

Standing up for Canada

NOTL women vow ‘elbows up’



A large crowd of Niagara-on-the-Lake women gathered at Simcoe Park on Monday morning as part of The Lake Report’s annual tradition to celebrate International Women’s Day. This year, women posed with elbows up and some handmade signs, sending a clear message that Canadian women are united. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Women send patriotic message

Read about some of the women who attended our mass photo in Simcoe Park this year, and how they celebrated International Women’s Day. **Page 6**

‘Resurrecting’ Laura Secord

Caroline McCormick, a descendent of Laura Secord, plans to revitalize her name amid U.S. threats to Canadian sovereignty. **Page 6**

Town’s new climate co-ordinator

Read about Kassie Burns, the town’s new climate co-ordinator, and her short and long-term plans to protect and preserve our climate. **Page 7**

Shaw Festival sees \$768K surplus

Tariffs could destroy small business

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

In one year, the Shaw Festival has managed to turn a record loss into an unprecedented achievement for the theatre company.

During Friday’s annual meeting, treasurer Greg Price announced the 2024 season’s operating revenue, sitting at \$39 million — the Shaw’s largest operating revenue to date.

The season achieved an operating surplus of \$768,000.

The announcement, made to an audience of company members, patrons and donors, comes after the Shaw passed a tough fiscal year in 2023.

Just last year, the festival announced a loss of \$5.7 million.

Price credited the turnaround to not only ticket sales but an all-time-high amount raised from private funding, at almost \$12 million.

“We also had expenses that were significantly contained,” Price said.

“A pivot had to happen from an artistic perspective and I think management really pulled off this plan.”

Targets of delivering an increase in traffic at lower

Continued on Page 3

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Dean Sanders has spent the past three years looking to take his business to the next level — but now, after securing a new building permit on March 6 for a 2,000-square-foot expansion of his sheet metal business, he’s unsure if moving forward still makes sense.

Sanders fears U.S. tariffs could hit his business hard, especially considering three of his top five customers export south of the border.

“I don’t know if I’m going to carry on — I don’t know if I want to,” he said.

“Because if I’m working two days a week, what’s the point?”

With demand from U.S.-bound clients expected to drop, Sanders anticipates less work and fewer hours for staff.

On Feb. 1, U.S. President Donald Trump threatened 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian goods, initially set for Feb. 4. After a month-long delay, tariffs took effect March 4, which prompted Canada to impose retaliatory tariffs.

On Thursday, the U.S. announced it would pause tariffs on some Canadian

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Metal cutter fears impact of U.S. tariffs could cripple his thriving small business

Continued from Front Page

goods until April 2, but only goods “compliant” with the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement.

Sanders, self-employed for 38 years, opened Budget Sheetmetal Inc. in St. Catharines in 2009 after he moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2007.

Tariffs are now all his customers talk about and uncertainty looms for everyone — including Sanders.

In 2015, he expanded his facility by 3,000 square feet to a total of 8,000. He spent \$60,000 and three years working to secure this latest expansion to make his facility 10,000 square feet large.

Sanders said the circumstances are unfortunate, especially after overcoming high interest rates early on and then COVID-19. The business turned a corner and was thriving — until tariffs hit.

In 2023, 79 businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake exported to the U.S., which supported about 1,667 jobs, according to Niagara Re-



Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Dean Sanders of Budget Sheetmetal Inc. faces an uncertain future as tariffs threaten his business. PAIGE SEBURN

gion’s employment survey.

While exact numbers for the town aren’t available, regional trade data suggests about 72 per cent of those businesses’ exports went to the U.S.

With so much of their business depending on U.S. sales, these 79 companies are at high risk from tariffs.

With the U.S. considering an additional 25 per cent tariff on top of the 25 per cent on steel and aluminum, Sanders fears an even greater impact — but he said he’s unsure just how bad it could get.

All five employees at the shop will see reduced hours no matter what, he said.

“I can’t have them sweeping the floor, so if we’ve got no work they’re gonna have to go on shorter time,” Sanders said.

Despite this, he has no plans for layoffs.

“They’re skilled and I need them,” he said.

Sanders hopes a drop in U.S. exports will help the business pivot to Canadian customers and avoid tariffs, but Canada’s smaller market poses a challenge to profitability.

“The U.S. is 10 times bigger than us,” he said.

He said it’s frustrating to face potential closure after decades of hard work, because of elements out of his control.

“I wouldn’t be a very happy person,” if he had to close, he said.

But if he doesn’t have to close the doors, he’ll feel a sense of Canadian pride.

“You’ve got to stay positive,” he said. “But at the moment, there’s a lot of dark clouds in the sky.”

“We need a silver lining and there’s no silver lining at the moment.”

The impact goes beyond directly affected businesses, says Mishka Balsom, CEO of the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce. Higher costs and affordability challenges will ripple through the economy.

Manufacturers will feel it first, but any business tied to U.S. trade — whether importing or exporting — will face new costs and operational challenges, said Balsom.

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Vineland Growers plans **major expansion**

Evan Loree
The Lake Report

Vineland Growers is planning a big storage expansion.

With \$120 million worth of fruit being sold out of the agricultural co-op every year, space is getting tight, its bosses say — and they need at least half an acre more in storage.

Leading representatives of the agricultural co-op came to a town development meeting March 4 to present plans to expand a storage facility at their location on the corner of East and West Line and Concession 4.

“We would not be building this unless we really needed it, and we do need it,” co-op board chair Phil Tregunno told Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors.

“Our co-op, one of the oldest co-ops in Canada, has been growing. Big time growing,” he said.

He said the co-op has grown to sell about \$120 million in fruit annually.

“That’s a lot of fruit.”

The co-op wants to expand its dry storage facility by another 2,818 square metres, or approximately 0.7 of an acre.

It needs council to approve a zoning change on the land in order to move forward with the expansion.

Council will vote on the merits of the project at a future meeting.



An aerial view of the Vineland Growers' storage site shows the property boundaries.

“It will help store the packaging containers for over 70 per cent of the fruit growers in Niagara,” said Nadia Kobylka, the co-op’s chief financial officer.

Kobylka said the Vineland Growers Co-Operative Ltd. have met this need by renting 20,000 square feet worth of storage from the region’s farmers for the last 20 years.

However, that is becoming less viable because those farmers are reclaiming the storage space for their businesses.

The expansion of the co-op’s facility would also allow growers to store seasonal produce containers closer to home.

The co-op plans to use an adjacent lot to the west of its property on East and West Line to park and load trucks and trailers.

That lot is currently occupied by a single detached home, which will be demolished.

NPG planning consultant

Dan Banatkiewicz said the builders would have to upgrade some of the sewage and stormwater infrastructure servicing the property to make the expansion possible.

The plan was to reroute vehicular access to the storage site through the property expansion and close off the existing one with hedges, he said.

