



Ron Planche: Life in photos | Page 27



Native Centre powwow focuses on youth

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Fifteen-year-old Lou Davis and 17-year-old Alexis Isaacs want Indigenous young people to celebrate their culture and feel empowered by tradition.

Youth took the lead at the Niagara Regional Native Centre's annual powwow Saturday, connecting culture and celebration.

Isaacs and Davis served as youth co-ordinators for this year's powwow, taking responsibility for organizing the event.

The theme was "Nurturing Our Roots Honouring Our Youth," something Isaacs was particularly excited to take on.

"It was really important for us to honour the youth, especially with us being youth and seeing the kind decrease in supports for youth over the years," she said.

The day began with a grand entry at noon, followed by dances, food and craft vendors.

Many of the dancers were youth and older youth, Isaacs told The Lake Report.

Isaacs wore a jingle dress and performed during the powwow.

"It's, like, being able to

Continued on Page 10

You can't park there

NOTL man, 27, charged after Volkswagen ends up inside Mary Street building



A 27-year-old Niagara-on-the-Lake man has been charged after the Volkswagen he was driving crashed into the side of a multi-office building on Mary Street early Wednesday morning. The building owner says the damage is estimated to be about \$120,000. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Paige Seburn | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

A 27-year-old Niagara-on-the-Lake man is facing impaired and dangerous driving charges after police say his Volkswagen Passat left Lakeshore Road, entered a ditch, went airborne, crossed Dorchester

Street and slammed into a building early Wednesday, causing an estimated \$120,000 in damage.

Niagara Regional Police said the vehicle was travelling east on Lakeshore Road when it left the north side of the roadway near the bend where Lakeshore turns

into Mary Street, eventually striking 333 Mary St.

Based on that route and the layout of the bend, the vehicle would have crossed the front lawn of 339 Mary St. before hitting 333 Mary St.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire &

Emergency Services responded at about 4:03 a.m.

Firefighters helped the driver, the only person in the vehicle, out of the car before Niagara Emergency Medical Services

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Final council forum gets personal over conflicts of interest



Council candidate Steve McGuinness lays out his conflict of interest concerns.

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Five candidates seeking a seat on Niagara-on-the-Lake council found plenty to agree on Friday night.

Infrastructure needs to catch up. Strong mayor powers should stay on the shelf. Residents should be

able to see how councillors vote. And more tourism is not necessarily better.

But the harmony did not last all night.

The final council candidates forum turned pointed when the discussion shifted to conflicts of interest, with candidates invoking real examples involving sitting councillors, family ties and

business relationships.

They also warned that Glendale is being left behind and challenged how the town has handled — and paid for — growth.

Growth has to pay its way

Candidates were asked to rank investing in water and wastewater infrastructure, services for youth and

seniors, and holding tax increases to inflation.

Nicholas Colaneri put the inflation cap last.

He argued "people's needs come first," especially water and wastewater, with youth and senior services a close second.

Weston Miller said devel-

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‘This too shall pass,’ says owner of destroyed building



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Tire tracks show the path of a car that left the road at about 4 a.m., tore through the lawn of a business and crashed through the wall of the building that houses Upper Canada Travel and the Budapest Bakery office, causing significant damage. A 27-year-old man was charged with impaired driving. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Continued from Front Page

took over his care.

Police said the man was taken to an out-of-town hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. No other injuries were reported.

The man has been charged with impaired operation and dangerous operation of a motor vehicle.

Police said they are not releasing the driver's name at this time because officers are proceeding by "blood warrant."

His injuries prevented him from providing a breath sample at the time of the crash, and police said they will confirm his blood-alcohol level later.

The impact left the vehicle crushed into the side of the mixed-use building, which houses travel agency Upper Canada Travel on the lower right, Budapest Bakeshop's office on the lower left and three apartments upstairs.

Two of those apartments were occupied when the vehicle hit, building co-owner Nadja Lepere said. She owns the property with her sister, Christine.

Lepere said one of the tenants called her shortly after the crash, bringing her to the scene.

Part of the building's exterior was torn open, a ground-floor window was damaged and debris was scattered around the property.

"It's like a movie, you know," Lepere said while looking over the damage later Wednesday morning.

By 11 a.m., Lepere remained at the scene waiting for a structural engineer to assess the building before the vehicle could be safely removed and repairs could begin. Tenants had been temporarily relocated and, Lepere said, were told not to go back inside until the building was deemed safe.

She said police gave that instruction, though police told The Lake Report it could not confirm who did.

Police said they did not have an estimated speed for the vehicle and that the building's structural integrity would have to be determined by an engineer.

For Lepere, the damage was secondary to the fact that everyone survived.

"Life is the most important," she said.

Still, she said it was difficult to take in what had happened to the building.

"It's a mess. It's devastating. We're devastated," Lepere said,

adding, "It's property. It's not as important as the lives."

The building is insured and the owners had already contacted their insurance agent, she said, but they were still waiting to learn how long it could take to put everything back in order.

Lepere is now worried about how the crash will affect the tenants who were inside and whether they will feel comfortable continuing to live near the bend.

"That's my number one concern," she said.

Even so, Lepere said she was trying to keep the damage in perspective.

"This too shall pass. We'll get through it."

Nearby resident Ian Gregg came across the scene around 8 a.m. while riding his bike out for coffee.

He said crashes of this kind are not something residents often see in that part of town.

"We don't expect this."

Gregg said he could not see obvious skid marks along the vehicle's apparent path and was baffled by how little of an incline there was.

"What gets me is there's not much of an incline here to gather that much air," he said.

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Price is right: The couple behind a \$10M Shaw donation who decided to keep name

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

It may be the Stratford Festival that has been around for more than 70 years and celebrates the work of humanity’s most legendary playwright, William Shakespeare, but for Timothy and Frances Price, before that festival entered their lives, there was the Shaw.

The couple first attended a play at the Shaw Festival more than 40 years ago, after being invited down to Niagara-on-the-Lake one summer in 1980.

“We enjoyed the town, we enjoyed the plays and the community,” said Tim.

“And the atmosphere at the Shaw,” Frances added.

After that, they would come down to the town multiple times a year for the weekend or as part of corporate-sponsored evenings and see various productions put on by the Shaw.

Today, the Prices are active supporters of the Shaw Festival — Tim was invited to join the board of directors 10 years ago and serves as its vice-chair today, and was subsequently invited to become chair of the board of governors when it was formed six years ago.

Tim has been chairman of Brookfield Funds since 1997. The couple are active in the world of philanthropy, lending their financial and leadership support to institutions and non-profit organizations, primarily in Toronto, where they’re from.

Describing their entrance into the world of philanthropy, Tim said that, “needless to say,” the couple has been financially fortunate, which made them want to be giving to others.

“For me, I grew up in England,” Frances added. “My parents were always philanthropic in a much smaller ways than we are. Things were different then after the Second World War, and they were always involved in community affairs, so it just seemed natural to me.”

They’ve been supporters of organizations in the worlds of education, health



Frances and Tim Price donated \$10 million to Shaw. FILE

and business, including the Schulich School of Business and the entrepreneurial non-profit NEXT Canada, but they say it’s the arts in Canada they want to lend their backing to the most.

“We do believe the arts side of things is the most vulnerable to pullback in funds from various sources. So it’s that area where we have put our emphasis in terms of philanthropy,” Tim said.

Last month, the Shaw Festival celebrated the Prices’ donation of \$10 million to fund the multi-million-dollar reconstruction of the Royal George Theatre, which was torn down in the spring and is set to be rebuilt with a larger, modern venue.

The original jewel-box theatre had a home on Queen Street for 111 years. The new Royal George is set to open in fall 2028, with its rebuild expected to cost around \$90 million.

Tim Price said the \$10-million donation gift was quietly in the works for a few years.

“We really wanted to help them in their fundraising for this venture and for other things that the Shaw needed to really help spur the philanthropy from others that might have been thinking about it, and draw them with us into supporting what we believe is a wonderful repertory theatre,” Tim said.

The Royal George has been part of the Shaw Festival’s collection of venues for more than four decades. Prior to 1980, the festival ran its productions out of two venues: the Court House Theatre, the first venue it hosted productions out of when the festival began in 1962, and the

Festival Theatre, which opened in 1973.

However, starting in the ‘80s, the Shaw expanded its reach to another spot on Queen Street: an old theatre at 85 Queen St., known at the time as the Brock Theatre.

In 1980, the theatre festival company acquired the venue from the Canadian Mime Theatre and, starting that year, began to host a handful of productions there, while completing several renovations over the years.

For the new name, the company chose to dip back into the past.

In the 1920s, George Reid purchased the venue that was built to host live stage performances entertaining the troops stationed at Niagara Camp. After Reid took over the theatre, it was used for vaudeville acts, community gatherings and touring performances.

During that time, it was called the Royal George, and would continue to be called that until 1929, when the theatre once again changed hands.

Fast-forward five decades, the Shaw brought the old name back.

As part of their large donation, the Prices were offered the right to change the name. They opted not to.

“We really couldn’t see how it would enhance the Royal George and felt that the name was really suitable for being in Niagara-on-the-Lake and that us trying to change it in some way wasn’t going to be that helpful,” Tim said.

The Shaw’s spokesperson Cathy Cowan shared that the theatre company hasn’t determined yet what official acknowledgement the Prices will receive when the theatre reopens and won’t

have confirmed plans until closer to the new theatre’s opening.

The Prices are aware that the rebuilding of the Royal George has drawn ongoing scrutiny from some in Niagara-on-the-Lake who don’t approve of the tear-down of the old venue and the new venue’s size.

“People don’t like change, typically,” Tim said. “In this instance, we could see that the company had done everything it possibly could to keep the feel and the theatre in the same way as it was before, but giving it a contemporary existence.”

He noted some of the issues the building has had over the years due to its building materials, such as the green room and changing rooms flooding after every rain storm, sometimes cancelling performances.

In that regard, he said it makes sense for the Shaw to take advantage of new materials and new modes of architecture to give the theatre better drainage, lighting and amenities.

“I felt very sad for the town that these elements were so strident, because everybody knew that the festival was having trouble during rainstorms,” he said. “Everybody knew that it was old and dank and needed change.”

Bigger than that change, however, is the hope that the new and bigger Royal George will become a hub in downtown Old Town that’ll bring more recognition to the Shaw’s work.

“What this is going to do for the town is open up the theatre, because the doors will be open daily for people to go in, have a coffee, sit and talk, and go and watch practices as they take place in the theatre or in the other areas,” said Tim. “I think it’ll allow Royal George to be more involved with Queen Street and the people that are there in great numbers during the summer.”

Whether it’s tourists or locals, the goal is for more people to know that live theatre, he said “is living among them.”

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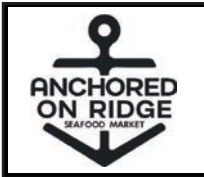




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Glendale needs **smart growth** with amenities: McGuinness

Continued from Front Page

opment charges should be raised to better reflect the costs of growth, arguing existing residents should not be left to cover the infrastructure bill that comes with it.

“As Niagara-on-the-Lake grows, us as taxpayers should see the benefit, not just a bigger bill.”

Steve McGuinness agreed that development charges should increase.

“Growth has not paid for growth and that’s why we’re in an infrastructure deficit right now.”

Gary Burroughs also put infrastructure first but said senior levels of government need to shoulder more of

the burden.

“We need to develop a much better relationship — a different relationship — with the province,” he said. “Also with the federal government.”

Adriana Cater Vizzari said the town must balance desired services with what taxpayers can afford, but argued it has multiple revenue sources and can address infrastructure while continuing to support youth and seniors.

“We can do it all,” she said, “with the right people at the table.”

Glendale cannot be an afterthought
McGuinness said some Glendale residents feel separated from the rest



Who should pay for growth — and what should Glendale get in return? Council candidates Gary Burroughs, Adriana Cater Vizzari, Nicholas Colaneri, Weston Miller and Steve McGuinness, from left, tackle residents’ concerns at Friday’s forum. PAIGE SEBURN

of NOTL and argued the community has been asked to absorb growth without enough everyday services.

He pointed to the lack of a supermarket or drugstore

despite the outlet mall nearby and warned Glendale should not become a place where the town sends growth it does not want elsewhere.

“We can’t let it become a suburb of St. Catharines,” McGuinness said.

For Burroughs and Cater Vizzari, one major need is a high school.

Cater Vizzari said her oldest daughter attends high school in Niagara Falls and also called for more library, community and employment opportunities in Glendale.

Colaneri said Glendale residents do not want to feel “like orphans anymore” and need schools, grocery stores and other basic amenities.

“We need to pull up our socks and add what they actually need for their lifestyles,” he said.

Conflict questions get pointed

Candidates were asked how they would handle real and perceived conflicts of interest.

McGuinness used his

Continued on Page 5

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‘Tourism fatigue’ top of mind for many

Continued from Page 4

answer to offer examples that sounded anything but hypothetical.

He first pointed to Burroughs’ former ownership of the Oban Inn. He said that if Burroughs still owned it and was voting on an application for a competing hotel across the street, he would obviously see it as a conflict and step aside.

“He has integrity,” McGuinness said.

He then drew a pointed contrast with Coun. Maria Mavridis, who was among the six council candidates who took part in the association’s first council forum the week before.

Mavridis’s father owns Corks Wine Bar & Eatery on Queen Street.

“If I was fortunate enough to have a dad who owned a restaurant down on Queen that had an enclosed patio, I don’t think I would feel comfortable leading the charge and the debate on a patio,” McGuinness said.

Mavridis has participated in council debates over the town’s temporary patio program and has previously faced a conflict-of-interest complaint over that involvement.

