without a healthy press we are at risk. We will become much more open and transparent.

There you go. We have a new sheriff. And you know who to call the next time the sewer backs up into your basement. He asked for it.

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

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RIDDLE ME THIS

This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style
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Last issue category: WORD ORIGINS

Clue: A Latin word for a round-bodied fish swam full speed ahead into English to become this naval weapon.

Answer: What is a torpedo?

Answered first by: Sue Rautenberg

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Tuija Johansson, Angie Woods, Jane Morris, James Wells, Bob Wheatley, Bill Hamilton, Emma Balsas, Lynda Collet, Nancy Paul, Jeff Lake, Esther VanGorder, Hedy Wiebe, Nancy Rocca, Hugh Lundy, Sam Pockele, Sheila Meloche, Claudia Grimwood, Peter Molson, Randie Topps, Donna Pearce, Katie Reimer, Margie Enns, Wade Durling, Marla Percy, Paula Quinn, Thomas Bartsch, Ana-Marija Petrunic

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OPINION

Between fitting in and standing out



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall
Columnist

As in any debate, there are always a spectrum of positions.

There are those who occupy the extreme opposing camps which reflexively argue the purity of their concepts must be maintained without deviation or compromise.

Then there are those who, while they may favour one camp over the other, are less inclined to be completely dogmatic and favour a somewhat less extreme advocacy.

Finally, there is a large group in the centre who can see both sides of the argument, are willing to cherry-pick, often modifying the precepts trotted out by the opposing philosophies to arrive at a position that will work for them.

In architecture, the two extreme opposing camps can be captured by the common labels of deconstructivism (or autonomous architecture) and contextualism.

Those who adhere to the principles of deconstructivism/autonomous espouse the belief that architectural design should intentionally break away from the surrounding environment.

Instead of a goal to achieving harmony within its setting, it embraces fragmentation, non-rectilinear shapes and controlled chaos to purposefully disrupt the context of a site (streetscape, neighborhood, etc.) to challenge traditional ideas of space and form.

In other words, a building's design should be dictated purely by its own internal logic, geometry and artistic form, completely independent of its surroundings or historical context.

I will refrain from boring you with explaining the early 20th-century roots of this movement (Russian constructivism and modernism), except by observing that central to its core is the tabula rasa concept that suggests that every site should be levelled to create a blank slate, thereby allowing the architect to design with uninhibited creativity "on the land" — ignoring the surrounding context — rather than "with the land."



The Royal Ontario Museum in fall 2021. SOURCED

In short, the deconstructivist/autonomous camp, like their forbearers, consider the architect as an artist whose creative expression must not be inhibited by any existing constraints, be that landscape, streetscape or neighbourhood character.

On the other extreme, the contextualism camp suggests that new architectural designs must rigidly conform to an approach that shapes a structure in direct response to its physical, historical, cultural and environmental surroundings, rather than treating the building as an isolated object.

In the mid-20th century, Robert Venturi, in his 1950 master's thesis, stated that "existing conditions around the site that should become a part of any design problem should be respected." Context, in other words, "is what gives a building its meaning."

By the time he published his book, "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture" in 1966, Venturi's original proposition had been expanded and refined into the suggestion that new buildings should be considered as parts of a composite urban fabric — additions to a "difficult whole" — and designs should enfold the compatible marriage of new with old.

On the face of it, that sounds pretty good. However, the unbridled pursuit of design compatibility could quite easily lead to facadism — an endless Disney-esque reproduction of phony historic streetscapes that would reduce the architect to a mere copyist or forger of the past.

In the book "Collage City" (1978), Colin Rowe proposed a middle ground between the two extreme camps. He flatly rejected both tabula rasa and rigid adherence to blindly copying the past.

Instead, rather than treating buildings as isolated "objects in space," Rowe argued that architecture must be designed in continuous dialogue with the "texture" of a city; that is, the existing built environment, history and urban fabric as informed by figure-ground analysis (mapping solid buildings against open voids/streets) to read the geometry, density and spatial grain of a historic city and other equally important gathered data.

Rowe's "radical middle" was a compromise that allowed architects to create new design concepts, provided that the new buildings would respond to the context of established urban fabric.

Now, as most long-term readers of this column may know, I happen to occupy a position similar to Rowe's definition of contextualism.

I believe that architects should have creative licence in their design process, provided that the end result (the new building) speaks to the landscape and respects the existing texture of the streetscape/neighbourhood.

Clearly, there are many parameters that need to be defined and subsequently observed during design to ensure the new building, when completed, will be contextually compatible.

Consider the sideyard setback provisions in the zoning bylaw that establish the minimum distance between buildings on a street. If that minimum distance has been rigorously observed in the past, the result will be a pleasing rhythm of solids (buildings) and voids (spaces between buildings), which will lend predictability and grace to the streetscape.

However, when a minor variance to the sideyard setbacks is granted (typically associated with greater lot coverage by a larger building), the rhythm is disrupted — generally to the detriment of the shouldering neighbours.

And that's just one simple example.

Stay tuned next week we'll identify and explore contextual design parameters in more depth.

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

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ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

To paraphrase Victor Hugo, an idea whose time has come can be very powerful.

So many great thinkers have said approximately the same thing, so it must be true. Sir Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King Jr, Henry Ford, and others have all offered their version of this quotation.

Now, this aphorism is playing out right here in our Niagara-on-the-Lake. With no fanfare, quietly, efficiently and colourfully. I refer to the NOTL Museum's Poppy Project.

Last past week, awesome poppy displays popped up at the Old Court House, the museum, Branch 124 of the Royal Canadian Legion and RiverBrink Art Museum in Queenston. I urge you to take a wee tour, and be prepared to be overwhelmed. (And thank you to Davey Tree Experts for their assistance and guidance installing the necessary netting.)