This would reduce the impact of noise on nearby properties.

Resident Vince Mazza, who lives across the street, said he hears “loud screeching breaks” well after midnight at the property.

“Wakes me up several times a week,” he said.

Citing the town’s noise bylaw, town planner John Federici said noise from loading and unloading trucks would be prohibited between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. the next day.

Aaron Butler, also an NPG planning consultant,

said truck loading generally goes until 9:30 or 10 p.m., but trucks sometimes enter and leave the site late at night in the summer.

Mazza also said the trucks kick up “unbearable amounts of dust” when entering and leaving the property.

He said the original property entrance was off Concession 4, and that ought to be the preferred entrance for trucks.

Another option would be to close access to the lot between 11 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Mazza also worried traffic to the site would increase with the expansion and suggested development on the property be halted until such concerns were addressed.

Councillor Sandra O’Connor asked what would happen to a tree line on the property.

Butler said the tree line along East and West Line would be extended as part of the development

Theatre can **connect us with our humanity**: Carroll

Continued from Front Page

costs were all met, Price said.

“Honestly, it was a great result,” he said.

“I’m not going to talk for ten minutes like I did last year, because last year I had to explain to all of you why we lost so much money — this year I get to cut it short.”

The Shaw Festival’s executive director Tim Jennings highlighted that audience attendance increased 15 per cent over the course of the year.

More than one in three festival attendees also participated in some kind of class discussion or activity, companion events to the festival’s productions (including seminars, special presentations and symposiums), as well as seeing a show, he said.

“That’s maybe a high not just for us, but for the industry,” he said.



Shaw Festival treasurer Greg Price announces the surplus at the annual general meeting on Friday.

These numbers are a clear sign audiences and artists want more interaction and opportunities to connect with one another, Jennings said.

Jennings outlined the Shaw’s continued efforts in supporting the community going forward through 2025, including the upcoming new artist village at the former Upper Canada Lodge and the Royal George Theatre rebuild, set to be complete by 2028.

Doors will close at the

Royal George after a final performance of “A Christmas Carol” on Dec. 21. Its rebuild is set to begin in 2026.

Artistic director Tim Carroll closed off the annual meeting with an emotional address, highlighting the importance of theatre during difficult economic and societal changes.

“Theatre is not only perfect to lead the fight back because the communal experience of watching a play is exactly the kind of thing that might spark us to reclaim our common humanity,” he said.

The skills it takes to watch a play are also the skills needed to write and perform in a play, Carroll said.

“These are the qualities we’re going to need to turn back the tide.”

New facilities will give people the chance to rediscover their “inner artist,” Carroll said.

Ian Joseph, board chair, said the Shaw is a welcoming place for American visitors.

“This is a community that shares art that transcends boundaries,” he said.

In a media release, the Shaw also announced the board of governors now has two new members, Colleen Johnston and Dan Patterson.

Johnston has held several past board positions with companies including Shopify, McCain Foods, Q4 and the Shaw in past years. She is currently the chair of Unity Health Toronto.

Patterson’s career spans five decades and is known for his contributions to Niagara College, Ontario’s college system and post-secondary education across Canada. He holds an MEd and PhD from the University of Toronto along with honorary doctorates from Niagara University and Brock University.

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Crossroads students potentially exposed to measles, region urges parents to vaccinate

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Niagara Region Public Health is warning students, parents and staff at Crossroads Public School that anyone at the school from Feb. 25 to 28 may have been exposed to a case of measles.

Parents of Crossroads students received a letter on March 7 from the Niagara Region medical officer of health Dr. Azim Kasmani and shared by the District School Board of Niagara, informing of “an individual diagnosed with measles that might have exposed others.”

Niagara Region Public Health is contacting affected families directly while listing potential exposure sites online.

“This means your child and anyone else who was present during the exposure date(s) above could become sick with measles. However, having two doses of a measles-containing vaccine is almost 100 per cent effective at preventing measles,” said Kasmani.



Crossroads parents were notified last week about a potential measles exposure February 25, 26, 27 and 28.

Crossroads parent Janice Dodd has two kids in grades six and four attending the school and a third attending the preschool program.

"Safety has to come first," she said.

Such preventable illnesses can be a burden to an already overwhelmed healthcare system in NOTL, which causes a ripple effect to everyone in need of health care, she said.

Dodd's children are fully vaccinated but she worries about it spreading into the community.

“Some kids don’t have access to vaccination because of different situations —

they may be allergic. But having parents choose not to vaccinate their kids, that's another story," said Dodd.

Children typically receive their first dose of the measles vaccine 12 to 15 months old and a second dose is given to kids four to six years old.

Dr. Kasmani advises worried parents with kids starting school who haven't had their second dose yet, "now might be a good time to ask your family doctor."

Niagara Region Public Health advises symptomatic residents to call ahead before visiting clinics or hospitals to prevent further exposure.

Measles can remain active and contagious in the air for up to two hours after an infected person has been present.

Simpson's Pharmacy owner Sean Simpson said there's a need for more education about the importance of vaccines as more people are hesitant to vaccinate against contagious diseases.

"Measles can cause fatal complications, yet is entirely preventable," said Simpson.

His kids don't go to Crossroads but he was not informed of the exposure incident at the school beforehand.

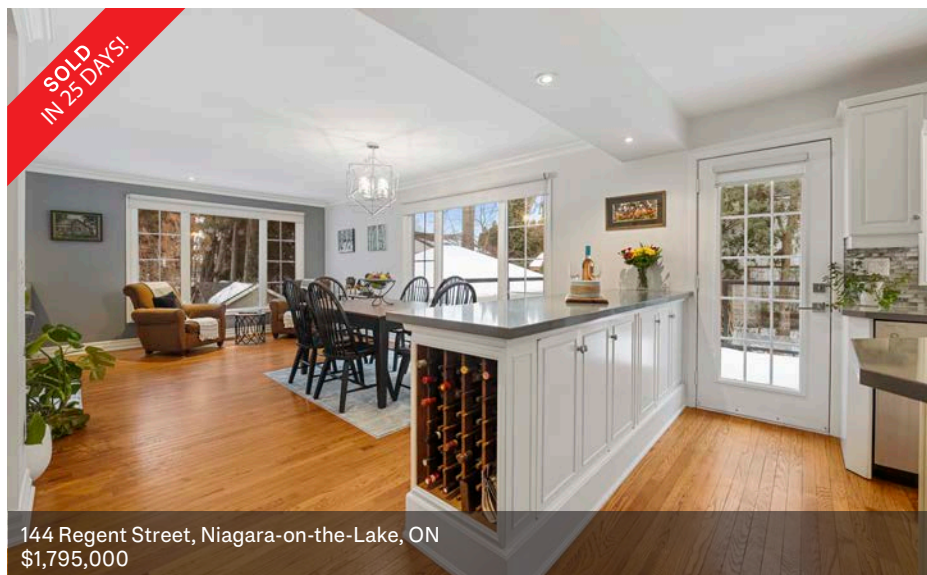
Unvaccinated individuals exposed to the virus risk severe illness including fever, cough and a spreading rash. Measles symptoms may take 21 days to appear.