The town’s former integrity commissioner dismissed that complaint. In 2025, the town’s current integrity commissioner advised Mavridis that if her father had a financial interest in a future patio matter, that interest could be deemed hers under provincial conflict-of-interest law.

McGuinness then pointed to “a deputy lord mayor” with a first cousin who is a prominent developer.

“Is that a conflict?” he asked.

McGuinness confirmed to The Lake Report that his references were to Mavridis, Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens and Wiens’s cousin, developer Rainer Hummel, who has brought multiple development proposals before the town.

McGuinness filed a conflict-of-interest complaint against Wiens in 2025 over matters involving Hummel. The town’s integrity commissioner dismissed it, finding their family relationship did not automatically



Tourism — does NOTL have too much or too little? Candidates discussed how the town should promote itself and whether tourism revenues could help fund town priorities. FILE

put Wiens in conflict.

Colaneri, meanwhile, said his own first cousin is proposing a development on Four Mile Creek Road.

Although he said he strongly opposes the proposal, he would recuse himself if elected because of the family connection.

“If I wasn’t at the table, I’d be fighting it tooth and nail,” he said.

Miller, a NOTL real estate agent, said he would also step away from a matter if his professional involvement with a property created a real or perceived conflict.

“If I had my friend’s house listed and they wanted to put in an application for a severance — and that would directly increase the value or something like that of a property that I had listed — of course, I would completely step away and recuse myself,” he said.

“Even if there was, you know, a genuine perception that there could be a conflict — I would do it, just out of good faith and representation of my community.”

Enough tourism already?

Candidates were also cool to the idea that the town needs more tourism promotion.

“Definitely not. No, definitely not,” Colaneri said when asked about more tourism advertising.

“We’ve done way too much as it is.”

Miller said his approach is “residents respected and visitors welcomed in that order,” arguing tourism should not come at the ex-

pense of traffic, noise, parking, housing or residents’ access to public spaces.

Burroughs said tourism is vital to the town but argued the sector should also help pay for the pressure it puts on local roads and infrastructure.

Cater Vizzari said the municipality itself should not be doing more tourism promotion because that is the role of Tourism NOTL.

Little appetite for strong mayor powers

Most candidates were unequivocal on strong mayor powers: they should not be used.

Colaneri said using them would mean a mayor had “already lost the table” and “lost the people,” calling it a failure of leadership.

McGuinness said he was “totally opposed” to them.

Miller said he would not help a lord mayor use the powers.

“If those decisions, in my opinion, are contentious enough that someone is tempted to use strong mayor powers — that’s a signal that the public consultation isn’t over,” Miller said.

Cater Vizzari said she was against their “undemocratic use,” but added they were less of a threat if council could still reach decisions through a vote.

Burroughs instead warned that the province’s move to an appointed regional chair and a regional council made up only of mayors could leave NOTL with less influence on issues such as heritage and the Greenbelt, arguing the town will need a council that works closely as a team.

The candidates also agreed residents should be able to see how councillors vote.

All five backed recorded or electronic voting, with McGuinness pointing to the 5-4 Parliament Oak decision as an example of why individual voting records matter. He later urged voters to check incumbents’ voting records on his campaign website before casting their ballots.

In his closing remarks, Miller held up logs from 3,428 homes his campaign said it had visited, using the stack to underscore his pitch that residents’ concerns would follow him into every vote at town hall.

Colaneri said the experience had given him “a greater purpose” than he knew he needed.

Cater Vizzari pointed to her four years of bringing “a stronger voice for families with young children” to council.

Burroughs warned NOTL is heading into “very challenging times” and said the next council will need to work as a team, while McGuinness told voters it was “report card time” for the current council.

With Friday’s event, the association has wrapped its three election forums.

Now it is up to voters to decide which candidates they trust to act on the problems the contenders largely agreed exist — and who they trust to make sure NOTL does not lose itself in whatever comes next.

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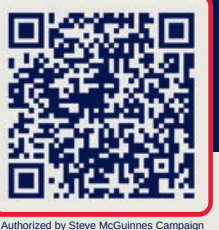


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NOTL’s Richard Meloen named this year’s Living Landmark by Niagara Foundation

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

Before retiring almost 20 years ago, Richard “Rick” Meloen says he knew relatively little about the history of Niagara-on-the-Lake, which he’s lived in all his life.

Today, however, he has plenty of irons in the fire in an effort to keep the town’s storied past alive.

He’s director of the Friends of Fort George, chair of the Upper Canada Heritage Trail committee and a guide for the NOTL Museum’s historical walking tours.

For his commitment to the community and enthusiasm for sharing its history, the Niagara Foundation has named Meloen this year’s Living Landmark.

Each year, the NOTL-based organization gives the title to a person or institution that has made “an outstanding contribution to the quality of life in Niagara,” in keeping with its focus on preserving culture and heritage.

Meloen said he was initially puzzled to learn he had been chosen.

“In the past, there’s been some pretty big names,” he said. “Now I’m on that list, so I feel humbled.”

Past recipients include the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum (2025), Tony Chisholm, president of the Friends of Fort George (2024), and Ward Simpson, founder of Simpson’s Pharmacy (2023).

Despite his many community roles, Meloen takes them on with enthusiasm and a can-do attitude.

“A lot of the stuff I just enjoy doing. I enjoy volunteering with the museum. I enjoy being part of the Friends of Fort George. As for some of the other stuff, I thought, ‘Well, somebody’s got to do it, so I’ll step up,’” he said.

Meloen began volunteering after retiring in 2009. The Chautauqua native had spent more than 30 years in the Town of NOTL’s public works department, starting in 1976 and retiring as roads department supervisor.

When preparations began

for the War of 1812 bicentennial, he decided to join the committee organizing commemorative events. The work sparked an interest in history, and he began reading extensively about the town’s past.

“It’s almost like a light went on. I have lived here all my life and I didn’t know this stuff, or I didn’t realize the significance of it,” he said. “Here I was, living in this historic town, and I was ignorant. But I’ve since made up for that.”

Through the events, which ran from 2011 to 2014, Meloen became involved with the NOTL Museum and began leading walking tours, sometimes in costume.

“I got a period costume and I took on the persona of different characters,” he said.

His involvement with other history groups grew from there. He joined the Friends of Fort George in 2013 and eventually became its director. In 2016, he co-chaired the town committee organizing Canada’s 150th

anniversary celebrations. Two years later, he created the Upper Canada Heritage Trail committee.

The committee is overseeing the restoration of 10 kilometres of recreational path between Old Town and St. Davids, along the former Erie and Ontario railway line, which operated from 1854 to the mid-1950s.

Four kilometres have been restored so far. The project has required fundraising, grant applications and phased restoration work. Meloen said progress has been slowed by the pandemic and an archaeological study required after the discovery of an old artifact, a railroad whistle stop.

Work has paused in recent months as town staff, who are responsible for the physical restoration, respond to the effects of this summer’s floods.

“Everybody on the committee knew it was going to take a numbers of years to come to fruition, but we didn’t really think it would take this long,” he said.



Richard “Rick” Meloen is a key leader in the realm of historic education and preservation, as director of the Friends of Fort George, chair of the Upper Canada Heritage Trail committee and a guide for the museum’s historic walking tours. FILE/JULIA SACCO

“Still, we’re not giving up. We have a vision and we want to stick to it.”

Asked what local history enthusiasts like him hope to achieve, Meloen said they want to uncover the full story of the community.

“Every community has a story to tell,” he said. “I’ve

learned over the years that every person has an interesting story. And you just have to tease it out of them. And if you dig, no matter where you live, if you do enough research, do enough digging, you’ll find interesting stuff.”

zahraa@niagaranow.com

RE-ELECT

GARY BURROUGHS

MY RECORD IS MY COMMITMENT

I’ve had the privilege of serving Niagara-on-the-Lake for more than 25 years as Lord Mayor, Regional Councillor, Regional Chair and, most recently, Town Councillor. I also owned and operated the Oban Inn for 30 years, giving me firsthand experience running a business, creating jobs and working in a tourism-based economy.

I’m asking residents to look beyond my résumé. My record is my commitment.

PROTECTING HERITAGE

Heritage is at the heart of what makes Niagara-on-the-Lake unique. Once we lose it, we will not get it back.

We must protect the streetscapes, scale and character that make Niagara-on-the-Lake distinctive. Our planning policies should require contextual design that respects them.

My voting record reflects that commitment. In 2024, I voted NO to the rezoning allowing the proposed 129-room hotel at Parliament Oak, which passed Council by just 5–4. In 2023, I joined other councillors in voting to refuse applications to alter or demolish heritage structures on the Rand Estate.

Our planning rules exist for a reason. A couple of reasonable variances may be understandable. But when a development requires numerous variances, Council needs to stop and ask whether the development is working to fit into our community or if our community is being asked to fundamentally change for a development.

If elected, I will continue to vigorously challenge development that threatens our heritage.

PLAN BEFORE WE GROW

I am not against development. We need housing and investment. But development must respect our planning rules and the character and infrastructure capacity of our communities.

For years, I have raised concerns about stormwater and development, particularly in St. Davids. I moved to advance improvements to Four Mile Creek and the new St. Davids stormwater facility.

Recent flooding reinforces the importance of getting this right.

Growth cannot continue to outpace infrastructure. Plan before we grow.

BALANCING TOURISM & RESIDENTS’ QUALITY OF LIFE

Tourism is essential to our economy, but our success comes from being different—not from becoming another Niagara Falls.

That is why I oppose extending the Niagara District Airport runway to accommodate large commercial aircraft without fully understanding the implications for noise, traffic, infrastructure and residents.

If elected, I will propose a Tourism/Resident Committee to work with the tourism sector to implement the new Tourism Strategy, understand the implications of the Municipal Accommodation Tax, and balance tourism with residents’ quality of life.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

As a retired chartered accountant, I bring a financial perspective to Council. We need significant investment in infrastructure, but taxpayers also deserve value for every dollar spent.

We should enforce our existing bylaws and

Official Plan more consistently and reduce unnecessary disputes and litigation.

If elected, I will propose a review of the Town’s external legal services—including procurement, costs and results.

TRANSPARENCY & REPRESENTATION

The next Council will be smaller. Residents will have fewer elected representatives, while strong-mayor powers give one office greater authority. That makes transparency — and meaningful public participation — more important than ever.

I believe residents deserve a genuine voice in how their Town is governed, not simply an opportunity to comment after decisions are largely made. Niagara-on-the-Lake is fortunate to have residents with tremendous professional knowledge, experience and commitment to this community. I want to bring more of that expertise back into Town Hall by reinstating meaningful resident committees that allow people to contribute directly to the issues affecting their communities.

I consistently request recorded votes because residents deserve to know where we stand. I was Regional Chair when electronic voting was introduced at Niagara Region. The Town already has the technology — let’s use it and put every vote on the record.

If elected, I will work to restore meaningful resident committees, strengthen opportunities for public input, and make Council decisions more transparent and accessible.

JUDGE ME BY MY RECORD

I’ve been around long enough to know what works — and what doesn’t. I know the value of experience, relationships and understanding



how municipal and regional government actually work.

But I also know the next four years will require new ideas and a willingness to do some things differently.

We can welcome investment without sacrificing our identity. We can build housing while protecting heritage and agricultural lands. We can grow without allowing development to outpace infrastructure. We can support tourism while protecting residents’ quality of life. And we can give residents a more meaningful role in the decisions that shape their communities.

Look at my record. Look at the difficult development applications. Look at the recorded votes. Look at the questions I have asked when those decisions were before Council.

My commitment is straightforward: judge me not only by what I say during an election, but by how I have voted, what I have done, and what I am prepared to do next.

Gary Burroughs
Candidate for Niagara-on-the-Lake
Town Council

Steve McGuinness

FOR TOWN COUNCILLOR



Know the Facts.

Before you vote, read the record. **Some would rather you didn't.**

Six issues facing Niagara-on-the-Lake, one page each. Every fact comes from council minutes, Town reports or provincial law, and the sources are printed on every card. If we get one wrong, we correct it publicly. That's the standard every councillor should be held to.

THE CARDS SO FAR

More cards coming before Oct. 26

PARLIAMENT OAK

One 5–4 vote rewrote the rules for Old Town.

A former school site in a heritage neighbourhood, rezoned for a 129-room hotel. Now every former school, church and public site can point to it and ask for the same.

UNUSED APPROVALS

Approvals are for building, not flipping.

Land gets rezoned, nothing gets built, and scarce sewer and water capacity stays locked up. Ontario gave towns new tools in 2024. NOTL council has extended granted development rights beyond the 3 years “use it or lose it” provincial standard.

DEVELOPMENT CHARGES

Growth isn't paying for growth.

NOTL's charges still rest on a 2018 study. Pelham charges 212% of ours. And most of the \$14 million already collected sits uncommitted while taxpayers carry the gap.

TOWN TAXES

Taxes up 27%. Inflation up 16%.

Across four budgets, the Town's share of the average tax bill rose from about \$1,227 to \$1,564. In 2024, NOTL's increase was nearly four times St. Catharines'.