This rambler will now refer to and quote a one-pager received from the leader of our local museum's poppy brigade. I couldn't say it better myself.

The NOTL Museum's Poppy Project began in 2021 with a donation of some 1,500 handmade poppies from the Niagara Falls History Museum. I have been told that the overarching concept started at the Tower of London a fairly long time ago.

Since then, our Niagara museum's effervescent and irrepressible community engagement co-ordinator, Barbara Worthy, with over 40 volunteers, have been proving that a great idea at the perfect time is powerful.



Yvonne Causer helps create the cascading poppy display that now drapes the Old Courthouse ahead of Remembrance Day. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Just this year, they have knitted, sewn, crocheted and handcrafted over 17,000 poppies. Hard to believe, but true.

Locally, the Poppy Project also includes nearly 100 red poppy wreaths displayed at local businesses, along with purple poppy wreaths remembering the millions of animals that served during wartimes.

The detailed logistics of this project must be so intimidating. For example, after Remembrance Day, if there has been rain (and there will be some precipitation activity), where do they hang poppies by the thousands to dry? Store them where for future years?

This is an unusual and important instalment of Ross's Ramblings. Without the military service and sacrifice of so many Canadians, not that long ago, we would not be having all this fun.

Every year, the local Legion branch has their poppy campaign, a major fundraiser to support Branch 124 activities and services.

This year, please dig a little deeper when donating for a poppy from a local volunteer or from a strategically placed donation box around town.

And spend some serious remembering time at the Veterans' Garden in front of our museum on Castlereagh Street. Each and every local veteran is individually remembered. It is not my intention to oversell, but please, carve out some time.

And think about joining our museum, and the General Nelles Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. It's Branch 124, on King Street near Veterans Memorial Park — which makes sense, eh?

Let's conclude with a few lines from Lt.-Col. John McRae:

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place, and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard above the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.
Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch, be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Very respectfully offered.

Be kind.

rossrocket9@gmail.com

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OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Democracy won the midterm battle, but the war is far from over



Keith McNenly
Special to The Lake Report



A symbolic blue wave sweeps through Washington, but Donald Trump still holds the pen — and the presidency. CHATGPT

The U.S. midterm Tuesday night was historic: a blue tsunami for Democrats in Congress, the Senate, governorships and state-houses. The good news for Canada is that, even if Donald Trump tries to blame us for interference, our targeting of a few border and bourbon states could not possibly have caused this dramatic reawakening of the American conscience. I guess we're off the hook for this one.

The bad news is that Trump is still there for two more years, with the power of the administration, the Department of Justice, the Department of War and the sharpie pen for executive orders.

This election was a repudiation of Trump, Republican corruption and cruelty, and the harm done to the American economy. Don't get too excited that it was a similar repudiation of his deleterious effects on citizens of other nations — it was not. This was a battle at home in the U.S., not on the world stage.

Perhaps we will see the old America we loved as a neighbour and brother rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the past 10 years of Trump, and rejoin the family of world democracies. Only time will tell.

There may be liberation or entrenchment. A wounded president is not necessarily a subdued one, and he has much to lose — and much to pay for.

Everything the world and Canada have endured was done in less than two years. He has more than two years remaining. Around 55 Senate seats is not enough to remove him: conviction requires 67 votes. It's unlikely that one or two Republicans would join Democrats to turf him out; a dozen is simply not possible.

It's hard to know where the pendulum of American politics points at the moment, only that it swings between the parties with regularity. Unlike Canada's parliamentary system, where a vote of non-confidence can send an unpopular or crooked prime minister and government packing for a fresh election, the U.S. Constitution is not so flexible.

Americans have a president for four years, come hell or high water. There are checks and balances, including impeachment, but it failed last time after he sent a mob to storm Congress. Neither the courts nor congressional victims could bring him to account. Clearly, the constitutional power balance tilts toward Republicans.

Still, this moment is significantly encouraging. The American public took hold of the political pendulum and gave it a mighty shove to the left — toward love over hate, justice over corruption and strength over submission.

It's been a long fight, and the world will sleep better tonight. But the arc will begin its return, even before the new Congress is seated, and we should keep the Niagara sparkling wine corked for a little while yet.

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Keith McNenly was the chief administrator of the Town of Mono for 41 years.



No place can thrive with high-volume tourism forever



Bruce Gitelman says NOTL needs to focus on attracting the right kind of tourist, not just more numbers. FILE

Dear editor:

A new term of council gives Niagara-on-the-Lake an opportunity to ask an important question about tourism.

Not whether we want tourism. We clearly do.

Tourism supports our hotels, wineries, restaurants, shops, the Shaw Festival and many of the amenities that residents themselves enjoy. It is part of the economic and cultural fabric of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The better question: what kind of tourism do we want, and how do we make sure that it remains successful and sustainable for the next generation?

Many of the difficult issues our community has faced in recent years may appear at first to be separate problems: traffic and parking, short-term rentals replacing homes, neighbourhood concerns about noise, pressure on heritage properties, development that can change the character of residential areas and the growing demands placed on municipal infrastructure and services.

But perhaps they should not be considered separately.

Many of them lead back to the same underlying question: what kind of tourism are we encouraging, what benefits does it bring to the whole community and what costs accompany it?

For years, when traffic increases and parking becomes scarce, the discussion has tended to begin with: where can we put more cars?

Perhaps the question should come one step earlier: why are the cars coming, what economic and community benefit do they create and what kind of visitors should we be trying hardest to attract?