Canada declared measles eradicated in 1998 but global cases surged post-pandemic as vaccination rates dipped.

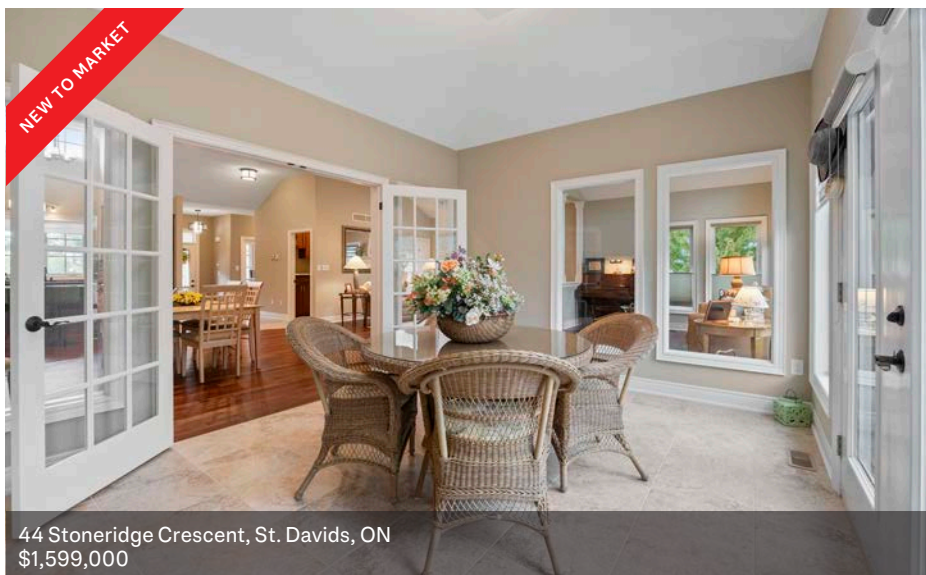
Niagara Region Public Health advises checking immunization records via healthcare providers on its website.

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Town voids 134 parking tickets after error

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is backtracking on 134 wrongly issued tickets given out on the Family Day long weekend between Feb. 15 and 17.

Town staff acknowledged 134 of the 239 parking tickets issued in NOTL from Feb. 15 to 17 were wrongly given before snowplows began operating during the snowstorm.

During the Family Day long weekend, residents who parked on the road in Niagara on the Green received 187 parking tickets, each carrying a \$50 fine.

Niagara on the Green resident Daniel St-Jean flagged the issue to councillors and criticized the enforcement as a “cash grab.”

“I looked around and thought, what the f--- is this for? There hasn’t been a plow here in four days, and we’re supposed to get snow later — right now, there’s nothing! What’s this ticket for?” said St-Jean.

Though he avoided a ticket, he documented 54



Cars parked on Wright Crescent were issued tickets on Feb. 15 for parking on the road during snow clearing.

penalties in his neighbourhood on Feb. 15.

“Can you spot a scam when you see one? I counted 54 tickets before I stopped looking. So the city scammed its people out of \$2,700 Saturday morning.”

St-Jean raised his concerns to a bylaw officer issuing tickets to cars.

“We had a little bit of an exchange. It didn’t go well,” he said.

“She was telling me, she said, ‘Well, we have to give the tickets because there’s a bylaw in NOTL that forbids people from parking their car on the street in the winter.’ And I thought, ‘No there isn’t!’”

Under section 205.01.12 of the parking and traffic

bylaw cited on the tickets, vehicles are prohibited from blocking snow-clearing operations. Parking in winter is not stipulated as grounds for a ticket.

Fire Chief Jay Plato confirmed 134 tickets issued between 5 a.m. and noon on Feb. 15 were voided and all associated penalties were cancelled.

“Due to mandatory driver hours, plow operators were required to take a break, and therefore, unfortunately, ticketing began several hours before the plows were active,” said Plato.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa defended the bylaw but acknowledged missteps.

“The gap here was that the plows didn’t arrive

in time, which is hard to control during extreme weather,” Zalepa said.

He confirmed no bylaw changes are planned, calling the incident a “learning experience” for staff.

“Correcting this shows the process works.”

Of the 239 total tickets issued Feb. 15 to 17, Niagara on the Green’s Wright Court, 46, and Keith Crescent, 36, saw the highest numbers.

Neighbourhoods like Old Town received fewer tickets, with King and Victoria streets each recording one ticket over the long weekend.

The town of NOTL has since been trying to improve public education by sharing winter parking guidelines via a news release, frequent social media posts and information on the town’s website.

Residents seeking refunds for voided tickets must contact the town directly. Snow removal updates and bylaw details remain available on the town’s Plow Tracker portal.

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Town settles with developer, tribunal green-lights contentious 41-unit condo project on Mary Street

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The Ontario Land Tribunal has given a developer the green light to move forward with a 41-unit condo development at 223 and 227 Mary St. in Niagara-on-the-Lake, after the town decided to settle the developer’s challenge — in order to steer clear of the legal costs.

The town of Niagara-on-the-Lake released a statement Friday morning detailing the tribunal’s decision to allow the project to proceed.

In an interview with The Lake Report, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said the town decided to settle to avoid the legal costs of taking this challenge all the way.

The municipality was part of a few high-profile hearings at the Ontario Land Tribunal, including a month-long hearing on the Randwood Estate involving Solmar Inc. and another on a King Street condo proposal involving Butler’s Gardens Development Inc.

Zalepa said he is happy with the development proposal going ahead and “the report stands for itself,” referring to the official mu-



A rendering of the proposed condo building. FILE

nicipal staff report on the Mary Street project, which recommended council approve it.

The tribunal’s approval, which was given orally during the settlement hearing, removes any lack of clarity around the development’s suitability, he said.

The Lake Report does not yet have access to a copy of the tribunal’s written decision. Town staff said it will receive the written decision from the tribunal “in the coming weeks.”

The final decision to approve the Mary Street condo will still have to come back to council and site plan details still need to be worked out, he said.

The development has been a contentious one, with residents speaking out against building heights and

questioning the condominium’s compatibility with neighbouring areas — mostly detached single-family homes.

Last September, a tie vote from councillors on the necessary bylaw amendments resulted in an overall refusal of the proposal.

This decision came after the application itself was approved at a past committee of the whole meeting and approved in discussion at the same September meeting.

The applicant, NPG Planning Solutions, appealed this decision to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

Councillors voted in favour of settling the appeal. Only councillors Couns. Gary Burroughs, Sandra O’Connor and Tim Balasiuk voted against the motion.