FLOODING

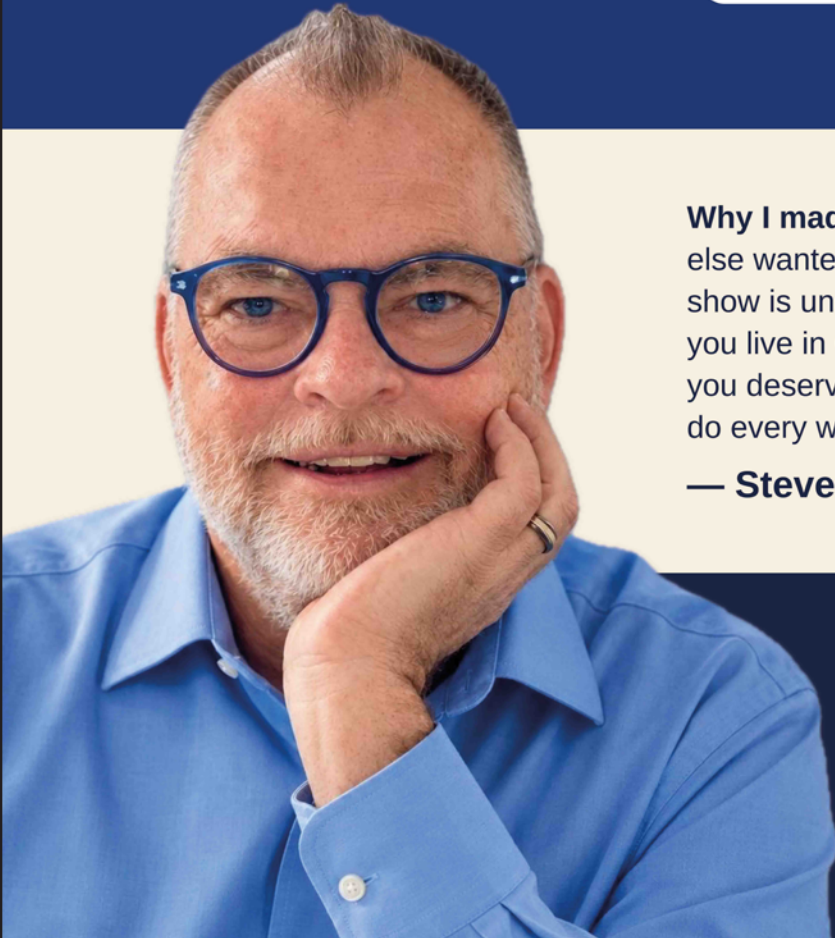
15 years of flooding. Still no fix.

St. Davids and Virgil keep flooding while growth decisions run ahead of a permanent fix. This July, 146 mm of rain fell on Virgil in a single night.

WHAT GOT DONE

A motion passed is not a job done.

Some incumbent councillors seeking re-election are asking you to count work started or in progress as their accomplishments. This is not finished work.



Why I made these. I'm a retired CPA. I spent my career reading the files nobody else wanted to read, and that's what I've done here. Some of what these cards show is uncomfortable. It is also true, and all of it is on the public record. Whether you live in Glendale, Old Town, Queenston, St. Davids, Virgil, or our rural areas, you deserve to see it before you vote. As a full-time councillor, this is the work I'll do every week.

— Steve McGuinness

Collect the set →
votestevemcguinness.ca/facts
Online voting opened Oct. 5
Advance in-person voting Oct. 17 · Election day Oct. 26
Our Heritage. Our Future. · Authorized by the Campaign to Elect Steve McGuinness.



Road Rally scavenger hunt raises \$75,000 for Red Roof Retreat

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Some teams solved clues. Others plunged into Lake Ontario. That was all part of the challenge Saturday as 20 teams raced around Niagara-on-the-Lake for Red Roof Retreat's annual Road Rally, a scavenger hunt that raised an estimated \$75,000 for the respite care organization.

This comes after the non-profit organization crossed the finish line its \$4.3-million fundraising campaign to build a new, larger facility, set to open this January. The fourth annual event featured 25 clues dreamed up by organizer Jon Taylor, with teams completing



Christina Jeffries, Susan Dugay, Christine Goard and Jane Blamires didn't come in first place for points, but they certainly had fun during the scavenger hunt. JULIA SACCO

photo, video and action challenges before time ran out. "It's not just about tricky, it's about how much you committed to it," Taylor said. And some teams committed more than others. Several participants ended up taking a dip in Lake Ontario to complete clue 8, including Christina Jeffries of Team 1. "It was really rocky, that was the hardest part. The water itself was fine," Jeffries said. For Hamish Shaw and the Red Roofers, clue 17 proved more difficult. "Jon Taylor has a twin

of these. And strangely enough, Jon is also this type of engineer," the clue read. The answer — Minor Brothers — stumped Team 17.

The Red Roofers nevertheless walked away with the prize for best outfit thanks to their roof-shaped headgear. Last year, the team finished second and won best outfit despite suffering a flat tire.

This time around, they came prepared with a strategy. "We saved time by not going to far-out destinations," Shaw said.

Taylor said the lighthearted competition is part of what keeps people coming back year after year. "It's competitive, but it's not crazy competitive," he said. "It's moving the needle."

That competition also translated into a major fundraising boost for Red Roof Retreat.

Founder Steffanie Bjorgan said the organization hit its fundraising goal this fall to finance the rebuilding of its main respite care facility on Concession 6 Road, which is reopening this January.

However, the \$75,000 raised through Roof Rally will allow it to comfortably finish the project and check a few items off its wishlist for revamping the facility, she said.

"Events like this are letting us finish every detail. We're putting in new pathways, we're finishing the tarmac, all kinds of stuff."

This year's rally began at Centennial Arena in Virgil

while Red Roof's Concession 6 property undergoes upgrades and renovations.

Taylor said the organization provides an important service for families across Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"It's 24/7, so to give (families) an opportunity to come to a place that's fun, it's safe, and then get a little bit of a respite is — it's a remarkable community service," he said.

Ginny Taylor, Amanda Binnie, Ria Rosenberg and Joey Riggs took home first place in this year's rally.

The prize for best car went to Jason and Rachel Redekop, Joyce Yance, Jessie Yance and Lia Hohne.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com

WINE & WORDS

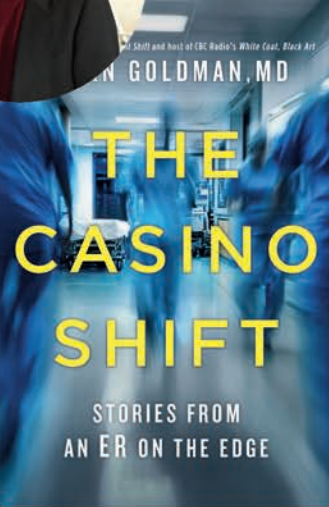
with Dr. Brian Goldman



Tuesday, October 27th
7pm - 9pm
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\$40 per ticket.

Visit notlpubliclibrary.org or scan QR code to register.

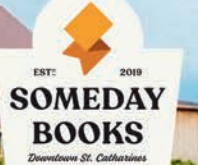
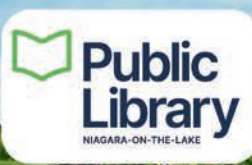




THE CASINO SHIFT
STORIES FROM AN ER ON THE EDGE

Join ER doctor and bestselling author, Dr. Brian Goldman, as he discusses his new book *The Casino Shift*: a raw, revealing, and compelling look at life on the front line during one of the largest health crises Canada has ever seen.

Expect an engaging talk, laid-back chats, and a chance to get your books signed. Enjoy a glass of wine & a delicious food pairing with your ticket. Wine and Words is a NOTL Public Library fundraising event, all proceeds go to enhance library programs, services and collections.



THANK YOU

On behalf of Father Peter Rowe and The St. Vincent de Paul Peach Festival Committee, we would like to thank all of our dedicated volunteers for the countless hours dedicated to setting up, organizing, dismantling and working on a hot summer day to celebrate this year's Peach Festival. Your hard work, generosity and spirit of service were essential in making the event another resounding success.

A special note of appreciation goes out to the following for their contributions:

Peach Festival Steering Committee
"The Vineyard" (diocesan newsfeed)
Niagara Warehouse of Hope
Cotton Inc.
Vintage Inns
Simpson's Pharmasave
Hendriks Your Independent Grocer
NOTL Fire & Emergency Services
Colonial Florists

Tourism NOTL
The Lake Report
Paul Tarsitano
Niagara Helicopters
Sandtrap Pub & Grill
124Q Hotel & Spa
Cupcakes by Laura
Niagara Parks Commission

We would like to especially thank Mario Puma and the following businesses that have supported our Peach Festival over the past 26 years:

Seaway Farms
Quiet Acres
Palatine Fruit and Roses
Van de Laar Orchards
Walker's Country Market
Folino Family Farm
Tregunno Fruit Farms
Muir Farms

Meyers Family Farms
P.G. Enns Farm
Gaio Family Farms
LaValle Family Farms
Lepp Family Farms
Ricciardelli Orchards
Pillitteri Estates Winery
Juras Farms

We truly couldn't do it without you.
With heartfelt gratitude,
Fr. Peter Rowe and The St. Vincent de Paul Peach Festival Committee

RICK MILLS

FOR TOWN COUNCILLOR

LISTEN, LEARN, LEND... A VOICE!

FROM NOTL, FOR NOTL
notlmills@gmail.com

Paid for by the Rick Mills Campaign



TWO SISTERS
Resorts

PARLIAMENT OAK HOTEL

A RICH HISTORY. A VIBRANT FUTURE.

PRESERVING THE PAST | ENHANCING TODAY | BUILDING FOR TOMORROW

A HISTORIC
PROPERTY.
A STRONGER
COMMUNITY
TOMORROW.



1846

Josiah Burr Plumb Residence

A historic residence once stood
on this property.



1948

Parliament Oak School

The eight-room Parliament Oak School
was constructed on the site in 1948,
serving generations of local students.



Spring 2028

Parliament Oak Hotel

A 5-star luxury hotel that respects the site's
history, preserves greenspace and creates
a lasting community asset.

PRESERVING THE PAST, ENHANCING THE FUTURE

The proposed 5-star luxury hotel retains the historic footprint and architectural character of the 1846 building, integrating heritage elements while protecting and enhancing the site's natural beauty.



65% GREEN SPACE

Approximately 65%
of the property will
remain as open space
with mature trees and
enhanced landscaping.



PARKING UNDERGROUND

Most surface parking
will be moved below
grade, minimizing
visual impact and
preserving the beauty
of the site.



SAME FOOTPRINT

The new hotel will be
built within the same
footprint as the former
school (approximately
35% of the lot).



CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

- ✓ Underground work is transitioning to above-grade construction.
- ✓ Crews are pouring the ground-floor slab.
- ✓ December: Steel structure begins rising.
- ✓ Early next year: Precast concrete panel installation begins.
- ✓ Over the coming months, Parliament Oak will move into vertical construction, bringing the hotel's design visibly to life.



COMMUNITY BENEFITS

- ✓ Addresses the Town's documented shortage of hotel rooms.
- ✓ Supports year-round tourism and local jobs.
- ✓ Increased municipal tax revenue to support local services.
- ✓ A high-quality, design-sensitive addition to our community.

HERITAGE PRESERVED & COMMEMORATED

Important elements from the former school will be preserved, salvaged and incorporated into the new development, including:



Parliament Oak
stone tree-marker



Castellani
Railroad sculpture



Stone-incised
oak-tree panel



Graphic
bas-relief panel



Parliament Oak
School sign



Bricks salvaged
from the former school



1948 time capsule



Historic Town
boundary stone



Commemorative heritage wall
incorporating salvaged materials

YOUR QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

We know that a project in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake naturally raises questions. Parliament Oak Hotel is being developed by a local family that cares deeply about this community, and we believe residents deserve clear information about the project and the decisions surrounding it.

1

Were two levels of underground parking always part of the Parliament Oak proposal?

No. The original proposal contemplated one level of underground parking, with additional parking located on the surface. Through the Town's planning process, the design evolved. Additional parking was moved underground, creating a second underground level. This change reduced the amount of land required for surface parking and allowed more of the property above ground to remain available for landscaping and green space. Once the revised design was approved, the second underground level became part of the project that the developer was required to build. However, it was not part of the original proposal.

2

Did the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake waive approximately \$905,000 in development charges for Parliament Oak?

No. According to the account provided by a member of Council, Niagara-on-the-Lake Council did not waive the approximately \$905,000 Regional development charge associated with the second level of underground parking — nor did it have the authority to do so. Council supported referring the request to Niagara Region for its consideration. Niagara Regional Council made the final decision regarding the approximately \$905,000 charge. The developer remained responsible for millions of dollars in other applicable development charges.

3

Why was there a development-charge issue involving the second underground parking level?

There was an important difference between the policies of the Town and the Region. Niagara-on-the-Lake did not impose development charges on underground parking, while Niagara Region did. This raised a broader planning-policy question: when a project moves parking underground rather than using more land for surface parking, should development-charge policy discourage that choice? Niagara Regional Council ultimately considered the request and made its decision regarding the additional Regional charge associated with the second underground level.

4

Why put more parking underground?

Moving parking underground reduces the amount of the property occupied by surface parking. For Parliament Oak, the revised design means that significantly more of the site above ground can remain landscaped and green rather than becoming a larger surface parking area.

5

Why is Parliament Oak being built in the centre of Niagara-on-the-Lake?

Parliament Oak is intended to create a high-quality hotel that contributes to the community while respecting the character that makes Niagara-on-the-Lake special. We recognize that residents may have different opinions about development and change. Those concerns deserve to be heard. At the same time, we believe discussions about Parliament Oak should be based on the complete facts, including how the project evolved through the planning process.

Thank You
TO OUR NEIGHBOURS

We recognize that construction can be disruptive, and we sincerely thank our neighbours for their patience, understanding and continued support as we bring this important project to life.

Preserving the story. Preserving the greenspace. Moving the cars underground.



Fall Frames Are Calling

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Powwow a way to reconnect with culture

Continued from Front Page

feed my spirit and nurture it and being able to be like, I did this for me, not for anybody else. It's really rewarding."