A visitor who stays several nights in a local hotel, attends the Shaw Festival, eats in our restaurants, visits our wineries and shops in our stores creates a very different impact from someone who drives into Old Town for a brief visit and then leaves.

Both are welcome. But they are not necessarily of equal value to the community, nor do they impose the same costs.

Niagara-on-the-Lake is also physically constrained. We cannot endlessly widen our historic streets, create new roads through Old Town or provide unlimited parking without changing the very place people are coming to experience.

There is a well-established concept in tourism research called the "tourism area life cycle." Successful destinations grow, become busier and eventually reach a point where choices must be made.

With thoughtful management, they can renew themselves. Without it, congestion, crowding and loss of character can begin to undermine the destination itself.

Niagara-on-the-Lake has an opportunity to make those choices before circumstances make them for us.

I believe council should establish a broadly representative tourism and community sustainability committee early in its new term.

The tourism industry must have an important voice at that table. Hotel operators, wineries, restaurants, retailers, cultural organizations and tourism professionals understand their customers and their businesses in ways that residents cannot be expected to.

But the committee must also have strong representation from residents and community organizations whose responsibility is different: to consider the long-term interests of the entire town.

That balance is important.

An individual business quite properly asks how it can attract more customers and improve its own results. A community must ask an additional question: does the same decision improve the long-term economic, environmental, heritage and social wellbeing of Niagara-on-the-Lake as a whole?

Council also has a responsibility to ensure that the millions raised through the municipal accommodation tax strengthen Niagara-on-the-Lake — economically, culturally and as a place to live — rather than financing tourism that adds more pressure than value.

The committee's first task should not be to promote more tourism or less tourism. It should define what successful tourism actually means.

How do we increase the economic and cultural benefits tourism provides while reducing unnecessary traffic, parking pressure and costs to residents?

How should we measure success — by the number of people who arrive, or by the value and quality of the experience we create for visitors, businesses and residents alike?

And before major tourism expenditures or infrastructure projects are approved, should we not be able to explain how they advance those agreed community objectives?

Tourism and residents do not have opposing interests. In the long run they depend on the same thing: protecting the qualities that make Niagara-on-the-Lake such an extraordinary place to live and such an extraordinary place to visit.

A new council gives us an opportunity to bring all of those interests together, ask the difficult questions and create a tourism strategy designed not merely for the next season, but for the next generation.

Protect what makes Niagara-on-the-Lake worth visiting.

Invite guests, not traffic.

Bruce Gitelman
NOTL

Vibrant programs for older adults dedicated to joy, play & connection

Join us at the Burton Centre for Lifelong Creativity for a wide variety of Positive Aging programming this fall. Only at the Shaw Festival!

Improv for Nimble Minds
Nov 11, 18, and 25
A fun and engaging class where participants explore the art of improvisational theatre. Through various exercises and activities, seniors boost their creativity, confidence and communication skills while having a great time. It's a fantastic way to socialize, laugh and keep the mind sharp! **Drop in. No prior booking required.**

Actors' Secrets Revealed
Nov 12, 19, 26
Join us for this series where actors reveal how they learn all those lines. Have fun while strengthening your brain and boosting your confidence.

Confi-Dance!
Nov 6, 13, 20, 27
This progressive four-week session is a playful intro to the basics of different dance forms that you have seen on the Festival stage. Build physical strength and improve your balance through technique and even a bit of choreography!

Join us at the CARE Summit on November 7
Burton Centre for Lifelong Creativity
Drop-in any time from 9:30am until 3pm
This event is free and open to the public, offering older adults and caregivers the opportunity to experience the benefits of The Shaw's Positive Aging workshops firsthand, engage with local organizations and resources at the Community Exhibition, and hear helpful presentations examining mobility, wellness, creativity and the experience of aging.






To discover more about Positive Aging experiences contact us at engagement@shawfest.com

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SHAW Niagara-on-the-Lake

Thanks to voters, time is ripe for amalgamation

Dear editor:

Think about this for a moment: less than three out of 10 eligible voters brought in a ticking time bomb through election interference, largely supported by the NOTLRA and SORE groups, at the expense of alienating most if not the entire rural farming community.

That was not democracy; that was strategic manipulation of the election process, the benefit for a few at the overall cost of many.

As a direct result, a high-profile member of the Old Town elites got the job without having any fundamental knowledge about effectively navigating governing land-use policies, the real estate development process, economic development and politics at the provincial level, where the real bosses reside.

Most people that truly care about NOTL did not vote for the shiny new mayor possessing zero in terms of qualifications, experience or applicable competency skills, other than pitching the anti-Benny rant ad nauseam, whereas the other folks voted with sober perspective, or did not vote at all.



Letter writer Peter Rusin suggests our loose-cannon premier, Doug Ford, watched NOTL's election closely and may now revive amalgamation because voters had the audacity to reject his buddy for mayor. If Rusin is right, we're dealing with a premier whose skin makes wet toilet paper look like armour — and who apparently needs to redraw municipal boundaries to accommodate his bruised ego. Most toddlers can only flip the Monopoly board. This one has a legislature. CHATGPT/RICHARD HARLEY

In speaking with some of the farmers, it was readily evident that they were not pleased with the result and makeup of the "no" new council, and feel the divisiveness has become even greater than ever before, albeit a lot quieter.

They also question how an outsider can come in, take over the reigns and literally promise to change the world; just a bit too smug and confident, same as his close friends and most of the new council members.

Putting aside the stark differences between the Old Town elites and the much larger and more authentic resident groups of NOTL, there are several obvious questions that arise:

1. Will the lord mayor attend to the "dead horse" Parliament Oak ribbon-cutting ceremony? That will be awkward, one way or the other.