Burroughs told The Lake Report he still has some concerns.

“I’m disappointed because I don’t think we’ve considered either traffic or the stormwater, but I assume it will be dealt with at the site plan stage,” he said.

There is a holding provision on the plan as it stands, to further inspect stormwater management before development starts.

Traffic is also a major concern for Burroughs, he said.

“It’s so close to a very busy corner. We’ll see what happens,” Burroughs said.

“We have built some sort of apartment units successfully but not when they’re surrounded by residential homes so close.”

O’Connor emphasized her concern with stormwater management at the property.

“I’m not happy with it going forward as it is but you have to move on,” she said.

“My main concern was stormwater management, the size of the infrastructure that it was going to be linked into.”

With the hold on stormwater, there are potential changes that could be to come, O’Connor said.

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 **WOMEN'S DAY 2025**



NOTL women gather for a photo at Simcoe Park on Monday. The annual photo and gathering is meant to celebrate International Women’s Day, which was March 8. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

NOTL women send patriotic message

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Women of Niagara-on-the-Lake celebrated each other once again, this time meeting at Simcoe Park for The Lake Report’s annual International Women’s Day photo op.

Around 75 women from different walks of life recalled the hardships overcome and strength exhibited by women in their lives and beyond.

For realtor Teri Andrusiw, the ability to take time and

recognize the strength of women in society is an immense privilege.

“It represents the voice my grandparents never had,” Andrusiw said in an interview.

Andrusiw’s grandparents immigrated from Europe after living through wartime and worked hard to make a new life, she said.

“It’s good to bring the awareness of what women bring,” Andrusiw said International Women’s Day allows her the opportunity to honour the women in her family

who came before her.

For Sandra Hardy, this year’s Women’s Day gave a platform to women wishing to stand up against the mistreatment of women in both Canada and the U.S.

On March 10, in the opening of the annual session of the United Nation’s Commission on the Status of Women, its executive director, Sima Bahous said, “We face pushback and a peak in resistance to gender equality. Misogyny is on the rise, and so, violence and discrimination.”

Researchers at the Insti-

tute for Strategic Dialogue noted a surge in misogynistic rhetoric and attacks on social media immediately following November’s U.S. election, with phrases such as “Your body, my choice” and “Get back in the kitchen” spreading on social media platforms X (formerly Twitter), Tiktok and Facebook.

Posed in the front row of The Lake Report’s photo, Hardy hoisted up a sign reading “We are not handmaidens. Unite Canada.”

Heather Hall joined Hardy in her feelings.

“(Women’s Day) is really important now, because we’re only a swim across from America,” Hall said.

Canadian women should be empowered to use their voices and take action, Hardy said.

“It’s important to use our voice and speak up and not just keep all the things inside you.”

Both Hall and Hardy participate in different groups and activities around town to help empower other women from NOTL and beyond.

Hardy is a member of a current events group that

discusses world news and keeps each other informed.

“We try and keep our souls together,” she said.

Hall mentioned her regular walking group, along with the University Women’s Club run out of St. Catharines.

Hardy and Hall also help out with the Nyanyas of Niagara, a group that supports women in Africa through funds raised for housing, school fees, grief counselling and more.

“They’re always looking for new members,” Hall said.

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‘Resurrecting’ Laura Secord amid Canada and U.S. tension

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

With political tensions rising between Canada and the United States, it may be the perfect time for Niagara-on-the-Lake to call upon a woman who Canadian history remembers for helping to thwart a surprise American attack against British troops in Queenston — Laura Secord.

Caroline McCormick is president of the Friends of Laura Secord and the great-great-great granddaughter of Secord herself.

When she first moved to NOTL around 2011, McCormick took the reigns to honour Laura Secord during War of 1812 commemorations.

“As a direct descendent

of Laura Secord, I felt that I had the burden of taking some plans on,” she said

Now, having established the Laura Secord Legacy Trail and building the First Nations Peace Monument at the terminus of the trail, the Friends of Laura Secord are continuing to keep Secord’s story alive.

Secord, who lived in Queenston for several years, is famous for her dedication during the War of 1812 to those fighting on the side of what would become Canada, walking more than 30 kilometres to warn British troops of an American invasion planned for what was then known as Upper Canada.

Because of her warning, the Americans lost the Battle of Beaver Dams in June 1813 — they were am-

bushed by Kanyenkehaka (Mohawk) and other Indigenous warriors and surrendered to British troops, led by Lt. James FitzGibbon.

“She walked to defend her country,” McCormick said.

After hearing world of annexation threats from President Donald Trump, the organization brainstormed ways to use Secord’s story to move Canadians to stay strong and do what they can, McCormick said.

“It made us think, ‘Oh, we’re going to have to resurrect Laura Secord to help defend this country once again,’” she said in an interview.

“What she represents and what she did is so significant in today’s world.”

The annual Laura Secord



Caroline McCormick is the great-great-great granddaughter of Laura Secord. She says with the climate between Canada and the U.S., Secord’s history is still relevant, and hopes to highlight that importance.

Walk, likely slated for June this year, may have more of a focus this year, McCormick said.

“We’ve been having discussions with our organization of how we can hopefully use Laura Secord to inspire others.”

Secord’s story is not only

establish context for the accomplishments of Canadian women today, McCormick said.

“I hear from young girls writing to me to say, ‘I love Laura Secord, what she did was so courageous,’” she said.

“What she represents is courage and determination, fortitude and perseverance, going the extra mile for what is important.”

Step by step, young women, too, can make a difference, McCormick said.

“It’s time for her to inspire people to go the extra mile for our country.”

To learn more about Laura Secord’s story or to get involved, contact McCormick at cmccormick@friendsoflaurasecord.com.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



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Meet Kassie Burns, the face of climate action in NOTL



Kassie Burns, NOTL's new climate change co-ordinator, is leading the charge on the town's climate action plans.

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Flooding, extreme weather and carbon emissions are pressing concerns in Niagara-on-the-Lake — but the town's new climate change co-ordinator Kassie Burns said she's ready to help take them on.

Burns, 29, began her role on Feb. 3 and has since focused on a natural asset management plan and a climate change adaptation plan.

The natural asset plan aims to help integrate natural assets like forests and wetlands into the town's strategies for managing its physical assets — like roads, buildings and equipment — in a cost-effective, efficient and sustainable way over their lifecycle, she said.

Burns said the plan is still in its early data-collection stage.

The climate change adaptation plan outlines 27 action items to address climate change impacts — one of them being developing this natural asset plan, she said.

Next on Burns' agenda is creating an invasive species management plan.

Burns said a long-term, community-driven approach to climate action is crucial.

She helped organize an invasive species workshop last month and plans to represent the town at an Earth Day gathering on April 22 at the community centre.

"Collaboration is really the key to change," Burns said. "That's a big message I always like to share."