Davis, who has been attending powwows his entire life, said the event has always been an important community staple.

"The powwow is, like, a deep place in connection," Davis said. "As I've been coming here since I was a fresh newborn and came into this world."

For Isaacs, the powwow is also a way to connect deeply with Indigenous cultures and traditions.

"I know when I'm away from powwows and stuff, I fall onto this little path of, you know, not following my traditions and all that. And being here reminds me of that," Isaacs said.

"To me it really means, like, reconnecting with your culture, reconnecting with family and reconnecting with who you are as a person."



Alexis Isaacs and Lou Davis want people to have fun and enjoy community togetherness at the annual NRNC Powwow. The two youth powwow co-ordinators emphasized engagement and curiosity. JULIA SACCO

The annual powwow is open to all, with powwow etiquette guidelines on display for newcomers detailing photo policies and how to interact with dancers.

"If this is your first powwow, read up on powwow etiquette and how to be respectful," Isaacs said.

"And just have fun, enjoy yourself, dance, and eat and eat."

When it comes to food, Davis suggests a walking taco, while Isaacs recommends a Bannock Tail, frybread covered in your topping of choice.

Taking place only days after the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the powwow also gave Isaacs and Davis an opportunity to discuss what they would like to see from

non-Indigenous people in the community.

"It's very hard for non-Indigenous people to feel the effects of Truth and Reconciliation Day," Davis said.

"But show your support, wear an orange shirt, advocate and go to the many events happening in your region," he said.

Isaacs and Davis began planning this year's powwow in August.

"It's been about two months of solid, steady work," Davis said.

The end result was rewarding for the two youth co-ordinators.

"It's a great feeling to see all this and, you know, be able to claim the success for it," Davis said.

Isaacs said seeing the community come together was a highlight.

"It's really heart filling to, you know, see family, and connect with family, and be in that community setting," she said.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



2 FOR 1

WINE TASTINGS

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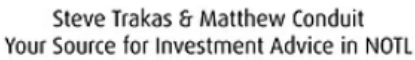
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Thank You

To our incredible partners, sponsors, volunteers and auction donors for making this remarkable season of events and fundraisers possible.



Together, we raised over \$140,000!

This supports the care of the Museum's collection & buildings, our educational programming & exhibits, and our expansion project.

To learn more about the Museum and to support our work, become a member:



That’s a wrap for 2026 NOTL golf leagues

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

Weekly competitions in the men’s and women’s leagues at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club have wrapped up for another season.

The nine and 18-hole women’s leagues hosted a joint step-aside scramble on their final day and the team of Michele Darling, Cathy Murray and Carole Matheson combined for a 2-over 38 to take first place.

Maria Townley, Christine Earl, Suzanne Watson and Kathy Taylor were second, also with 38.

And Diana Dimmer, Robin Foster, Sharon Allen and Marg Ketcheson finished third with 41.

As well, the leagues celebrated the winners of various trophies that were competed for over the season.

In the 18-hole league, May Chang won the Vera Derbyshire Award for golfer of the year. League members accumulate points from competitions over the season to determine the winner of the award.

Chang also won the Rossall Cup.

Gayle Tanner was the Holmwood Cup winner and Yolanda Henry took the Hunter Cup.

Cathy Murray was the Robb Cup champ and Susan Gagne was crowned the winner of the annual match play tournament.

Club champion Diana Dimmer won the Barbara Ahluwalia Cup, while Martha Cruikshank and Deborah Williams were recognized as the Yule Pairs champions.

In the nine-hole league, Jill Smethurst won the Captain’s Cup, Carole

Matheson was the Member’s Cup and Joy Nelles champ, Sharron Marlow took the Carmichael Cup, and the Gretchen Ormston Award went to Sue Sherk (flight A) and Linda Williams (flight B).

During the final week of regular men’s league competition last Thursday, Stephen Warboys and Dan Regan were the top shooters, both with 1-over 37 scores.

Colby Ostromecki was low net winner with 28, followed by Stein Hansen at 29. Ostromecki also sank the longest putt on #6.

Other winners: Matt Mines (longest drive #1) and closest to the hole went to Mike Sanders (#4) and Jeff Jacques (#9).

Ricky Watson (#3), Warboys (#5), Rick Janes (#6), Stuart Young (#7) and Jacques (#9) also had

birdies that won gross skins worth \$20.

Net skins of \$95 went to Stephen Jenkins (#1) and Greg Fedoryn (#4).

The league holds its annual banquet next week after the men endure “Magwood’s Revenge” this week, with awkward hole placements and other surprises courtesy of groundskeeper Mike Magwood and his dedicated crew.

In the Tuesday Woofs league finale, Don Allen was tops with 38. Ted Wiens took low net with 35. Eric Borrows birdied #7 to win the hidden hole prize and Martin Vagners was closest to the pin on #4.

A total of 76 players competed in the Woofs’ year-end scramble and the team of Peter Falconer, Rob Chubey, Glenn Young and Brian Heer led all contenders by shooting a phenom-



Martha Cruikshank, left, of the 18-hole league, and Deborah Williams of the nine-hole league, teamed up to win the Yule Pairs championship. SUPPLIED

enal 8-under 28.

When the Woofs handed out the season’s hardware, the winners were: Mike Eagen and Richard Sammons

(Legends Cup), Hansen (Woofer’s Cup), Meszaros (Top Dog) and Doug Dineley (Golden Dog).

kevin@niagaranow.com

PRESENTED BY:



NIAGARA ON THE LAKE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

CANDIDATE NIGHTS

LORD MAYOR CANDIDATES

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 14TH

TOWN COUNCIL CANDIDATES

THURSDAY OCTOBER 15TH

Moderator, Jeff Bolichowski, Armstrong Media Group

LORD MAYOR CANDIDATES

VAUGHAN GOETTLER
ANDREA KAISER
ERWIN WIENS

TOWN COUNCIL CANDIDATES

TIM BALASIUK
GARY BURROUGHS
NICHOLAS COLANERI
KAREN JONES-TAYLOR
MARIA MAVRIDIS
STEVE MCGUINNESS

WESTON MILLER
RICK MILLS
ANDREW NIVEN
SANDRA O'CONNOR
ADRIANA CATER-VIZZARI

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Event begins at 6:00 pm

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RE-ELECT

Adriana Cater Vizzari

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A MESSAGE FROM THE NIAGARA FOUNDATION

Who will protect Niagara-on-the-Lake... **IF NOT YOU?**

Too often, development has exploited what makes our town special—
instead of contributing to it.

And the Province keeps making that easier, law by law:

- 2019 More Homes, More Choice Act
- 2022 More Homes Built Faster Act
- 2024 Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act
- 2025 Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act

Our Lord Mayor and Councillors, not Town staff, must clearly define the
kind of growth our community wants. And they need to act now.

You have the power to make it an election issue.
ON OCTOBER 26...

- ✓ **CHOOSE** to preserve heritage, natural landscapes, and agricultural lands.
- ✓ **TELL CANDIDATES** what matters to you and to the next generation.
- ✓ **VOTE** for a Council committed to development that makes Niagara-on-the-Lake
a better place to live—not just a more profitable place to build.

Status Quo or Change?



The Niagara Foundation—a charitable organization with a volunteer Board—has helped to champion and safeguard the Town's architectural, cultural and environmental integrity since 1962.

theniagarafoundation.com

Willowbank hits \$163K in fundraiser for estate upgrades

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

It was a busy Saturday afternoon at the Willowbank Estate in Queenston, as the School of Restoration Arts opened its doors to the public, inviting them to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its foundation and learn more about how the school works to provide a rare education experience in Canada.

The school held an open house celebration at its campus Sept. 19, located in the 19th-century estate home. The day featured live heritage demonstrations, an artisan market, children's activities and a tour of the school's Indigenous Love Garden.

The school also marked a milestone in its ongoing fundraising efforts to revitalize and modernize parts of the Willowbank mansion, built in 1836.

The Government of Canada has committed to matching up to \$193,000 of



Student Elizabeth Law and carpentry instructor Doug Vickers show how paints are milled. JULIA SACCO

funds Willowbank raises, creating the potential for about \$386,000 to be used to stabilize the building's northwest wall and install an internal fire stair that will provide access to the third floor.

This month, donations from organizations such as the James A. Burton & Family Foundation and the NOTL Rotary Club saw the school hit \$163,000 in funds raised.

Katie Houghton, Willowbank's executive director, said it is rewarding to see the government recognize it's work.

"Not only are we a school, but we're part of the broader community here in NOTL," she said. "In getting into that third floor, we're looking forward to making this more of a community hub."

The Burton foundation donated \$70,000 of the funds raised, while the Ro-

tary Club donated \$5,000.

Fundraising will not end when the \$193,000 goal is reached, Houghton said.

"As we try to broaden our reach and make the site more interactive and accessible for the community, obviously we need to invest in making those spaces available," she said. "There's endless things we could be doing at Willowbank."

Houghton said she hopes the third floor will be used by the community during the summer months following the end of term in April.

Julian Smith, Willowbank's former board chair, was instrumental in creating the school's curriculum in the mid-2000s, which combines academic learning with hands-on action.

"I think that's what makes Willowbank so distinctive," he said

In the 20th century, jobs and vocations were labelled as blue-collar, white-collar and grey-collar, Smith said. "Willowbank was set

up to address the way we divided the world into little boxes and really create a model for people to understand how places and communities are created."

Willowbank is one of a handful of conservation programs operating in the country offering hands-on experience, among programs at institutes such as the College of New Caledonia in British Columbia, Athabasca University in Alberta, Holland College in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia Community College.

More than 95 per cent of Willowbank's graduates are fully employed in the heritage restoration field, Smith said.

Heritage plaster conservator Magali Furieri, a former Willowbank student, was at the open house giving a demonstration involving the work she does at Iconoplast Designs.

"Our work takes us from restoration to preservation to conservation," she said.

After graduating from the school, Furieri now works in residential and heritage-designated locations, including Massey Hall and Prince Edward Island's old courthouse.

Over the last 20 years, Willowbank's curriculum has increasingly focused on sustainability practices.

Jim Mountain, the school's co-dean of education, said the buildings being worked on in the restoration field are older and therefore prone to climate change.

"As time has evolved, there's been a climate change factor worked into the curriculum," he said.

Smith also noted the school's increased focus on Indigenous teachings.

"That part of the curriculum is much more just a central part of how we teach."

Those interested in supporting Willowbank's continued fundraising efforts can visit willowbank.ca/donate.

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Song Selections at the Artists' Village.
Penny-Lynn Cookson
Special to The Lake Report

This was an unexpected master class in the music of Haydn, Salieri and Mozart, and it was a surprise how intertwined their lives and compositions were with one another. Their world was Vienna, the epicentre of classical music during the 18th century, and they were its leading masters and innovators.

Selections of compositions by Mozart, Haydn and Salieri, with references to the young singer and composer Marianna Auenbrugger, were introduced and explored by musicologist Kristen Franseen, a post-doctoral research associate at Western University.

The outstanding string quartet players included Juilliard-trained teacher and violist/violinist Esme Allen-Creighton and violin/viola performer and teacher Caitlin Boyle. Sharon Lee is a violinist, concertmaster, music director and orchestra contractor. Amber Ghent is a chamber and orchestral cellist who plays with a wide range of ensembles, including at the Shaw. All four perform and record with symphony orchestras.

They were joined by soprano, librettist and producer Rachel Krehm, the co-founder and director of Opera 5, the current company-in-residence at the Canadian Opera Company. On keyboard was pianist Stéphane Mayer. He is a coach and répétiteur with the Canadian Opera Company, collaborates with other Canadian opera companies and is an active recitalist.

They came together to perform for us in a small, spartan space at the Artists' Village. This lacked the grandeur of the Habsburg court of Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II or the palatial rooms of the wealthy noble Esterházy, but the intention of making music was the same. Theirs was



Located at the epicentre of classical music during the 18th century was Vienna, and within it, two of the art tradition's leading masters and innovators: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Antonio Salieri. WIKIMEDIA/JOSEPH WILLIBRORD MÄHLER

a joyful interplay with one another and, in turn, with us. However, the context was different and has continued to change over time.

In the 18th century, instability, wars and social change were the norm. The Russian defeat of the Turks in 1783 was a relief, as the Viennese remembered all too well the Ottomans at the gates of Vienna a hundred years before. Joseph II's mother, Empress Maria Theresa, was in frequent conflict over territories with Frederick the Great of Prussia. Reforms resulting from the Enlightenment and increasing threats of revolution were adding to the uncertainty of the time. Political alliances were made and broken by dynastic royal marriages. Joseph II's sister, Maria Antonia, was sent off at 14 to marry Louis XVI of France and, as Marie Antoinette, lost her head to the guillotine.

The function of music socially and politically was to represent the social values held by the royals, the aristocrats and the wealthy bourgeoisie. Operas were comedies and very popular at the Burgtheater, founded by Maria Theresa. Musicians, including teachers, were considered servants. Music was played at home by family members or by paid musicians.

Joseph Haydn was employed for 30 years to conduct the Esterházy orchestra. One of his students

was Marianna Auenbrugger, a gifted pianist and composer. Her renowned physician father, Leopold, was a close friend of Salieri and wrote the German libretto of Salieri's opera "Der Raufgangkehrer."

On Marianna's death at 23, Salieri published, in her memory, her Sonata for Keyboard in E-flat Major alongside his own funeral composition, "Ode, Deh si piacevoli." This sonata was played by Stéphane Mayer, and the Salieri aria was sensitively sung by Rachel Krehm. Haydn dedicated a series of sonatas to Marianna and her sister Katherina, writing, "Their way of playing and genuine insight into music equal those of the greatest masters."