2. Will the province now walk in with its expansive authority by placing a Conservative chair to lead the region? Jim Diodati perhaps, definitely not some lefty wingnut proxy of the Wayne Gates breed, who is the enemy of whatever policies are good for the economy and the good of the people, especially if bad man Doug Ford is involved.

3. The recently announced proposal requests for the development of three new casinos — will one of those be at the new Ritz hotel site in Old Town? Hopefully that will be the case. Why not?

4. Did this rabid collective group of election interference dimwits effectively roll out the red carpet for amalgamation?

This new lord mayor may in fact not have to worry about the cutting of the ribbon at Parliament Oak hotel, because it may just be that another leader appointed by the province, a leader that may actually possess an appropriate CV fit for the single-vote council role (remember the new lord mayor promised not to use strong-mayor powers) that would be of more fulsome benefit to the other more than seven out of 10 eligible voters.

Somebody who is not beholden to the Old Town elites, and somebody who truly cares about the whole and not just a part of this complex and unique community.

That is what amalgamation is going to do, which may surprisingly work out in favour of the bona fide majority.

So, thanks at least for that, and also hoping all the Old Town elites get over their short-lived triumphant snickers to witness how the future of NOTL will start to evolve in mid-November.

Definitely another historical time of significance to remember for sure. The horror ... the horror.

Peter Rusin
St. Davids

The little things that influenced how I voted

Dear editor:

By the time you read this, the municipal election will be over. I will have cast my ballot, and I can tell you that getting there involved more than reading the candidates' platforms and considering their positions on the important issues facing our town.

There are some pretty important things to consider: development versus preservation, updating our infrastructure, amalgamation, transparency and the needs of our farming community. Competing visions for the future of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Serious stuff.

Someone recently asked me whom I was voting for.

"I don't know," I said. "I'll have to ask my husband."

My friends were aghast. I thought this was very funny.

Apparently, I was supposed to have an opinion of my own, carefully considered and ready for public consumption. Instead, I'd inadvertently suggested that my ballot required spousal authorization. I hadn't realized the situation was quite that serious.

I've been to town hall meetings. I've listened to presentations. But when it came to choosing a candidate, I found myself considering things that wouldn't appear in any campaign brochure.

One candidate seemed promising, until I heard something that made me reconsider. Another had qualities I liked, but then I heard something else that gave me pause.

There are certain things that can complicate the decision.

For instance, there's the fellow I've met at several town hall meetings.

I brought my home-baked cookies. He liked them. In fact, he liked them so much that he ate eight. Eight!

Now, I realize that eating eight cookies is not a municipal platform. It tells me nothing about his position on the issues.

But he certainly seemed to enjoy my cookies.

I have to admit that I remember him fondly. And I'm beginning to think I may have found my candidate.

Then there's one candidate who took my parking space at the Sandtrap.

Of course, he may not have realized I was waiting for it. I was applying my lipstick in the visor mirror. But he took my parking space.

And then there was the councillor who was so kind to Dawn, one of the cashiers at our local grocery store. Dawn is older and very sweet. I was waiting in line and watched the exchange.

I remember thinking, "This person is wonderful."

I was collecting evidence.

I also saw a councillor leaving "My Fair Lady" at the Shaw Festival Theatre, my favourite performance of the season, right in the middle of David Adams' little "shimmy." How can anyone leave during the best part?

I think it was him, anyway. He'd better have had a good reason. I mean, really. It was "My Fair Lady."

Then there are the moments when you remember that candidates are people, too. They have bad days, difficult encounters and things going on in their lives that the rest of us know nothing about.

This can be a tough town.

So yes, I read the information available to me and consider the candidates' positions. But I was also paying attention to things that wouldn't appear in campaign literature.

You won't find any of this in the newspapers.

Debra Rowe
NOTL

We can't give up power at regional council

Dear editor:

Niagara-on-the-Lake used to have two representatives on regional council: our lord mayor and a directly elected representative. But when the new Niagara Regional Council meets for the first time on Nov. 26, our lord mayor will be our sole representative.

Also, all mayors' votes won't count equally then either. The three cities with the biggest populations will be able to dominate the other nine smaller municipalities as they have been handed an effective majority under the new weighted voting formula.

The head of the new council will be a (still to be named) appointed chair with new "strong chair" powers.

The alternative double-majority proposal (where motions would need to be approved both under the weighted-vote formula and by a majority of at least seven of the council members representing all 12 municipalities) is better than what the province plans to impose. The appointed chair should also only vote to break ties.

If this voting formula isn't fixed, the three larger cities could misuse and abuse their new power, together with an appointed string chair, to impose an amalgamation that would see them annex their smaller neighbours.

NOTL is a unique place and has played a significant role in Canadian history. It must continue to exist as a separate municipality.

Steve McGuinness
Councillor-elect
Virgil

Advice to new council: Kindness is strength

Dear editor:

No regrets. I would do it all over again.

Was I shocked? No. Surprised? Yes. Disappointed? Of course.

I made the decision to run in this year's election for the position of town councillor by putting forward my name and reputation, history as a lifelong resident, experience with a willingness to listen, learn and lend our collective voices at Town Hall.

My offer did not get the required votes of town residents. No regrets.

From multiple questions via special-interest group emails, asking for simple yes-or-no answers to what I thought to be more complicated issues, veiled with threats, my decision was not to answer in the requested manner for the purpose of votes.

Oh, I was tempted to answer "politically." But I wouldn't. No regrets.

Someone came up to me at the grocery store and commented, "The town will regret not having elected you." Oh, please. I'm only Rick Mills.

Can we all work at being an encouragement to this newly elected council, rather than an encumbrance?

We've seemed to have lost our ability of agreeing to disagree, without personal attacks.