She said the town is leveraging social media to keep residents informed about climate initiatives and continues to build partnerships with other municipalities and environmental organizations, like the Niagara Peninsula Conservation

Authority, though no major new collaborations have been confirmed.

Before moving to St. Catharines in 2018, to attend Brock University, Burns grew up in Waterloo.

She graduated from Brock with a bachelor's in biology and a master's in sustainability, which she said equipped her with project management skills and research experience for her new role.

Before starting the town, she worked as a field technician at Niagara Parks and as a research technician at the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre.

At the centre, Burns helped run the Greening the Landscape Research Consortium, where she collaborated with professionals from across the tree industry to address urban tree challenges.

The town was a member during her time there and is now represented by Burns.

"The knowledge with tree canopy and urban trees I think is also what lent a hand to me acquiring the position," she said.

During her master's, Burns also took a course where students developed climate change adaptation plans for a municipality of their choice, led by a professor involved in the Niagara Adapts Partnership — which helped make NOTL's climate plan.

Burns chose Niagara-on-the-Lake as her focus.

When she applied with the town, she included her devised plan in her application, though it wasn't required.

"This stood out to them," she said.

Climate change projects take time to show visible results, so Burns encouraged residents to be patient while staying updated through the town's website and social media.

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Dorothy Soo-Wiens named Citizen of the Year

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Dorothy Soo-Wiens didn't have a formal speech prepared when she walked into the Chamber of Commerce annual Spirit Awards on Thursday evening.

"Someone said the other finalist is Dr. Berti and I thought, 'Oh she's a doctor! I don't even need to make a speech,'" Soo-Wiens told The Lake Report.

"I thought for sure she would win."

Regardless of her expectations, when she was announced as Citizen of the Year for 2024, Soo-Wiens accepted her win with a few key points written down on a recipe card.

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Soo-Wiens was recognized for her tireless volunteer work across different organizations across town, including Cornerstone Community Church and the NOTL Lions Club.

She was also recognized for her support of farm-workers and the farming community, plus annual events like the Christmas



Dorothy Soo-Wiens accepts the award for NOTL's Citizen of the Year at the Spirit Awards. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Tractor Parade, raising more than \$100,000 for cancer research and much more.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa presented the award and in his speech, described Soo-Wiens as a person who believes that community is built one thoughtful act at a time.

"This is evident in everything Dorothy does," he said.

During her speech, Soo-Wiens said community spirit was instilled in her as a child.

"When I came as a three-year-old to Canada with my family — an immigrant family — they always said if you don't like something you've got to make sure you get involved, you are part of improving your community."

Soo-Wiens also said how grateful she was to live in NOTL.

"Even though I didn't grow up here or was raised here, it has become my home," she said.

Soo-Wiens spoke highly about all of the other volunteers she hopes to share

her honour with.

"I share that award with all the different communities that I am part of. They should be recognized as well," she said.

Along with Soo-Wiens, other residents were awarded for their outstanding community achievements: Barbara Worthy, who was granted the Christopher Newton Award for Arts and Culture; Tammy Martin, who took home the Entrepreneurial Spirit Award; Bonnie Bagnulo, awarded the Community Spirit Award; Michael Zappitelli, recipient of the Excellence in Hospitality and Tourism award; Betty Colaneri, who took home the Chamber of Commerce Award; and Catherine Beyene Dubois, who was selected for the Dan Patterson Award for Youth Leadership.

The Irish Harp Pub took home two awards, including Business of the Year and the Peter Ling Award for Business Leadership which was given to owner Jovie Joki.

Palatine Roses was awarded with an Outstanding Achievement in Agriculture Award.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



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Kate Wojtowicz is a licensed pharmacist who joined our team in November 2021. She graduated with a nursing degree from McGill University followed by the pharmacy degree at the University of Toronto in 2014

Krista Makinson joined our team in February 2022 as a pharmacy assistant. She has worked in both the hospital and community fields and has over 25 years of experience in pharmacy!

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 **WOMEN'S DAY 2025**

Steffanie Bjorgan: The woman behind NOTL's Red Roof Retreat

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

This International Women's Day, we're honouring a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident who has spent the last 25 years making a world of difference for families in town.

Steffanie Bjorgan founded Red Roof Retreat in 2000 and volunteered her time for eight years until 2008, when she transitioned to the paid position she has today.

Red Roof Retreat is a local charity that provides recreational and respite services to children and young adults with special needs. Its main hub, "The Ranch," is located on an 11-acre farm on Concession 6 Road.

Born out of necessity, Red Roof started when Bjorgan struggled to find the right programs for her son, Garrett, who has cerebral palsy.

"I had a really hard time finding programming," she said.

So she took matters into



Steffanie Bjorgan, founder of Red Roof Retreat.

her own hands and started running summer camps at her house, she said.

"That way, my kids had something to do. We invited kids from the community and then we got to know families," she said. "It all just sort of went from there."

These backyard summer camps eventually grew into Red Roof — a charity that now provides year-

round support for families, including a weekend respite and adult day program, plus regular recreational programs.

Those who attend the summer camp get to spend six weeks taking part in activities like arts and crafts, movies, baking and more, plus hanging out at "The Ranch" and its hobby farm, home to farm animals such as horses, goats and bunnies, plus hiking the farm's trails.

Red Roof has always relied on volunteers and fundraising, never government funding, Bjorgan said. It takes part in a handful of fundraising efforts every year, including an annual pasta dinner in April.

"Every single day, I get reminded about how good people are," she said.

Bjorgan said despite the struggles of the population Red Roof serves, it's inspiring to witness their resilience and optimism and the kindness of those who help.

"I am so lucky to have my

job," she said, while also acknowledging it hasn't always been easy.

"We've had 25 years of amazing support, but that doesn't mean at night I don't go, what if, what if, what if," she said.

In the beginning, Bjorgan said it was motivating to have service clubs like the Rotary Club and businesses like the McDonald's in town quickly support Red Roof, without hesitation, after hearing her vision.

"That was like, whoa, that's a sign from the universe that we are on the right track," she said.

Now, with each expansion, Bjorgan said she's reminded of the community's unwavering support.

"Every time, people have rallied around us and supported us and said, 'You can do this.'"

Before starting at Red Roof full-time in 2008, Bjorgan spent 17 years as a teacher at the former Parliament Oak public school.

"Keeping it local," she

said, adding that she found it incredibly rewarding to teach many kids with families she knew personally.

Being a NOTL resident is something Bjorgan is proud of and makes a priority, she said.

"I married a local guy who was literally born in the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital. So we're about as Niagara-on-the-Lake as it gets," she said.

That's why Red Roof and its expansions have always stayed in town.

"When the vision for Red Roof was coming to fruition, we knew this was the place to do it," she said. "Red Roof was born and raised here."

Bjorgan said NOTL's socially and economically conscious community made her success possible.

"I don't think we could have done this anywhere else except this community," she said.