Stéphane Mayer played, with delightful variation, Mozart's Six Variations on "Mio Caro Adone," sourced from Act 2 of Salieri's popular opera "La fiera di Venezia." Salieri composed more than 40 operas in Italian, French and German. He was the most influential composer of his time, appreciated for his traditional approach in contrast to the innovations and complexity of Mozart's compositions. Salieri's operas were highly acclaimed in Paris, and Rachel Krehm sang "La Ra La" from his "La Grotta di Trofonio."

Salieri taught Beethoven, Schubert, Liszt and Mozart's son for free. Beethoven dedicated his "Violin Sonata

No. 3, Op. 12" to his teacher, writing, "Salieri taught me that music must speak like a noble tongue." Mozart struggled to get teaching positions to supplement his performance income. His brilliance was recognized, but his genius and innovative gifts would only be appreciated after his death.

The program came to a delightful conclusion with Haydn's String Quartet in E-flat Major, better known as "The Joke." As string quartets became increasingly popular in homes, there was a great demand for music. After being in London and seeing how English musicians self-promoted their talents, Haydn took out a newspaper ad once or twice a week offering, for a fee, six published quartets to be returned the next day.

The at-home string quartet musicians faced each other in a circle so they could engage in a musical conversation. The violins sustained the conversation, the cello added a darker, serious tone and the viola was considered a lighter female voice. Most string quartets until the 20th century were played by men. Straddling a cello was not considered ladylike. The give-and-take, starts and pauses of "The Joke" were a delightful end to an excellent performance.

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

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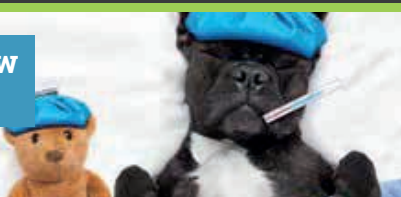


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Student wins Pumphouse scholarship

Staff
The Lake Report

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre has awarded its 2026 art education scholarship to Laura Secord Secondary School graduate Emma Smith. Smith received the \$200 Niagara Pumphouse Arts Scholarship for Art Education and is continuing her studies in illustration at OCAD University.

Her work focuses on creating characters in a graphic style, often using humour and playful concepts.

Smith also spent the summer working as a camp counsellor at the Pump-house, helping children explore art and develop their creative skills.

“My favourite part was being able to assist and connect with children from a vast range of ages, helping to strengthen their connection with art, its production, and fundamentals,” Smith said.

“I will definitely carry with me the skill of running and teaching certain art

techniques and assignments, as this has given me more practice in both explaining and showing my art process, which is a very important part of my major.”

Natalie Early, secretary of the Niagara Pumphouse board, presented Smith with the scholarship in recognition of her artistic achievements and plans to pursue post-secondary studies in the visual arts.

The scholarship was established in memory of Pump-house founding member Ian Butler. It was created in 2010 and formalized in 2018 as an annual award for a graduating student from A.N. Myer Secondary School, Laura Secord Secondary School or Holy Cross.

Recipients are selected from applications submitted by school staff.

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, located on the Niagara River in Niagara-on-the-Lake, offers visual arts classes, workshops, camps, exhibitions and events throughout the year.



Pumphouse board secretary Natalie Early presents Laura Secord student Emma Smith with a \$200 scholarship in recognition of her artistic achievements and commitment to pursuing post-secondary studies in the visual arts.

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Agriculture art installation set to be completed in October

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Ron Clavier’s Thanks for the Meal project has been more than a decade in the making, and in early September, the concrete foundation piles were laid for the first art installation in the series.

The project is dedicated to celebrating farmers and agricultural history in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

On-site framing for the first piece has a tentative installation date of Tuesday, Oct. 13. Niagara College trades students will install this framing.

The artwork is set to be installed onto the frame in the following weeks.

Indigenous artists Raymond Skye and Shayde Sandy chose the legend of the Three Sisters as the basis for their design concept.

The legend tells how corn, beans and squash came to

be grown together. The art installation will feature three women, or “sisters,” working in a field, with the tallest rising 16 feet from the ground.

Concrete slab bases for the figures were laid on the eastern side of Niagara Stone Road, between Hare Winery and Southbrook Vineyards, on Sept. 3.

Clavier told The Lake Report laying the foundation was an amazing feeling.

“It had been a long time coming,” he said.

The team involved in the project, including representatives from the Art Gallery of Niagara-on-the-Lake, set the date for the first installation after a meeting in March.

In June last year, Clavier vouched for the town to exempt visual art from its bylaw banning road signs by non-government groups and ordinary people.

The motion was passed,

giving him the green light to move forward.

A number of councillors support the project, including Coun. Erwin Wiens.

“It made me feel good that people seem to get it. They seem to know what it is, it’s not just an exhibition,” Clavier said.

He said he does not know how many further installations the group will complete, but says the possibilities are “infinite.”

He is interested in creating installations in honour of groups including Menonites, Farmerettes and British land grants.

“I’m happy to sit around their kitchen table and hear their story,” he said.

He would like the art itself to be made by someone in the communities the pieces are honouring, or as close to the community as possible/1,≥/.

“And that’s a way to bring people together. We have a



Artist rendering of the Three Sisters installation.

huge amount of divisiveness in society,” he said.

“We have to start listening to each other and we have to start talking to each other like humans, which shouldn’t be as hard as it seems to be these days.”

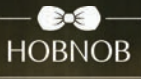
Twelve Niagara College trade students will be among the team members completing the field installation.

The structures will be equipped with wind braces and bird spikes.

Clavier said that by next spring, the group should be ready for the next project.

This summer, the group received a \$10,000 donation from the Burton Foundation. Once the installation is up, Clavier said he will begin preparing material for further fundraising events to bring people together.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



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BKind Grateful #96: Check in on someone after a big life event once the attention has died down.

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Contributed by Patty Garriock
“Just because you are offended by something doesn’t mean you are right.”
- Ricky Gervais

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Puppy path

Pancake, a rescue dog, pauses on the path at the Commons dog park while waiting for Rod, Mariette and Frank to catch up during an afternoon outing.
DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Opinion

So, why would anyone want this job?



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

Walking the dog in St. Davids, Geoff Fisher says the conversation lately is all about the election. And developers — who probably buy politicians.

“One thing I have heard often is that many of the candidates are too aligned with developers (leading to council decisions that favour developers over current residents’ interests) because council is under the influence of the big developers,” he tells me. “I haven’t studied the council’s decision history on developments, and likely neither have my neighbours, but what does stand out to me is this situation where people think that council members can be ‘bought’ in some manner.”

He asks if that’s true. If so, how would a developer, like whipping boy Benny Marotta, come to “own” council members, getting them to greenlight his big deals? Like the Parliament Oak hotel. Or the sprawling hotel/spa/condo development on the Rand Estate.

As far as the town and the cops are concerned, there’s no corruption. That was the verdict after Marotta gave

a councillor ten grand in an envelope, saying it was for “campaign expenses.” The recipient, Gary Burroughs, turned it over to the municipality and was eventually cleared of any gift. But that memory lives on.

Everyone running in this election has a personal agenda. Nobody gets into municipal politics for the pathetic money they receive. And every day means dealing with more crap and grief from pesky constituents. The job sucks. Yet people are begging you to give it to them.

Why? Because being elected means influencing decisions that can impact millions, or hundreds of millions, of dollars. It’s how we got the Big Dig on King Street, those godawful buildings beside atmospheric Garrison Village and a 50,000-square-foot Mississauga-clone theatrical box going up in the heart of the Old Town.

Most people living here would have voted against one or all. But here they be. And now it seems we’re close to the biggest project of all, the Ritz-Rand.

Of the three running to be our lord mayor (with super powers), two have no issue with the latest Marotta mega-dig, so long as development rules are followed. Erwin Wiens (now deputy mayor) said as much in this column. Now Andrea Kaiser (currently a regional councillor) tells me she’ll openly consider a Ritz-Carlton hotel, plus 170 condos in five buildings, a spa, conference centre and 514-car parking garage.



It took 161 days for members of a citizens group to be told about water flow from this deep Parliament Oak hotel site — during which historic flooding hit the town. They wonder why.

“I do not take positions in favour or against any planning application before the proper planning process has been completed with full transparency, appropriate heritage and technical reviews as well as meaningful public input,” she says. So let the process rip.

“Any plan must respect and follow the findings of the Ontario Land Tribunal. That includes protecting the significant heritage buildings, the cultural heritage landscape and important landscape features, as well as preserving the mature trees and natural heritage features identified through the tribunal process.”

Vaughn Goettler, in contrast, is a hard no. He’d slap a moratorium on development since NOTL can’t swallow more — certainly not when this summer’s floods showed basic infrastructure may already be taxed.

And while Wiens and Kaiser say they’d be guided by the expertise and decisions of town staff, Goettler suggests we’re already paying the price for elected people handing power to NOTL employees.

Oh, and this brings us to water. Specifically dewatering.

It took our largest citizen group 161 days and a freedom of information process to get details on the amount of water being pumped out of Marotta’s deep hotel hole, to gauge the impact on our pipes and flooding of basements.

There’s apparently been no co-operation from the town on whether rules are being followed. “Why this is such a deep, dark secret,” says group director Ron Simkus. “Beats me.”

For citizens who can’t add a small porch without a permit (that will likely be denied), cut a nuisance shrub without a tree permit or replace an old broken window without a heritage permit, watching builders and developers raze entire historic structures, erect hulking developments in sensitive areas and enjoy almost-free use of public infrastructure seems wrong. Privileged. Suspect. Especially when done in the dark.

This makes people like Geoff and his dog buddies wonder. Me too.

Perception, in politics, is reality.

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

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Goettler is the **only** candidate for change

Dear editor:

In my letter to the editor, published Oct. 1, ("Letter: Looking for change after this election? Beware of Goettler and Kaiser split vote") I focused on the numbers and the danger of splitting the vote on Oct. 26.

Since then, some social media groups have used my piece in ways I never intended; twisting a simple data-based warning into something else entirely. For this reason, I wish to clarify my position and further comment on what I see unfolding in our community.

This follow-up isn't a case of "flip-flopping." Rather, I am a resident who looked at the mathematical reality first, the actual campaigns

second, and I believe arrived at a logical conclusion.

Splitting the vote between the status quo or significant change will not deliver change; that requires support for the candidate who stands for that change.

While Andrea Kaiser has my full respect for her years on regional council, she does not represent the significant change I observe many of the citizens are seeking.

Vaughn Gotthler is explicitly saying no to Ontario strong mayor powers as completely undemocratic. In a political landscape where others view these concentrated executive powers as a "tool in the toolbox," his refusal to ever use it signals a commitment to collaborative leadership.

Under the new rules and our shrunken council, a mayor needs to have just two councillors on side to make the decision and override the majority. It completely weakens the voices we elect to represent us.

At the candidates for lord mayor forum, he publicly rejected that system entirely and said he will treat council as a team, where every single voice matters and decisions are made together.

This approach is akin to many northern European government models and certainly not the "first pass the post" model and our general experience.

The fact that he has explicitly committed to work full-time, and to donate

the salary to charity, are additional clear differentiators as well. This couldn't be clearer and has not been cloaked in any doublespeak or political rhetoric.

Citizens are telling me that these points alone is a welcomed change signalling an approach to a different future in municipal politics and town management.

Ultimately, what we do on the ballot will be the outcome in this election. Over the next four years, we will reflect on this election and the choice of the majority, but the outcome will not be because we did not have a clear choice: more of the same, or the chance to turn the corner.

**Judith Barnes
NOTL**

We need a mayor who can **control** development

Dear editor:

The official plan for Niagara-on-the-Lake is the document that determines the framework for how land is used, as well as growth and development in the entire town (five communities).

A great deal of effort went into the creation of the plan when it was created, so why is it not followed? We have lost count as to how many amendments there have been within the official plan, but almost every development has been granted amendments. Why? How is that justified?

How many subdivisions have been planned and built in St. Davids in the last 15 years or so? Ten? Fifteen? More!

Has the infrastructure that has to carry the drainage — storm drains (for roofs, driveways and sidewalks and streets) and waste (sanitary sewers) — kept pace with the developments? How could they?

After numerous new subdivisions have been constructed, the water/sewer flow that the existing pipes have to take somewhere is inadequate.

Were new underground pipes installed in all these subdivisions? Yes. But then where do those pipes empty? Into the existing piping that was never sized for all the hundreds of new homes.

No one had a clue when the infrastructure was installed decades ago that there would be such expansion.

As it stands right now, there is not adequate dispersal of rainwater and sewage.

That is evident in all the flooding that took place in both storm and sewage systems this year.

Most of these new developments were created without proper planning. Who and where are all the professionals and experts?

We suggest that we need a lord mayor (who essentially is the top dog in the town) who can work with council and staff, control the developments by pausing them until all aspects of the project are thoroughly reviewed by staff who understand the ramifications and impact on the chosen location.

We need to have confi-

dence in the staff who are reviewing new applications, both residential and certainly commercial.

Many, many costly mistakes have been made over the years and folks are getting tired of it!

We need leadership that listens to what the citizens are asking for and need.

The lord mayor needs to encourage the implementation of the majority of what the citizens feel is necessary.

Make sure you have read all the information provided to you regarding the candidates for lord mayor as well as for council and decide who you feel would be the best at listening and implementation.