There is a lot of learning to be had by our newly elected six councillors and lord mayor, beginning with the direction and support of town staff, through the chief administrative officer, holding accountability both ways.

In last week's Lake Report, outgoing councillor Wendy Cheropita identified me as a "nice man." I can be. Also prone to fail. But I try. Can we?

Being nice isn't, as some would think while reading this, a sign of weakness. Not trying is the sign of weakness.

It's my hope our new council is led well by a learning new lord mayor. Without hope, failure is the only option.

Rick Mills
NOTL



Mayor must uphold council's transparency

Dear editor:

Public confidence in Niagara-on-the-Lake's municipal government depends not simply on elected officials obeying the law, but on their conduct being open, impartial and beyond reasonable suspicion.

There is an important distinction between Ontario's Municipal Conflict of Interest Act and NOTL's own code of conduct. Provincial legislation focuses primarily on financial conflicts, while the town's code goes further, addressing personal relationships and other non-financial interests that a reasonable person might believe could influence a councillor's judgment.

Importantly, conflicts of interest are not limited to voting. Participating in discussions or attempting to influence decisions can also violate applicable rules.

The town's controversial restaurant patio discussions illustrate why this distinction matters. Matters connected to personal relationships or financial interests of businesses connected to elected officials raise questions about participation and influence, not simply how the votes are cast.



Vaughn Goettler has work to do to improve transparency at town hall, writes Thomas Gauld. RICHARD HARLEY

The larger problem is transparency. Close relationships and private meetings between councillors and the counter parties involved in a council decision must be disclosed. Even the perception by voters of a potential conflict of interest can impact the trust in system and in our elected officials.

The present system relies heavily on councillors declaring their own conflicts and residents bringing complaints to the integrity commissioner. Yet the complaint process can be complicated, requiring documentation and evidence that ordinary citizens may have difficulty obtaining.

This is where the mayor's leadership becomes particularly important.

Ontario's Municipal Act specifically assigns the mayor a role in recommending measures to strengthen accountability and transparency.

The mayor should champion public disclosure of councillor relationships and clear declarations of potential conflicts, regular ethics training and a more accessible complaints process.

These safeguards would protect honest councillors as much as the public. They would also help prevent concerns from becoming controversies requiring lengthy investigations.

A mayor cannot guarantee that every councillor will always act appropriately. But a mayor can lead efforts to establish a culture in which transparency is expected, conflicts are disclosed and accountability is taken seriously.

The absence of a proven violation is not the same as genuine transparency.

Niagara-on-the-Lake already has ethical standards that go beyond provincial requirements. What we want is leadership to ensure those standards are met.

Thomas Gauld
NOTL

The heritage of NOTL has finally been saved

Dear editor:

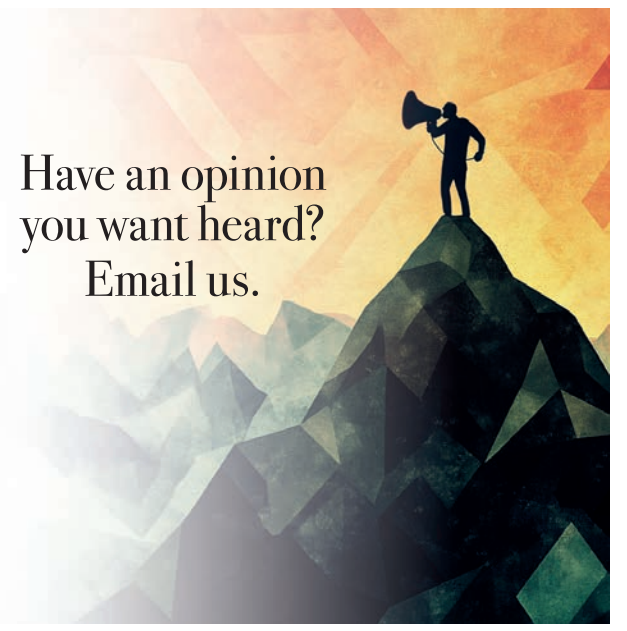
Sanity has returned to NOTL, and visitors will be welcomed to enjoy the "historic significance" of our town once again.

At least for today, my faith in democracy has been restored.

Congratulations to our new lord mayor, and his excellent and dedicated colleagues on council.

One piece of caution to them: we the people have spoken, and we will hold them accountable for their actions outside our collective vision for our historic town.

Timothy Collet
Virgil



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To Our Niagara-on-the-Lake Community

Like many of you, my family and I have seen the impact of this week's heavy rainfall. It's been heartbreaking to see so many neighbours dealing with flooded basements and damaged homes.

We're doing our best to help as many families as we can.

If your basement has been affected, we're here to help with:

- Water damage repairs
- Basement restoration
- Waterproofing improvements
- Basement renovations once everything is dry

We're also happy to provide detailed estimates for your insurance company and work directly with your adjuster to help make the process as straightforward as possible.

If you're unsure where to start, give me a call. Even if it's just for advice, I'm always happy to help.