But she also had to trust her vision and support it with consistent action.

"If you visualize something and you manifest it — it's the right thing. It will work," she said.

"Motion is lotion. Just keep moving and using your brain," Bjorgan said, adding that maintaining a healthy work-life balance is needed to achieve this.

For fun, Bjorgan reads, works out, spends time with friends and family and hikes. Looking for a spot to hike in NOTL? She recommends the Niagara Gorge.

Reflecting on International Women's Day, Bjorgan said she has always felt fortunate to avoid any kind of differential treatment at Red Roof and in the town of NOTL for being a woman.

She said she's always been accepted and supported, just like everyone else, which she truly appreciates.

We celebrate Bjorgan — and all the women in our community — for their ongoing contributions and the difference they make every day.

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EVENT DETAILS
Niagara on the Lake Horticultural Society
hosts Gardening Classes Saturdays

March 1st to May 31st
10:am to 11:30am
Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre,
14 Anderson Lane, NOTL

**ALL CLASS DETAILS
AND BOOKING LINKS MAY BE
FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE**
notlhortsociety.com/classes

Travel has changed – now smart phones are essential



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson
Columnist

Earlier this year, I learned that travelling is no longer for the technically incompetent. It's for young computer whizzes, who seem to be able to research anything on their little handheld smartphones.

I recently rambled about my fascinating trip to Vietnam and Turkey, which was a late-in-life trip taken to close a circle which included a country that had loomed large over my life. The Vietnam War had shockingly been shifted off to the side of my consciousness as a young man, as my self-absorbed student endeavours and jobs took precedence.

The Vietnamese people

I have met here in Canada have always fascinated me. Without exception, they are law-abiding, gracious, hard-working and always seem to be smiling. They are relatively recent arrivals to Canada and make important contributions to our proud and wonderful country.

Back last year, I determined to right this wrong, and travel to Southeast Asia to meet them on their own turf. My peripatetic son and daughter assisted me with travel arrangements, and thanks to their enthusiastic assistance and encouragement, my trip went off almost without a hitch.

Needing their help was ironic because between 1984 and 1998 I was the proprietor of a very busy corporate travel agency in downtown St. Catharines. We send business travellers around the world, and happy people to Hawaii. I billed myself as "Ross Ho."

Computerization had just arrived, and the world of arranging travel was changing fast. I couldn't keep up and thankfully found a buyer for that business.



Ross Robinson says it's increasingly important to have a smart phone while travelling. MIDJOURNEY

Everything is online now, including the airfare components, accommodations, and activities.

And what's the fun of trying to navigate public transit in Istanbul, Hanoi, Tokyo or Honolulu? I'll tell you what apparently makes overseas travel possible

now. Smartphones! As I navigated my recent trip, I politely prevailed upon hundreds of locals to guide me from one place to another on either side of the Bosphorus Strait, from downtown Hanoi to Ha Long Bay or around the fascinating and frenetic multi-

million-plus resident city of Saigon (officially known as Ho Chi Minh City, now).

Countless scooters everywhere!

How many times did the person helping me almost automatically pull out their smartphone and tap a bunch of letters on the keypad? Bingo, the information I was requesting was clearly printed on the screen, easy to understand and quickly sending me on my way.

Young computer sharpies don't need printed schedules or travel company booklets. It's all online now, instantly available. But I wouldn't have met the dozens of helpful, smiling Turkish and Vietnamese people who gave me a true sense of their countries.

And, now let's talk for a few minutes about the interpersonal dynamics of retail shopping. Markets have always fascinated me, the epitome of "supply and demand."

In a bustling Asian market with hundreds of vendors hoping to sell me something, eye contact had always been key. Just a brief glance, but the person

working in the stall could determine in an instant who might want their product.

They used to glance at each and every person who was passing their stall.

I will now ramble awkwardly to this week's final thought, talking about artificial intelligence. Travelling without the internet can be an incredibly enriching and refreshing experience. One gets a deeper connection with one's surroundings. Unplanned adventures, and the discovery of an unplanned adventure when one stumbles upon a hidden gem.

How about a story-worthy experience that might sometimes enrich a trip planned without the internet?

Navigating travel challenges and random opportunities in old-school, creative ways can lead to unique stories.

Enjoy old-style travel. Wake up, open the front door and let the new day take you on an adventure.

Yes, yes, this last trip has convinced me that travel has changed. It's much more efficient now, but is that a good thing?

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR HOUSE IS

Keep your dollars in Canada to strengthen communities and support local businesses, including your local newspaper.

NOTL Wolves make finals in March Break Classic tournament

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

The NOTL Minor Hockey Association hosted its annual March Break Classic from March 7 to 9, which saw all four Wolves age divisions reach the championship round.

Thirty teams from across the province entered the Meridian Credit Union Arena this weekend and families enjoyed the town's hotels, restaurants and small businesses.

"We probably could have got more teams, and we had more ice available," said tournament director James Cadeau, who also coaches the U18s.

He noted the Wolves kept their composure throughout the tournament and competed strongly.

"They're hard to beat," said Cadeau.

U9 coach Mike Cwierniewski, whose son plays in the U11 division, praised the tournament's balanced competition and the team's



Left: Cian Doyle, #11, of the U13 LL NOTL Wolves 1 team, scores on penalty shot against Campbellford to lead 5-3 in the second period. The team lost 6-5 in overtime. Right: Max Plomish of the U15 LL NOTL Wolves 2 team listens to his coach while on the bench. DAVE VAN DE LAAR



commitment to the game. "It's been actually probably one of the most even-keeled tournaments in terms of competition that I think we probably had in a long time," said Cwierniewski.

Volunteer coordinator Tracey Hope said the March Break Classic has been a great success for the association and visiting families enjoyed exploring Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"They absolutely love Niagara. We actually had some out-of-town parents who went to wineries between games. It's done really well, and then to see our teams in the finals is awesome," said Hope.