**David Scott
Queenston**

Commercialization doesn't benefit most residents

Dear editor:

In a letter to the editor published by TLR a few weeks ago, a writer from Old Town expressed his opinion concerning various problems that currently exist in NOTL ("Stop manufacturing the parking problem," Bruce Giterman, Sept. 3, 2026). This was his personal opinion only, but it is, in my opinion, valid and one that I largely share, and probably many other residents of NOTL do as well.

As the letter points out, the purpose of tourism, while subject to opinion and debate, is certainly not to cater to more ice cream day visitors and their cars. I would agree that on certain days and at certain times of the year there are far too many of both already. And now we also have a merchant standing on the Queen Street sidewalk soliciting everyone to enter his store and buy his soaps. This

behaviour is completely out of character with that of the heritage district of NOTL that has been built over many years.

The expansion of NOTL is inevitable, and many would probably say it is good for all of us. However, elected government, as well as tourism agencies, must consider limits and the needs and opinions of local residents before any others.

Many visitors come here

largely because of the unique reputation and character that have been well established in NOTL and what it has to offer them — theatre, wineries, natural beauty, etc. In my opinion, there should be no need to actively encourage more of the same. Such encouragement will only be to the ultimate benefit of a few entrepreneurs and not local residents.

**Derek Collins
NOTL**



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style
Category: PAGE BOYS

**This Golden Ticket holder takes
Grandpa Joe with him to the
chocolate factory.**

Last issue category: ABOUT A BOY

Clue: Raised by wolves, a "man's cub" named Mowgli learns wisdom from wild animals in this Rudyard Kipling story collection.

Answer: What is the Jungle Book?

Answered first by: Jess Bartsch

Also answered correctly (in order) by:
Lynda Collet, Sue Rautenberg, Bob Wheatley,
Jane Morris, Emma Balsas, Jane Andersen,
Jim Dandy, Becky Creager, Jeff Lake,
Claudia Grimwood, Marla Percy, Wade Durling,
Margie Enns, Hedy Wiebe, Rob Hutchison,
Nancy Rocca, Katie Reimer, Hugh Lundy,
Esther VanGorder, Sheila Meloche,

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(Subject line: Riddle me this)

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When it comes to town decisions, it ain't over till it's over



Brian Marshall
Columnist

Many of us thought that when town council passed a bylaw in March of this year to expand the Old Town heritage district, we could breathe a little easier knowing that there were finally, at long last, some level of protection in place for this unique historic community within Niagara-on-the-Lake.

I wish that was in fact the case but, unfortunately, 'tis not true.

Six property owners — incidentally, not necessarily those who actually reside on the properties — filed appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal pursuant to the provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act thereby stalling and potentially killing the expansion of the heritage district.

All the monies paid in consultancy and town staff costs plus the hours or

days invested by volunteers and town council, may all be flushed down the toilet dependant on the decisions rendered by the tribunal on each of the individual appeals.

So, despite the overwhelming majority of property owners within the boundaries of the proposed heritage district being supportive or accepting of the change, objectors representing about one per cent could derail the will of the majority.

Let's step back for a moment to understand the legislation.

There are two specific sections of the Ontario Heritage Act which provide for appeals pursuant to the process and creation of a heritage conservation district.

In the case of process (relative to properties within the defined boundaries of the designation study area), section 40.1(4) of the legislation provides that "any person" may appeal to the tribunal within 30 days of council endorsement of defining the boundaries of a designation study.

Then, the legislation speaks to appeals associated with the actual designation of a heritage conservation district in section 41(4) wherein it states that within



The saga of the Queen-Picton heritage district update continues, with appeals filed by residents with the Ontario Land Tribunal this fall.

30 days of the publication in a local newspaper notice of the passage of the designation bylaw, "any person who objects to the by-law may appeal to the Tribunal by giving the Tribunal and the clerk of the municipality" provided that they specify their objection and the reasons supporting said objection together with payment of the applicable fee.

Now, of the appeals filed by the six property owners, all of them appealed under section 40.1(4) contesting the boundaries of the designation study area and two of these owners also appealed under section 41(4) objecting to the actual designation of the proposed heritage conservation district.

At the time this column was written, all of the appeals with the exception of one, are shown as "closed" — meaning the tribunal has issued a final order or, the appeal was withdrawn by the appellant or, the case was resolved through another administrative action — on the Ontario Land Tribunal's case status webpage (jus-olt-prod.power-appsportals.com/en/e-status), however no decisions, withdrawals or alternative resolutions of the appeals have been published.

That leaves the one 41(4) appeal still outstanding since it is shown as being in the first phase of the tribunal appeal process — "pre-merit hearing" as per the webpage or officially, a "case management conference," which, in real terms, is a mechanism to sort the wheat from the chaff, first focusing on defining the actual issues and facts underwriting the appeal, then attempting to (dependant on the merits of the appeal) push resolution to mediation or other dispute settlement processes.

In my world, this is a logical and reasonable choke point to sort, divert or dismiss what may be described as weak or nuisance overtures — which could waste tribunal time and taxpayer

dollars — from 50,000-foot substantiated appeals under the law.

That said, and given that an appeal to the tribunal passes this minimal threshold, it becomes a legal battle dependent upon the pocket-books of the appellant and the municipality to fund and defend their respective positions.

Given the current council's reticence to properly fund important legal contests at the tribunal based on their apparent belief that it is a waste of money since the municipality always loses (despite the Randwood victory in 2024), one can only hope that in the case of appeals launched against the new heritage district they have ponied up the money for proper and effective legal representation.

Otherwise, one can only wonder about their actual commitment to fulfil the promise they made to protect our heritage through the expansion of the district — something at least one councillor running for re-election have inferred is a "done deal" while taking a bow.

As a general observation, council can attempt to shift accountability elsewhere (such as in the case of making Transport Canada rule on the proposed heights of

buildings in Glendale) but, at the beginning and end of the day, the responsibility — together with the blame or accolades — remains solely in the hands of our local elected councillors.

The future boundaries are yet to be determined and, to use Ralph Carpenter's famous 1976 quote, "The opera ain't over until the fat lady sings."

Closing off this week's column, it was pointed out by one of our readers that, included within the Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act of 2023, an amendment was made to the Ontario Planning Act which allows "any person or public body" to appeal a municipal interim control bylaw to the Ontario Land Tribunal within 50 days of its passage, contrary to the previous appeal limitation to only the Minister of Municipal Affairs as cited in the Arch-i-text column from last week ("Arch-i-text: Is keeping town facilities off-limits during elections right?")

Oddly though, there is no definition of what or whom a "person" is included in the Planning Act leaving fodder for legal fees to sort it out.

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



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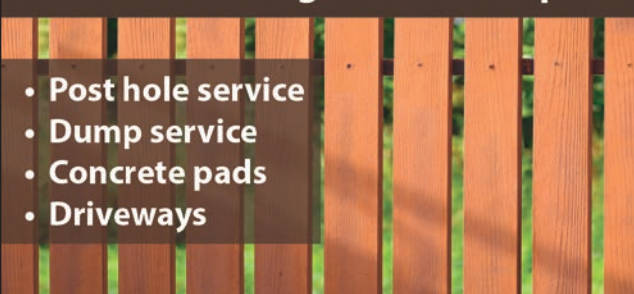
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Thinking about Silks Restaurant in Virgil



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

Talk about a unique and local topic for this week's edition of Ross's Ramblings. Was it their flashy new outdoor sign that drew my attention to Silks Country Kitchen a few days ago? Or did some other subliminal prompt turn on the chandelier in my head?

And just what is the etymology of the name Silks?

Since moving here in 1992, I have passed through the intersection of Four Mile Creek Road and Niagara Stone Road hundreds of times.

Objectively, downtown Virgil is not really memorable. I have been to Silks many times, quite often for breakfast after a spirited

Wallbangers hockey game very early Sunday mornings. Opposing teams would dine together, and rarely was there a harsh word. Commissioner Bill Dickson kept an eye on things, and any emotions were quickly cooled down.

Also, the Hot Tub hockey players often enjoyed a cold post-game beverage at Silks after their evening games. For me, an Oast House Barnraiser.

Silks was sort of like a favourite winter sweater or a comfortable sofa for TV watching. It felt good, and there were no surprises. Like a warm toque.

In an attempt to find out where the restaurant name originated, I made a few telephone calls. Then, leaping into the current century, I Googled it. Still curious, I actually spoke to Jennifer Phelan, co-owner with her brother Joel Dempsey. Then I called the source of much local information, Megan Vanderlee. I think it was Megan who told me she had heard that an original owner of Silks had been into horses and horse racing. Thoroughbreds or



Whether it's for grabbing a drink, or the reasonably priced grilled cheese at \$5.50 a pop, Silks Country Kitchen is a dining staple of Virgil. FILE/EVAN SAUNDERS

standardbreds? Trotters or pacers? The venerable track at Fort Erie, or Garden City Raceway? Yes, from 1964 until 1976, the Ontario Jockey Club did its best out where the outlet mall is now, but "it just didn't work out."

I know a wee bit about horses, having freeze-branded standardbred foals in the southlands of New Zealand back in 1974. (A little knowledge in the hands of a fool, and all that.) Invercargill, what a lovely town.

Stay with me here. Thoroughbred jockeys wear

"silks." What an aha moment that prompted. And sulky drivers wear silks, too.

I shifted back to Google, and that's where the research became interesting. There are actually two hospitality venues named Silks. The other one is called Silks Balcony and Loge, located prominently and presumptuously on the third level of the clubhouse at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky. With a good view of the finish line.

Yes, that Churchill Downs, where the Kentucky

Derby is contested annually. The first leg of the Triple Crown, followed by the Preakness and the Belmont Stakes. Only 13 horses have ever won the Triple Crown.

I am wandering way off track. Let's get back to Silks Country Kitchen in Virgil. Certainly an anchor and important tenant, along with Avondale and Domino's. By the way, Avondale doubles as the landlord at this busy strip mall. Who knew? Who really cares?

Let me ramble to a conclusion with a few words about Silks. Not a restaurant

review, just a few informal words. In this case, encomiums, meant to say, "Well done."

Jennifer and Joel run a tight ship. I understand the eatery opened in 1995, and they took over the reins 17 years ago. They have the Midas touch of attracting highly talented, loyal and classy employees. All service staff are what I call "fast walkers," and they take care of a lot of guests, often under rush-hour pressure.

Host and busser Lincoln is a real winner, along with another Jennifer and Alex.

Now, a drum roll as I ramble to a conclusion this week. At Silks in little old Virgil, I have stumbled upon what must be the best sandwich value in all of Canada. A very generous cheddar grilled cheese on fresh sourdough bread. Shockingly priced at \$5.50. It was so good, I ordered a second one to go.

That grilled cheese sandwich tasted just as good the next day. For lunch.

Which made me remember the truism, "There is no plural for grilled cheese."

rossrocket9@gmail.com

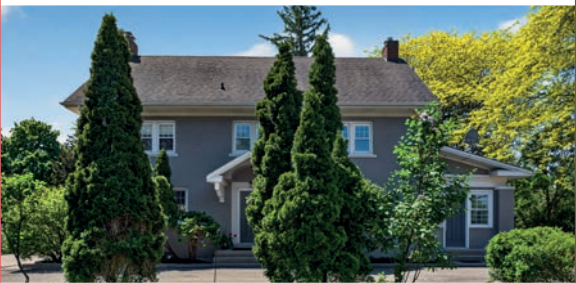


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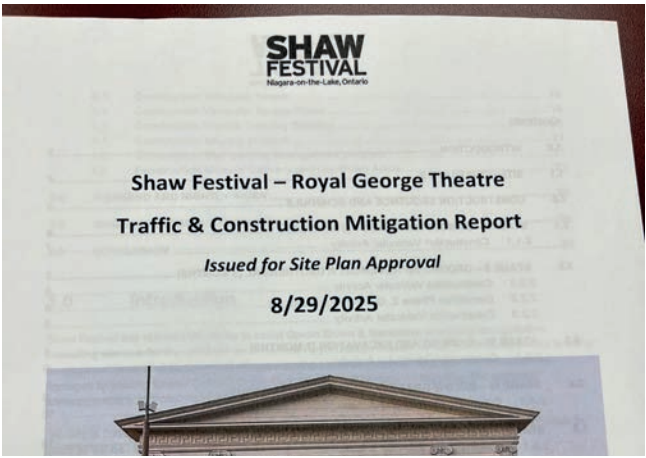
LETTER OF THE WEEK

Residents deserve answers, not roadblocks

Dear editor:
Some of us have asked for information backing up the town’s decision-making but have been stymied by what appears to be a resistance to providing this information. Individuals have been told to seek information under the Freedom of Information Act. Information that should be publicly available and has probably been paid for by NOTL taxpayers. So, have you ever wondered what the reasoning is behind the seeming lack of co-operation and transparency?

At this June 29 meeting, Mr. Frost was asked why it was so difficult for residents to receive public information from the town. He indicated these information requests had to be screened for privacy. Apparently, one document could take up to four hours to review, and he couldn’t afford the time to deal with all the information requests from the public.

Mr. Wiens, on the other hand, indicated that town staff were slow because they did not have the person-



Writer Gienek Ksiazkiewicz says the Town of NOTL seems to be purposefully making information it doesn’t want people to know hard to access, like this traffic plan for the Royal George rebuild, which you can only view in-person under supervision, and you can’t take notes or photos (we did anyway, because these are the public’s documents).

nel to adequately respond within reasonable time frames.

Whatever the reason, it seems that when the information request involves documents that could question or contradict the logic behind a specific decision, a curtain of bureaucratic silence and resistance seems to appear.

If I personally didn’t want to divulge information, I would use privacy as a weapon to thwart any

attempt to compel me to divulge information I didn’t want to. Particularly information that might be used to question my decision-making. A handy tool when needed.