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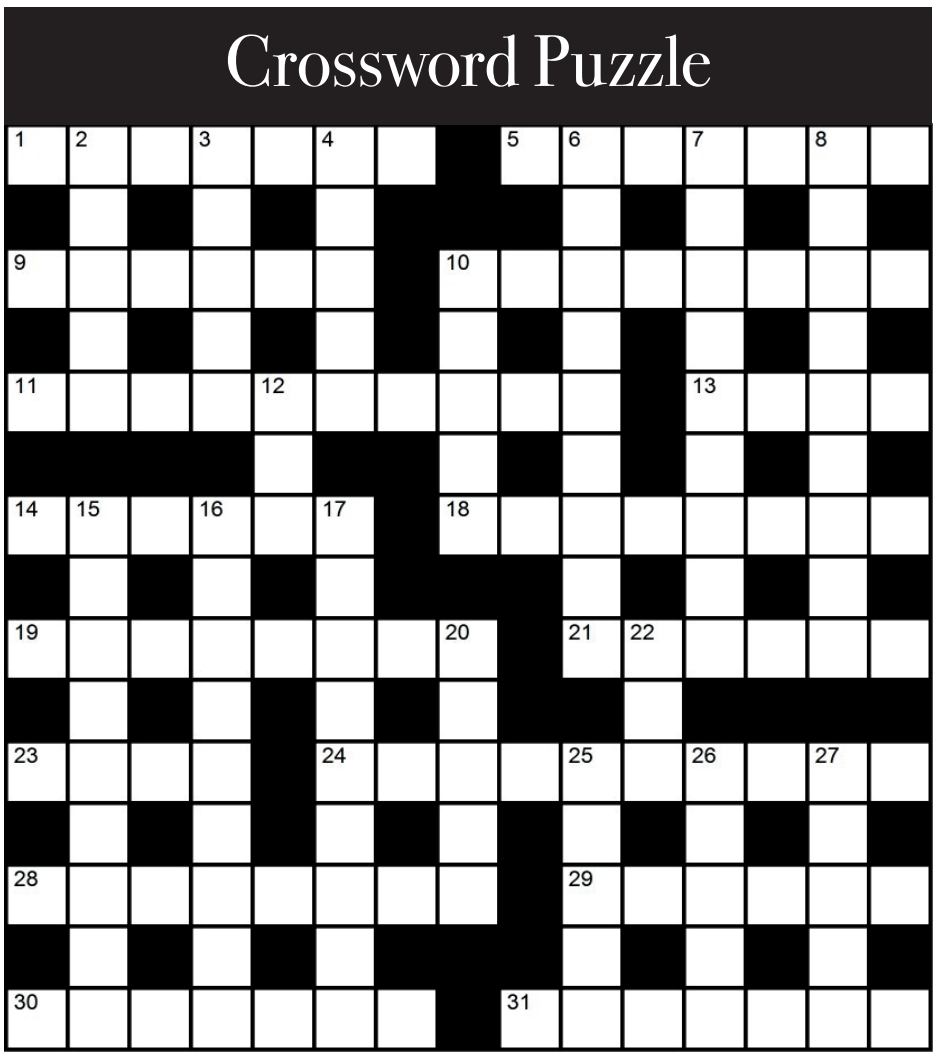
GAMES

Have some fun

Across
1. Husky (7)
5. Highest (7)
9. Complete (6)
10. Opening (8)
11. Shades (10)
13. Restraint (4)
14. Unsullied (6)
18. Foretells (8)
19. Fleet commander's vessel (8)
21. Chaise longue (6)
23. Having no money (4)
24. Writing materials (10)
28. Large amount of electrical power (8)
29. Stoppage (6)
30. Profound (7)
31. Nervous (7)

Down
2. Member of the Indian majority (5)
3. Unpaid (5)
4. 8th letter of the Greek alphabet (5)
6. Lay out too much (9)
7. Motherhood (9)
8. Table napkin (9)
10. Fabulous story-teller (5)
12. Permit (3)
15. Eve of All Saints' Day (9)
16. Source of sweetness (5,4)
17. Recipients of one of St. Paul's Epistles (9)
20. Braid (5)
22. Fuss (3)
25. Relative by marriage (2-3)
26. The dark (5)
27. Achieve (5)