The Wolves had several standout moments during the tournament, including back-to-back shutouts in the U18 semi-finals with a 5-0 victory over the Listowel Cyclones, followed by a 7-0

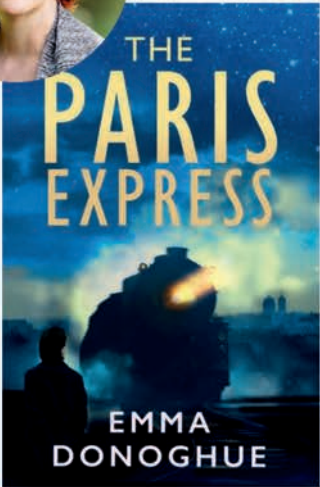

win against the Thorold Blackhawks. The Midland Centennials defeated the U11 Wolves 7-1 in the championship game. At MCU Arena, the Campbellford Colts edged the U13 Wolves 6-5 for the title. In the U15 division, Caledonia Thunder won the championship with a 5-0 victory over the Wolves, while in the U18 final, Thorold Blackhawks

claimed a 5-2 win against the Wolves. Cadeau pointed out that although the Wolves didn't win in the finals, the players' strong performances throughout the tournament proved the hard work of the teams, coaches and staff paid off. "I've basically been living here since 7 a.m. on Friday. I got about three hours of sleep last night, maybe five hours the night before. It's a

lot of work, but it's fun. It's rewarding," said Cadeau. Cadeau and his wife run the Sweets & Swirl Café in the NOTL Community Centre and were asked by the town to run the concession stand at the arena. Standings from the March Break Classic can be found on the NOTL Minor Hockey Association's website, notlhockey.com/tournaments/1352. andrew@niagaranow.com


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Public Notice

2025 Annual Strengthening and Resurfacing Program

Niagara Region is advising the public about upcoming road work and related disruptions that will be taking place over the coming months on the following Regional roads as part of the Annual Road Strengthening and Resurfacing program. In some cases construction start times are still to be determined. Follow niagararegion.ca for more information including closure start dates and up to date detour routes.

Town of Pelham

River Road (Regional Road 529) from O'Reillys Road (Regional Road 627) to Airport Driveway

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times

City of Port Colborne

Killaly Street West (Regional Road 5) from West Side Road to Main Street West (Regional Road 3)

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times

Killaly Street West (Regional Road 5) from King Street to Mellanby Avenue (Regional Road 3A)

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times; 7a.m. to 7p.m.

Forks Road (Regional Road 98) from Wilhelm Road (Regional Road 98) to Schihl Road (Regional Road 98)

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times; 7a.m. to 7p.m.

City of Port Colborne/ City of Niagara Falls

Schihl Road (Regional Road 98) from Forks Road (Regional Road 98) to Netherby Road (Regional Road 25)

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times

City of Niagara Falls

Montrose Road (Regional Road 98) from Mount Carmel Boulevard to Kalar Road

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times

Stanley Avenue (Regional Road 102) from Thorold Stone Road (Regional Road 57) to Church's Lane

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times

City of Welland

Niagara Street (Regional Road 50) from Quaker Road to Thorold Road

Impact: Night Work; Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times; 7p.m. to 7a.m.

Lincoln Street (Regional Road 29) from Riverside Drive (Regional Road 27) to Prince Charles Drive (Regional Road 54)

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times

City of Thorold

Collier Road (Regional Road 56) from Richmond Street to St. David's Road (Regional Road 71)

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times

Beaverdams Road (Regional Road 67) from Pine Street South (Regional Road 67) to Collier Road (Regional Road 56)

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times

City of St. Catharines

Carlton Street (Regional Road 83) from Lake Street to Ontario Street (Regional Road 42)

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times, three Pedestrian Crossovers to also be constructed

Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Lakeshore Road (Regional Road 87) from Garrison Village Drive to Mississauga Street (Regional Road 55)

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times

Township of Wainfleet

Marshagan Road (Regional Road 7) from Concession 6 Road to Regional Boundary

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times

Robinson Road (Regional Road 15) from Canborough Road (Regional Road 63) to Regional Boundary

Impact: Single-lane closures; longer than normal wait times

The anticipated hours of operation during construction will be 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., unless noted otherwise, weather permitting.

Businesses and residents will have access during the closures but may be directed to take an alternate route to get to their destination. Emergency services will also have access if required.

Follow **Municipal511.ca** for real-time information on Regional road closures and construction updates. Municipal 511 shares road information that connects directly to Google Maps and Waze and assists Niagara Region, Local Area Municipalities, and MTO to better coordinate local construction projects in order to minimize traffic disruption.

Project contacts:

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stephanie.huppunen@niagararegion.ca

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905-984-3690

Your co-operation and patience are appreciated while we undertake this important work.

Terry Ricketts
Commissioner of Public Works
Niagara Region



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BKind
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With Bradley Hamilton
#19: Water your neighbour's plants if they look wilted and you know they are away.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock

“Wherever you go, no matter what the weather, always bring your own sunshine.”
- Anthony J. D'Angelo

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Editorials

An unnecessary election – and a vital one

Kevin MacLean
Editor Emeritus

Well, that provincial election was worth every penny of the \$189 million it cost Ontario to appease Doug Ford's ego.

Pity he was left disappointed and upset that voters chose not to give him the increased majority he craved.

But, credit where it is due, Ford has continued to do a solid job invoking his “Captain Canada” persona and representing our interests in the ridiculous trade war launched by Donald Trump. He just didn't need an election in order to do so.

Yes, we are being facetious in suggesting Ford's whole contrived excuse that “we need a strong mandate to fight Donald Trump” was a worthwhile exercise.

It was not, but it allowed Ford to go to the people about 18 months early, ahead of what could be a bloody battle in the looming federal vote, and secure another four years. Good for Ford — but a waste of money for us, as any value for money audit would show.

That \$189 million could have done a lot to help our school system or hospitals. Instead, it was spent to give Ford and his Progressive Conservatives the same mandate as they had prior to Feb. 27.

Yes, he won an almost unprecedented third straight



A \$189 million election didn't change much for Ford's Tories. Money well spent? We think not.

majority, but his ego was bruised by the fact his party was unable to grab more seats from the Liberals or the official Opposition, the NDP.

In fact, in Haldimand-Norfolk, what was once a Tory stronghold, the PCs were trounced again by an Independent candidate.

Federally the riding is held by a Conservative, so basically the same voter pool in the past two elections has rejected folksy Ford's spiel — this time giving the Independent nearly 64 per cent of the vote.

Perhaps that sort of voter mentality is mirrored here in our area's own riding, Niagara Falls — which includes Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie.

Despite some Tory supporters whinging that New Democrat incumbent

Wayne Gates would never have “a seat at the table” given the expectation that Ford's party would win again, voters here gave the NDP a resounding victory.

He took nearly 55 per cent of the votes cast, defeating the PCs' Ruth-Ann Nieuwesteeg by about 11,000 votes. He only outpolled Tory Bob Gale by 6,000 in 2022.

The Liberals, who could not attract anyone locally to run against the Gates juggernaut, were miles behind, with barely 6 per cent support.

Looking at the voting numbers for NOTL specifically, courtesy Elections Ontario, we see that the NDP attracted 52.6 per cent support, the Tories polled 39 per cent and the Liberals (who held this riding under Kim Craitor for a decade starting in 2003) were just over 8 per cent.

In raw numbers, the NDP had 4,000 votes in NOTL, PCs 2,968 and Liberals 630. Gates took almost every poll, including the advance vote, with Nieuwesteeg edging him 281 to 244 at the Holiday Inn Express poll in Glendale and being within striking distance at the Bethany Mennonite Church (229-226) and St. Davids Lions Club polls (695-659).

What does this all mean in a riding that is held federally by Conservative Tony Baldinelli?