Although Mr. Frost is concerned about privacy, he managed to reveal a matter that one would think would be very private. He pointed out that a legal battle is playing out regarding an insurance claim made by the son of John Petrie, owner

of Niagara Trailers on York Road.

He disclosed that Mr. Petrie’s son’s basement was flooded during a very recent rainfall. Mr. Petrie’s son made a claim with his insurance company. The insurance company apparently felt that the town/region was responsible for an infrastructure deficiency that resulted in flooding and should be liable for damages.

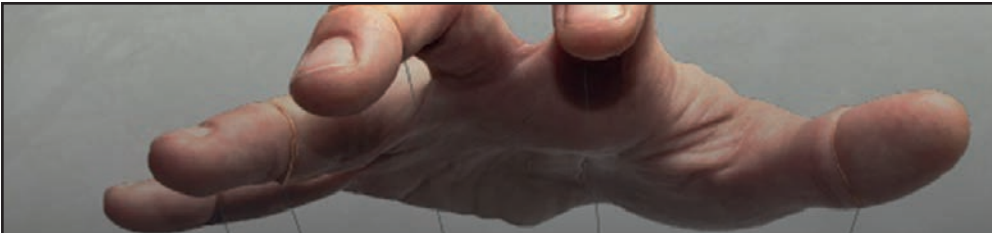
The town/region is apparently denying a causal relationship between the town’s infrastructure funding decisions and the resultant flooding that has caused damage to residents, hence the involvement of lawyers.

An ominous foreshadowing for anyone who might be in a similar situation.

Perhaps the consulting reports failed to assess all the risks involved with new developments and a reason why Mr. Frost doesn’t want to put his engineering stamp on them?

To be continued next week.

Gienek Ksiazkiewicz
St. Davids



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Leadership means being **ready for opportunity**

Dear editor:
As Niagara-on-the-Lake residents prepare to go to the polls, I believe they should take a hard look at how our current council has handled community recreation needs — and whether it has demonstrated the leadership required to take advantage of significant government funding opportunities.

On July 15, 2025, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club opened a conversation with council about its willingness to partner with the town in developing a dedicated indoor pickleball facility for the community.

In February 2026, council formally approved the closure of the Virgil outdoor courts and directed staff to find an alternative outdoor location.

After learning that the town was looking for another outdoor location, I wrote to council on May 25 suggesting that, rather than simply replacing the outdoor courts, the town should revisit the club's proposal for a dedicated, year-round indoor facility.



With the deadline to apply for recreational provincial funding coming this December, which could help open a new indoor pickleball facility, the town's lack of initiative on the idea may indicate a leadership issue, writes Ron Pychel.

Shortly afterward, I learned about the provincial Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund (CSRIF), which could provide funding of up to 70 per cent of eligible project costs. Given the club's willingness to partner, the growing demand for pickleball and the loss of the Virgil courts, I believed this opportunity warranted immediate investigation.

I wrote to the lord mayor and council on July 5 and continued to raise

the issue in subsequent correspondence.

Yet, with the Dec. 22 CSRIF application deadline rapidly approaching, council has still not directed staff to investigate or develop a potential indoor pickleball facility project.

That raises a much bigger question:

Is this simply about pickleball — or is it about the way this council leads?

Consider the St. Davids pool.

Preliminary plans were

presented to residents in July 2019, official plans followed in August, revised designs were completed in October, and a fundraising campaign was launched in February 2020 for a project estimated at approximately \$5 million.

The project subsequently stalled when expected funding did not materialize.

More recently, the town did not apply for the provincial CSRIF program in 2024, an opportunity that could have provided substantial funding toward the St. Davids pool project.

After that experience, one would think council would understand the importance of being prepared when government funding opportunities become available.

Apparently, that lesson has not been learned.

Here we are again.

The town has known about the loss of the Virgil courts. It has known about the club's interest in a potential partnership and the growing popularity of the sport. It has been made aware of a provincial funding program that could potentially cover a substan-

tial portion of an eligible project. And it has been repeatedly reminded of the approaching deadline.

Yet council has not even directed staff to develop a proposal that could be brought back to council for a decision on whether to proceed with a CSRIF application.

That is not a failure of government funding. It is a failure to be prepared for it.

Other municipalities have demonstrated that municipal leadership means looking beyond today's problems and preparing for tomorrow's opportunities. It means identifying community needs, developing projects, establishing partnerships and being ready to act when government funding becomes available.

Niagara-on-the-Lake should expect the same.

This is not really about pickleball. It is about leadership, accountability and priorities.

Do we have a council prepared to listen to community organizations, investigate opportunities and act with urgency when significant outside funding is available?

Or will we continue planning only after funding opportunities have passed?

Municipal elections are about more than personalities, promises and campaign signs. They are an opportunity for residents to decide what kind of leadership they expect from their elected representatives.

So before marking your ballot, ask the candidates:

What will you do differently to ensure Niagara-on-the-Lake is prepared to take advantage of government funding opportunities rather than watching them pass us by?

And perhaps most importantly:

After the St. Davids pool experience and now this CSRIF opportunity, has this council demonstrated the vision, urgency and leadership our community deserves?

If your answer is no, then this election gives residents the opportunity to make their voices heard.

Vote for change. Vote for accountability. Vote for leadership that is prepared to act.

Ron Pychel
Virgil

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Joe Dias says it's time for a new chapter in NOTL politics, one with less development. FILE

Turn the page on failed planning

Dear editor:

If past is prologue, when we look at the slate of candidates running for NOTL council, then the citizenry needs to turn the page on those who have caused so much confusion and rancour in our community.

The newly adopted official plan for Niagara-on-the-Lake, submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs in 2026, bears no resemblance to the one created after a great deal of time, money and effort in 2019. Countless amendments, approved by the previous council, have diluted the intention, direction and scope of how the municipality should grow, without any justification or explanation.

This has led to unfettered growth without any guardrails, leaving the municipality and its citizens dealing with completely foreseeable, costly expenses, and those individuals who put our communities in this position are asking for four more years of much of the same.

How many subdivisions have been built on our agricultural farmland? Land that used to absorb water to grow crops and fruit. How many of these new neighbourhoods were built and tied into the existing, aging infrastructure that was never going to be scalable for the people now living in the region?

Insurance companies and families now bear the burden of carrying the costs of developing without a plan, of a council that shirked its responsibilities, and of developers putting houses where houses shouldn't be.

Solutions offered in debates, forums or conversations at the doors of the electorate don't address where water that fills these neighbourhoods can go. Simply clearing the drains doesn't speak to the fact that development costs have fallen behind, along with infrastructure investments and the trust of people throughout the affected areas.

Dog-whistle slogans of "Taxes are too high and going higher," "This is the region's fault," "I grew up here, so I care more than the other guy," and "It will be different with me in charge" are meaningless when the question is asked, "But why did you let it happen then?"

Time to turn the page. Time to give new faces and new ideas a chance. Time to say to those who have failed our communities:

Thank you for your service, but watch the door on your way out.

Joe Dias
Queenston

NIMBY groups are biggest risk to the future of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Dear editor:

The biggest risk to the future of NOTL is not who does or does not get elected to the next council; it is the elites in Old Town who are troublesome and who pose the greatest threat.

It has been proven as fact that, had it not been for the largely anonymous SORE group, the Parliament Oak site would have been developed as a beautiful infill residential neighbourhood, and the Ritz-Carlton site would have also had a nice, quiet residential subdivision integrated with the other carved-out developments that also once formed the infamous, decaying former Rand Estate property.

The fact that these little but negatively powerful NIMBY groups continue to pull strings and brainwash the rest of the peasants places NOTL in great peril.

SORE, for example, is seeking input through some crafty questionnaire requesting responses, under the veil of a vague, threatening tone, from the mayoral candidates.

This is actually a good test of character and leadership qualities. If any of the three candidates respond to this anonymous political entrapment attempt, they should automatically be disqualified from running for the top seat at council because they would be seen as bowing down to the few at the expense of the rest of the population in Glendale, Virgil, Queenston, St. Davids and the humble peoples of the rural areas.

The control game, quite frankly, is almost over, and SORE needs to go away for good, as does NOTLRA, which for some reason keeps bumbling along while censoring its members.

The good news is that every single one of the candidates seeking election this time around is equally naive and underqualified to effect the type of governance that has been chronically sought by the Old Town elites, and thankfully that should ensure the same type of performance in the future as in the recent past.

The other good and refreshing news is that when the new casino is up and running within the confines of the shiny new Ritz, I will be surrounded by like-minded individuals who will be having a great time at the craps tables in Old Town territory while the elites plan for yet another destined-to-fail coup d'état.

Peter Rusin
St. Davids



Protesters follow Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, voicing their anger with the Parliament Oak hotel project. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

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Keith McNenly
Special to The Lake Report

The Niagara River is not simply a dramatic setting for development. It is Ontario's great glacial landscape corridor: a 58-kilometre river connecting Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, carrying the waters of the upper Great Lakes, passing historic towns, agricultural lands, battlefields, gardens, gorge, escarpment, hydro works and the Falls themselves.

The Falls are its geological centrepiece — not its only asset.

That larger understanding is essential as Ontario considers new entertainment and casino development. We should not treat Niagara as an empty platform on which to generate revenue streams for provincial coffers. We should build from the public landscape earlier Ontarians assembled: a landscape

whose economic value lies precisely in its singular nature, history and public accessibility.

In the late 19th century, Ontario and the state of New York faced the same Niagara questions. Both recognized the river's immense potential for industrial growth with the emerging promise of large-scale hydroelectricity. Both endured aggressive tourism commercialization at the Falls: private fences, paid viewpoints, mills, factories, hotels, signs and attractions competing for control of a natural wonder. And, in 1885, both created public park institutions to reclaim the scenery.

But their wider development visions diverged.

New York created the State Reservation at Niagara, now Niagara Falls State Park. Yet the reservation became a protected scenic core within a wider hydro-industrial city, while development from Lewiston to Buffalo made the American side an industrial-energy region.

Ontario also created a public park at the Falls — Queen Victoria Park, opened in 1888 after the



Horseshoe Falls, 1869.
SOURCED

province expropriated private frontage and removed many buildings.

But Ontario's more consequential decision was to extend the idea beyond the immediate brink.

Niagara Parks acquired historic sites, assembled land and built connecting roads until it became steward of much of the riverbank from Fort Erie to Niagara-on-the-Lake. The system now includes thousands of acres of parkland, heritage sites, gardens, the parkway and trail connections along the river corridor.

This was not anti-development. Ontario developed power intensely. The parks commission leased water rights and lands to hydroelectric companies, using the revenue to help sustain the park system. Yet its agreements required atten-

tion to the Falls' natural features and gave the commission control over plans and construction.

In other words, power was promoted, but scenery, public access and the overall composition of the landscape remained governing concerns.

Even the power buildings expressed that principle. The Toronto Power Generating Station was designed by E. J. Lennox, architect of Toronto's old City Hall and Casa Loma. It is an ornate, monumental building beside the river, not a disposable shed.

Nearby, the former Canadian Niagara Power Company generating station has been restored as a major visitor attraction, allowing the public to experience the monumental architecture and engineering that once powered the region. Ontario's early hydro works demonstrated that essential infrastructure could be technologically ambitious while still architecturally distinguished.

The landscape itself explains why that restraint mattered. Niagara emerged during the Holocene — the current geological epoch

of human civilization — following the last ice age. Retreating glaciers left the Great Lakes basin and enormous meltwater flows; the Niagara River then cut through the Niagara Escarpment.

Hard dolomite and limestone over softer shale created the conditions for undercutting, collapse, gorge formation and the upstream retreat of the Falls — roughly 11 kilometres over about 12,000 years.

That unique geological confluence is the reason the region exists as a global destination. It supports the river, gorge, whirlpool, escarpment, soils, agricultural landscape, hydroelectric history, parks, trails and enduring drama of the Falls.

Ontario today should therefore begin with a simple planning principle: the Niagara River and escarpment landscape is the asset; economic development must serve it.

That does not mean rejecting hotels, restaurants, or carefully located complementary attractions. It means applying a hierarchy. The river, Falls, gorge, escarpment, public views, parkland, geological integri-

ty, and historic places come first. New development must fit around that inheritance rather than treating it as a branded backdrop.

Niagara does not need to prove it can imitate other world destinations with observation wheels and casinos. Its advantage is that it possesses attributes no other destination can reproduce.

Earlier Ontarians understood that public ownership, pastoral landscapes, gardens, historical preservation and architecturally serious infrastructure could be forms of economic development. They created a foundation that continues to draw visitors more than a century later.

Our task is to respect that foundation — ecologically, culturally, architecturally and economically — so that Niagara remains a public landscape whose beauty governs development: a place where Indigenous and settler histories are interpreted honestly, fully and with respect, within a geological and glacial inheritance unlike any other.

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



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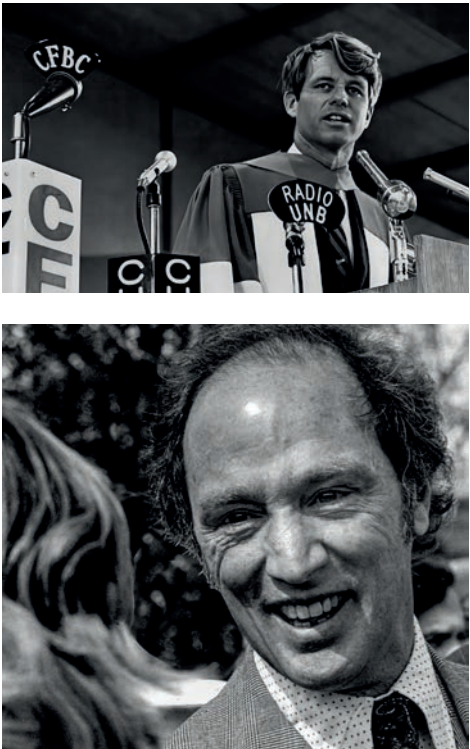
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Ron Planche selected photos for his exhibition that represent something from his life, whether it be an interest, a trip or a story, such as these shots of Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and Robert F. Kennedy. JULIA SACCO

Ron Planche’s life in photos comes to Niagara Pumphouse after death scare

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

Last December, Ron Planche was told he was going to die.