Crossword Puzzle



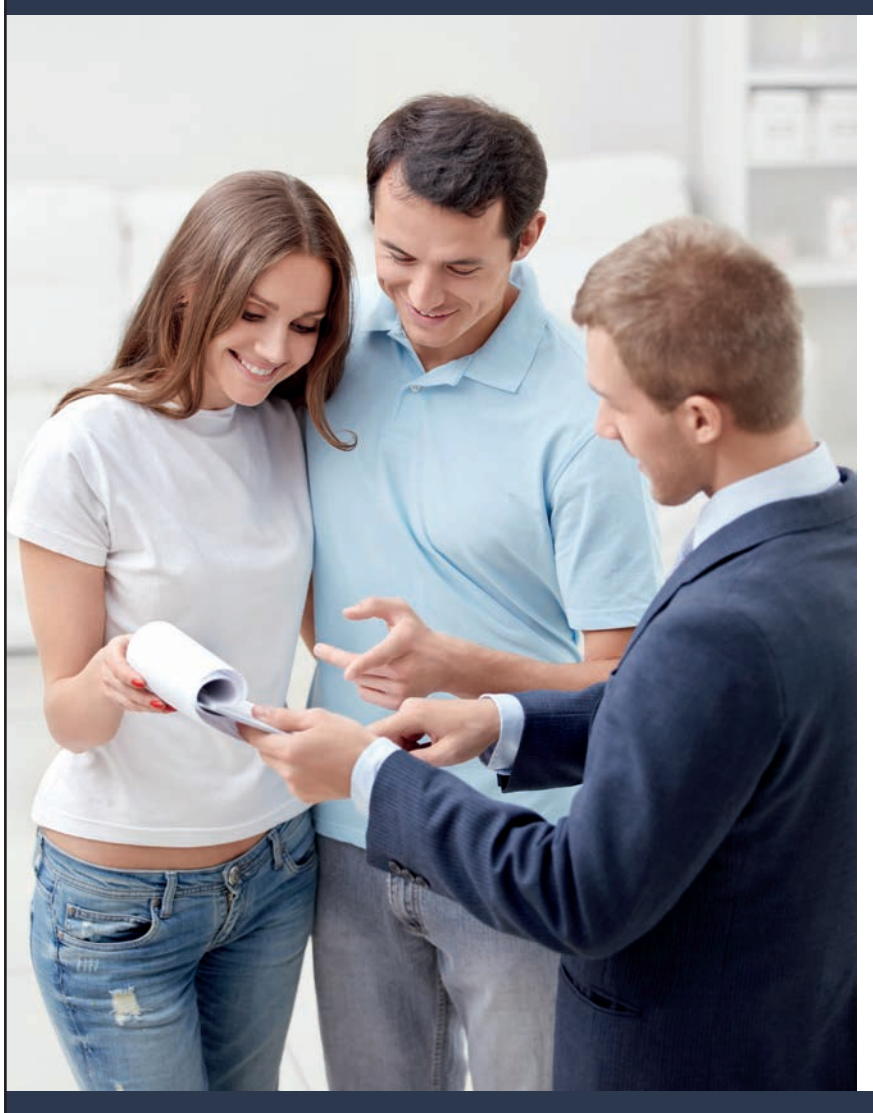
Last issue's answers

C	O	B	W	E	B	■	N	E	P	A	L	E	S	E
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EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM

NIAGARA ON THE LAKE MUSEUM



Bidding the troops farewell, 1915

During the First World War, an estimated 75,000 people came to Niagara-on-the-Lake to train at Niagara Camp, receiving both basic and specialized military training. Life at camp was busy. Soldiers took part in long days of drills and learned skills they would need on the battlefield, including bayonet and machine-gun training. The camp also became a part of everyday life in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Military bands played concerts in town, soldiers visited local shops and businesses and thousands of people passed through the community during the war. When it was time to leave, troops would make their way to the dock in town, where local residents, friends, family members and fellow trainees gathered to say goodbye. From Niagara-on-the-Lake, they travelled by steamship to Toronto, where they boarded trains bound for the East Coast. From there, they would board ships for the journey overseas. For many, the farewell at the dock was the last time they would see home, family and friends.

The domino effect that lets us predict Nobel Prize winners



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

It's Nobel Prize time in the fall, with the announcement of winners in early October, followed by presentations at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library beginning in late October by me for the physics, chemistry and medicine prizes, then presentations by David Elkins for the economics and peace prizes, and ending in December with Valmai Elkins and the literature prize. The award ceremony is then held on Dec. 10.

In the sciences, winners are sometimes easy to predict. For example, in 2015, detection of gravitational waves produced by the collision of two black holes was followed two years later by a Nobel Prize in physics.

Ripples in space-time produced by the collision of large masses was a by-product expectation of Albert Einstein's monumental masterpiece, general relativity, in 1915. Hence, discovery of those gravitational waves was expected but as yet unproven, until exquisitely sensitive devices had been developed to pick them up — an effort that required three decades of sustained work and financial support.

This occurred similarly for black holes, another theoretical outcome of general relativity, whereby if a mass was large enough, space-time could collapse into a gravitational field so strong that not even light photons could escape (hence black).

Much work by Roger Penrose and Stephen Hawking and others followed about black holes, but no one had actually seen one. That was until 2019, when a black hole was photographed and published.

The Nobel committee wasted no time: the next year, a Nobel Prize was awarded for the discovery of a giant black hole at the centre of the Milky Way (and by implication, almost all galaxies) and key mathematical studies, which governed the shape of black holes by Roger Penrose.

Another obvious prediction for a Nobel Prize was the 2020 award in chemistry to Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna for their pioneering work on gene-editing.

Their work was a slam-dunk for the prize because the technique offered an obvious option for treating genetically transmitted diseases. Since then, the technique and related developments have refined gene-editing and revolutionized



Great discoveries in science are often the result of the great discoveries that came before them. Mathematician Roger Penrose began his work on black holes in the '60s, but it wasn't until 2020, following the first-ever photograph taken of a black hole, that he was awarded a Nobel Prize for his foundational mathematical studies. WIKIMEDIA

prevention and treatment for thalassemia and sickle cell disease — two common scourges.

Yet another obvious award was the development of mRNA vaccines, which were originally developed for treating cancer but offered incredible off-the-shelf technology for developing very effective vaccines for preventing COVID-19 in less than a year following the virus' outbreak in China in late 2019.

These days, mRNA technology continues to offer effective treatment for a variety of diseases, including the original target, cancer, for which the technique recently offered effective treatment for malignant melanoma in a small clinical trial.

For some, perhaps the majority in the sciences, nominees wait in line for many years until the nominating committee finds a way to link several bodies of work together into a shared Nobel Prize or before a body of work finds its time, such as the 2021 chemistry award for the development of lithium ion batteries, or last year's award in medicine, for foundational studies of autoimmunity.

Sometimes, Nobel prizes come too late. That was the case for Stephen Hawking, who died in 2018, two years shy of the prize for studies on black holes.

It's not uncommon for laureates to be in their late 70s or 80s, even 90s, several decades after the work that justified a Nobel. No posthumous Nobel prizes are awarded and there's a limit of three on the number of laureates awarded for any prize in the sciences.

One of the tricky aspects of any prize in the sciences is the question of who did what.

For some prizes, such as the physics prize for gravitational waves, the shared prize for finding the giant black hole in the Milky Way and the studies that confirmed the existence of the Higgs particle, depended on hundreds, even thousands of contributors, which makes the case for awarding some Nobel prizes to a defined group a reasonable choice such as, in the case of the Higgs particle, the prize could have been awarded to the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) or the Large Hadron Collider group.

Like all human organizations, the Nobel Prize group makes mistakes, but surprisingly, few in the sciences over the 125 years of its existence.

To look back over the history of Nobel prizes, especially in physics and chemistry, is to look back at the most important landmarks in those sciences.

One great way for those who want to learn about the sciences is to trace the major steps in the evolution of, for example, cosmology and quantum physics offered by the treasure-trove of information, both scientific and biographical, available at Nobel.org. Navigating that site is a marvel and gift to the curious.

Next week, we will be discussing this year's Nobel Prize winner in medicine at the NOTL Public Library on Wednesday, Nov. 11, starting 2 p.m. To register, visit notlpubliclibrary.org.

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

OBITUARIES

Charles ‘Chuck’ Jackson



JACKSON, Charles “Chuck” —
Passed peacefully, on Oct. 2, 2026.

Chuck was born on April 1, 1933, in Highland Park, New Jersey, to Wilfrid James Jackson, born in Sydney, Nova Scotia and Mabel Elizabeth Mott, born in Buffalo, New York.

Like his mother and sister, Chuck attended Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, graduating in 1950 with a B.A. in Government. While there he met his first wife, Oberlin Conservatory voice student Nancy A. Carnarius. The two married and moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where Chuck completed his Master’s in Retailing at the Graduate School of Retailing at the University of Pittsburgh in 1955. Shortly after, Chuck secured a management position at John Wanamaker’s, a leading retailer in Philadelphia, and the couple moved to Bryn Mawr.

In 1956, Chuck began basic infantry training at Fort Dix, New Jersey and was selected to serve as a special agent in the Counterintelligence Corps (CIC). He served three years with the CIC and was an army reservist for an additional three years.

Following his tenure with the army, Chuck returned to John Wanamaker’s Corporate Personnel Office, moving the family to Levittown, PA and later to Lawrenceville, NJ. His career with the Philadelphia retailer spanned more than 30 years, during which time he oversaw human resources, labor relations, and store operations, rising to the position Senior Vice President of Personnel. In the late 1980s he left Wanamaker’s to become a corporate human resources consultant with Right Associates in Princeton, New Jersey.

Chuck relocated to Toronto, Canada in late 1989, to assume the position of VP Corporate Human Resource with retailer DYLEX. In 1990 he met Sandra (Sandie) Lawrence; they married in 1997 and resided in Toronto’s Cabbage Town area. He returned to HR consulting work with Feldman Gray Associates before his final retirement in 1998. The couple moved to Niagara on the Lake in 1999, where Chuck was active in the community, serving on the Board of Directors of the Niagara Historical Museum and of Willowbank School of Restoration Arts. He enjoyed a robust social life, playing golf, attending Shaw Festival performances and participating in activities with ‘The Wanderers.’

Chuck was known for his love of classic cars, travels, writing on a variety of topics (including for the Toronto Sun), and for martinis – straight up with a twist, please. His greatest automotive passion was for Studebakers and for several years his garage was home to one or more antique Studebakers which he lovingly restored. He had a great enthusiasm for travel and was proud to share that he had visited 32 countries and much of the United States and Canada. Chuck was also an avid reader and particularly fond of American history. He was always happy to share his perspectives on history and debate its impact on current politics and culture.

Graced with a great intellect and quick mind, Chuck brought wit, intelligence, and compassion to all he did and will be fondly and forever remembered as a loving father, husband, grandfather, friend, and colleague.

Chuck is survived by his wife, Sandra Lawrence of Niagara on the Lake, his daughters Linda J. Mitchell (William) of Longboat Key, Florida and Laura J. Novia (Frederick) of Raleigh, North Carolina, his grandchildren Kevin E. Mitchell (Caitlin) of Bethesda, Maryland, Dr. Cara M. Elston (Christopher) of Cabin John, Maryland, and Gregory T. Mitchell (Margaret) of Vienna, Austria, his great grandchildren Dominic Elston and Leo Elston, and stepdaughter Carolyn Murdoch of Montreal. Chuck was predeceased by his parents Wilfrid and Mabel Jackson, his first wife Nancy C. Jackson, and his sister Marilyn Nichols.

As per Chuck’s wishes, cremation has taken place and a celebration of his life will be held at a later date. For those who wish, memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer Society of Niagara (www.alzheimer.ca/niagara) or the Humane Society of Greater Niagara (www.hsgn.ca). Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morseandson.com.

William Booth



BOOTH, William Roland - Passed away peacefully in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario on Saturday October 24, 2026 at the age of 84. Beloved husband of Margaret Jean Booth for 42 very happy years. He is also survived by sons Douglas (Lisa), David, grandchildren Ryan, Emily, nieces Terri Bridgman (Matt), Barbara Booth, as well as many cousins in the US. He was predeceased by his brother, Howard Jr., and sister-in-law, Margaret Booth. Born in Oil City, Pennsylvania on April 29, 1942, Bill earned a BA from New York University. He loved the advertising and marketing field, working at major agencies in New York, Dallas, Toronto and Chicago during his career. Also an entrepreneur, he established the consulting firm of Booth Associates in Toronto. He enjoyed teaching within the industry, bringing his knowledge and enthusiasm to York University and to the Institute of Canadian Agencies professional training program, CAAP, across Canada. Bill was a charming, worldly and gentle man, with a keen wit, an unassuming manner and a respect for scholarship and learning. He was an avid swimmer and golfer. He and Jean shared a deep love of music and travel, and especially enjoyed spending time in France and Italy. Cremation has taken place, with interment to follow. A celebration of Bill’s life will be announced at a later date. In memory of Bill, memorial contributions may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society (cancer.ca), and would be appreciated. Arrangements entrusted to the Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



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