He began putting together photos to sum up his 60-year career in photography and photojournalism.

Planche had gone to the hospital with a tremendous headache late last year. After crossing the border for a timely CT scan, he was told to come back and see the doctor.

“I got a call from the doctor saying, ‘I’d like you to come in and see me. Oh, by the way, have someone drive you in,’” he said.

“Oh, I knew I was in trouble.”

Planche was told about a series of growths in his brain and was advised to arrange for an MRI, which would have taken weeks.

Instead, he checked himself into the neurology centre in Hamilton, where he was given a prognosis of one year to live, if he was lucky.

“Holy shit,” summed up Planche’s reaction.

From that point on, Planche began thinking about what to do for his legacy and his kids.

“I’m not doing anything because I’m in so much pain and under drugs and everything else. So I’m concen-

trating. How do I get my life in order?” he said.

Planche had around a million film photo negatives and 154,000 digital images from his 60-year career. He decided to put a photo up on Facebook every day and soon amassed a regular following of 25,000 page viewers.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Pumphouse reached out to Planche to host an exhibition of some of the images.

“They said it’ll be April of 2027 and I told them I’ll be dead by then,” Planche said.

The dates were changed very quickly, Planche said.

Along with his photos, Planche began dealing with the other unfinished business of his life — including his wine collection.

“I got my diagnosis of having less than a year to live, right? My wine cellar had 360 bottles in it. Really, really good bottles,” he said.

“We went through half the cellar, a bottle a night.”

Planche also began planning a trip with his wife, Jill. They had decided on Scotland.

While booking the trip, Planche realized his passport was due to expire.

“I got to renew it and the first question they ask is, do you want a five-year or a 10-year? I said ‘10-year.’”

“Of course, why not? I’m

not dying. Ten years,” he said.

About six weeks after being told there was a 99 per cent chance he would die within a year, Planche got his MRI results.

He was completely fine.

“It just blows your mind, literally, figuratively,” Planche said.

It was an infection — one Planche was originally told had a less than one per cent likelihood of existing.

“And it turns out that the infection caused something to happen with the protein or something like that, that the MRI picked up and it interpreted a mass.”

Planche said the experience is not something he would wish on anyone.

“A lot of good things have come as a result,” he said.

For one, Planche’s retrospective exhibition, titled “60 Years in a Landscape,” is set to be displayed at the Pumphouse from Oct. 7 to 29 in the Hummel Family Room.

The photos include monuments, landscapes, glaciers and recognizable figures such as Robert F. Kennedy and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

Planche’s photos of the Queen Mother were taken during his time as a replacement summer photographer at Harvey Studios in Fredericton.

“I wouldn’t normally be on a royal tour. I was just put in because we didn’t have enough people,” he said.

Planche was immediately told where to stand, in the press bowl with a less-than-ideal view of the action.

“I said, ‘Screw this,’ and walked away from the thing, but I couldn’t get out of the park.”

The only way Planche could get out was over a four-foot-tall stone wall. As he climbed atop it, the Queen Mother drove by.

“She comes by and I yell, ‘Your Majesty,’ and wave at her. Bang. The picture goes around the world,” he said.

Later, the RCMP showed up at the photo studio where Planche was working. Before he could assume the worst, he was invited to cocktails with the Queen Mother.

Planche’s front-page photo of the Queen Mother will be on display at the Pumphouse, along with many others with stories behind them.

When it came to selecting which photos would be included, the decision was not simple.

“You boil it down to 250 or 300 pictures, and you say, ‘OK, which one of my babies do I leave behind?’” Planche said.

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Reception: October 15, 5:00 - 6:30 PM



Ron Planche, In a Large Landscape

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- Across**
- 1. Eyots (5)
 - 5. Rubbish (5)
 - 8. Incantation (5)
 - 10. Russian sleigh (6)
 - 11. Defence covering (6)
 - 12. Having the form of a song (5)
 - 13. Sister of Mary and Lazarus (6)
 - 14. Resident of e.g. Nairobi (6)
 - 15. Stage play (5)
 - 17. Scratched (6)
 - 19. Plan (6)
 - 21. Cuban dance (5)
 - 22. Die from lack of food (6)
 - 23. Professional killer (6)
 - 24. Locations (5)
 - 25. Workshop machinery (6)
 - 27. Pressed (6)
 - 29. Grecian architectural style (5)
 - 31. Go back (6)
 - 32. Beast (6)
 - 33. Porridge (5)
 - 34. E.g. Tarka (5)
 - 35. Is inclined (5)
- Down**
- 2. Rill (9)
 - 3. Throw out (5)
 - 4. Not in any circumstances (Poetical) (4)
 - 6. Recall past experiences (9)
 - 7. Sweat room (5)
 - 8. Mayonnaise (5,8)
 - 9. Lazy (13)
 - 16. Allow to enter (5)
 - 18. Storage building (9)
 - 20. Cemetery (9)
 - 26. Representative (5)
 - 28. Oil source (5)
 - 30. Part of speech (4)

Have some fun



Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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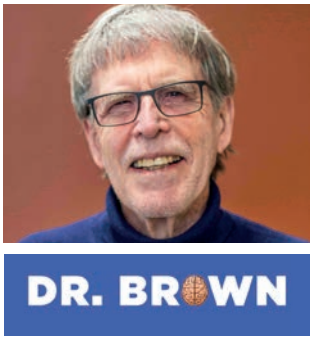
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Anne Woodruff

Born in St. Davids in 1850, Anne Woodruff spent her early life in the community, attending school and working on her family's farm. She was a founding member of the First Presbyterian Church in St. Davids, which opened in 1888, and served as its organist, Sabbath school teacher, and first secretary of the Women's Missionary Auxiliary. In 1891, Anne left St. Davids to live with her sister in the United States. Before she left, the church presented her with a scroll thanking her for her years of service, including her work with the Mission Band of Hope and Young People's Society and as a Sabbath school teacher. Anne later became an author, writing three children's books set in St. Davids: "Betty and Bob" (1903), "The Pond in the Marshy Meadow" (1906), and "Three Boys and a Girl" (1906). While Anne had no children of her own, her books and work with the Sabbath school show her fondness for children, and perhaps even more so for St. Davids. Anne eventually returned to St. Davids, where she died in 1938 and was buried in the Woodruff family plot.

Could research that helped fight COVID also **treat cancer?**



Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Recently, there's much hype about the potential to treat hitherto near-impossible-to-treat cancers such as pancreatic cancer with messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines designed to target specific molecular targets in cancer cells.

In a small study of 16 patients with pancreatic cancer, half were still alive four to six years later in a disease where the five-year survival is miniscule despite aggressive combined surgery, radiation and chemo therapies.

Although mRNA treatment for cancer seems new, the idea of harnessing mRNA to treat cancer goes back to the 1990s, well before mRNA's specular triumph during the COVID-19 pandemic in preventing, or very much reducing, the impact of COVID for millions around the world.

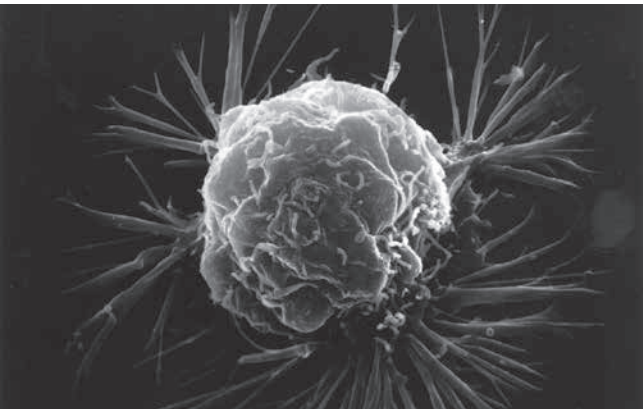
Readers may remember the first two versions, one by Pfizer and the other by Moderna — which were equally effective in preventing clinically moderate to severe COVID in those who were vaccinated.

Equally amazing was the speed with which both vaccines were developed and deployed in less than a year. Thank goodness, or the pandemic might have been much worse (despite claims, then and now, by vaccine deniers).

Such a brisk and very effective response was only possible because the underlying technologies for the vaccines had been worked out well beforehand and had only to be applied to COVID and scaled up by Moderna and Pfizer, boosted by government support in the Western world.

The idea behind both vaccines was to provoke an effective immune response by presenting the immune system with copies of COVID's spike protein to trigger both an antibody response to destroy the spike proteins of the COVID virus and kill cells infected with the virus.

To do so, scientists created mRNA that coded for the spike protein, delivered in lipid nanoparticle capsules to protect it and changed the



Findings published this year point to some promise in the strategy of using messenger RNA (mRNA) to target cancer cells on a molecular level. WIKIMEDIA

chemical structure of the mRNA just enough to evade destruction by the body's immune system.

The result was that freed of its lipid protective cover, the mRNA was free to latch onto the body's cells and once inside, make hundreds, if not thousands of copies of itself by hijacking the cell's cytoplasmic system for translating mRNA into protein.

In the final step, those copies of the COVID virus' spike proteins served to provoke an effective antibody and cellular immune response to future infections by the virus.

The catch with COVID was that mutations in the COVID spike protein arose from time to time — hence the need for updated vac-

course which help them escape traditional strategies for treating them. Hence the interest in immunotherapies.

Can immunotherapy be tailored to specific cancers and, as important, for specific patients? One very attractive solution is to harness mRNA vaccine technology to treat cancer.

The first step is to analyze the molecular profile of the cancer to identify proteins (and genes) that are specific to the patient's cancer and choose which might best provoke an effective immune response by the patient's immune system.

The second step is to parcel the selected protein in lipid nanoparticle shells as was done with the COVID vaccines and vaccinate the patient with one or more doses to provoke an immune response specific to the patient's cancer — simple as that.

In melanoma, a recent phase three trial of personalized LNP (liquid nanoparticle) mRNA vaccine from Moderna and Merck & Co. proved to be very effective in increasing "recurrence-free and metastasis-free survival." This study, the initial findings of which were publicized in August, proved that an mRNA vaccine designed specifically

for individual patients with melanoma, works very well. Personalized mRNA vaccines are under development for pancreatic, lung, breast and other cancers.

In the early '90s, DNA and mRNA vaccines were first tested in mice, but it took a lot of work over the next two decades before a safe, effective mRNA vaccine for personalized LNP was developed.

For the development of mRNA vaccine for COVID, Katalin Karikó, with her expertise in RNA biochemistry and Drew Weissman, with his expertise in immunology, made the perfect team at the University of Pennsylvania and shared a Nobel Prize in 2023, "for discoveries concerning nucleoside base modifications that enabled the development of effect mRNA vaccines against COVID-19" as the Nobel committee expressed it.

Given current promising results, there may be another Nobel Prize in a few years for the application of mRNA to cancer vaccines.

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



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Shaw teaches doctors bedside manner

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Senior doctors from five Ontario medical schools spent the weekend at the Shaw Festival learning better bedside manner through exercises stage actors practise every day.

The Shaw's Theatre of Medicine program brought physicians and medical educators to the festival for workshops on eye contact, posture, vocal tone and first impressions.

Alexis Milligan, the program's director and the Shaw's resident movement director, hopes participants will bring theatre-based communication training into first-year medical education.

"They are the ones who could change education," she said. "If we could get it folded into the first year, it has the real potential to be part of their whole system of practice."

In one exercise, Milligan asked physicians to



Alexis Milligan coaches doctors on bedside manner because patients start reading a physician's body language before a word is spoken. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

walk across a circle while making eye contact. On the second try, they looked down at iPads.

"There is hesitancy, there's disconnection," she told them. "What happened to those smiles? Gone."

She compared it to a doctor entering a patient's room while reading a chart.

"A body standing in space is already saying something," Milligan said. "So the question is, then what are you saying?"

The program grew from work Milligan began around 2014 after Dalhousie University nursing researcher Brenda Sabo

saw her rehearse a theatre project about death and stage-four cancer.

Milligan later taught nursing students exercises in eye contact and movement and said their discomfort with direct connection convinced her the skills belonged in health care.

Dr. Teresa Chan, an emergency physician and founding dean of Toronto Metropolitan University's School of Medicine, said the workshop reminded her of improv classes she took in high school in Niagara Falls.

She said one emergency shift can require a doctor to tell a family someone has

died, then immediately deal with a patient angry about a six-hour wait for an X-ray.

"I have to compartmentalize like a champ and really be able to read the room and play the role in real time," she said. "If that's not theatre, I don't know what is."

Dr. Ahtsham Niazi, vice-chair of education for anesthesiology at the University of Toronto, said operating-room teams can sometimes skip introductions before a patient goes under.

"The patient doesn't know who the anesthetist is, who the surgeon is, who anybody is," he said.

Niazi said he would like introductions added to the surgical checklist.

Milligan said the presence of leaders from Queen's, Toronto Metropolitan, McMaster, the University of Toronto and Western shows medical schools are paying attention.

"They're here, which tells me there's a shift happening," she said.

andrew@niagaranow.com



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