Well, that is anyone's guess, though we probably

will find out in the not-too-distant future.

In the last two national elections, Baldinelli has been victorious over Liberal candidate Andrea Kaiser (now a regional councillor representing NOTL).

He won by 3,100 votes in 2021 and by just over 2,000 two years earlier.

Federally in this same riding, the NDP has been strong but not a threat, polling a consistent 18 per cent the past two elections.

So, perhaps Gates' win is a reflection of his personality and likability, the NDP's ground game and get-out-the-vote ability. Which could bode well for the Tories provincially if Gates ever retires and Ford decides to take us to the polls again.

Meanwhile, we all can look forward to a vitally important federal election sooner rather than later, as the pundits keep saying.

That election is vital for the Tories, who hope to gain power, and to the Liberals, who want to revamp and legitimize their party under newly crowned leader Mark Carney.

Let's hope both the Grits and the Conservatives, led by the pugilistic Pierre Poilievre, can find a constructive and positive way to engage Canadians.

We need and deserve a united front in the war with Trump.

kevin@niagaranow.com

More to ponder from our ‘process-driven’ mayor

Richard Harley
Editor-in-Chief

As reported in this week's paper, the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake was forced to backtrack on 134 wrongly issued tickets given out during Family Day weekend.

That's the majority of the 187 tickets given to residents of Niagara on the Green during that weekend — 239 were given in total across NOTL.

It seems obvious that there is a problem here. A problem with bylaw enforcement being unaware of the town's laws, and a problem with public education surrounding snow removal and parking restrictions.

Yet, our “trust the

process” lord mayor Gary Zalepa took the opportunity to comment that since this is being corrected, it shows the “process is working.”

Uh, what? That's a new one, even for a town that by now expects nonsensical statements from its part-time manager — who seems to be completely in his own lane, residents be damned. “Hey, you know that totally unnecessary error we made? It really shows things are working, doesn't it?”

Baffling.

Back in reality, it shows a need for the town to educate its bylaw staff, and to educate the public on how and when to park when snow plows are operating.

Perhaps a live interactive

map showing exactly when parking prohibitions are in place would stop residents like Daniel St-Jean from cussing the town out?

It's still not quite as baffling as the recent boxing matches Zalepa hosted between himself and residents, in which he essentially told people their opinions don't really matter, callously joked about what “listening” means, and told others that if they didn't like the job he was doing they should run for lord mayor.

While we normally applaud efforts to engage with residents, his execution left a lot to be desired.

To say his method of engaging residents is strange, is a vast understatement.

Maybe killing your goodwill in the community is somehow a positive to him, given that erroneous parking tickets indicate a healthy process?

It's logic we don't expect you to understand. Because we certainly don't.

Maybe it's the same logic that causes him to somehow imagine the majority of people agree with him on issues like the roundabout? (They overwhelmingly don't).

We can call it “opposite logic,” in that it sounds false, and is false. But it makes Zalepa feel like a leader.

It's about time for him to put that rhetoric aside and listen to the people.

editor@niagaranow.com

Correction: Last week's story about the new Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake board members did not include one board member. Sarah Kaufman, who is also the executive director for the NOTL Museum, also sits on the newly established board that will oversee tourism marketing and use of municipal accommodation tax funds.



LETTER OF THE WEEK

Let's put tax rebates **back into the community**

Dear editor:

What to do? What to do?

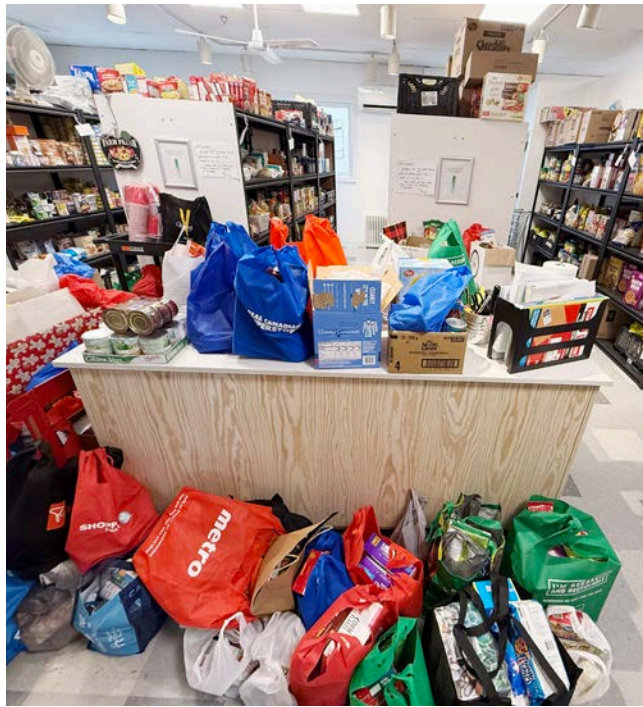
Just recently I found my cheque from the "Dougfather" in my mailbox. I didn't ask for it and think it is a political ploy. But I have it.

So, what to do with it? Before it came, with federal tax reductions (from Justin), I could have filled my fridge with beer or gone to one of our fine restaurants — once. My kids are all adults, so I don't need toys and I don't need diapers — yet.

I like the idea of supporting local initiatives. So, let's dip our toes in there.

I could pay for my memberships in the Museum, the Lodge, the Legion, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, or my wife's for the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre and NOTL Arts Collective.

I haven't forgotten The Lake Report, the clear win-



Letter writer Robert Moorhead says we should consider using Ford's \$200 rebate cheques to help local organizations, such as Newark Neighbours food bank.

ner of the two-newspaper fight with so many awards.

I could give it to any of our churches, Wells of

Hope, Lion's Club, Rotary Club, we have so many.

Then I thought, being as cheap as I am — who can

stretch \$200 the farthest? The Red Roof Retreat, the Salvation Army? But I remembered a really local charity, in the middle of Virgil, our food bank Newark Neighbours. Food banks know how to stretch a dollar!

Over the past 27 years, I have watched volunteers work in a cramped building to now arrive at their spacious, bright home. So, that is where my money went.

You may have cashed your cheque earlier, but you still have the money to ponder. I wrote this just to help everyone think of where we can do the most good in our community.

Your choice may be quite different from mine, but please, put the money into the community, not in retail (it always gets there anyway).

Robert Moorhead
NOTL



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.

Category: FESTIVALS

An art studio called Poetic Kinetics created the ginormous floating astronaut for the 2014 edition of this SoCal music festival.

Last issue: ISLANDS

Clue: Monuriki, an uninhabited island of Fiji, became a tourist attraction after the release of this Tom Hanks film.

Answer: What is Cast Away?

Answered first by: Claudia Grimwood

Also answered correctly (in order) by:

Jane Morris, Val McCue, Susan Hamilton, Sue Rautenberg, Mike Gander, Lynda Collet, Becky Creager, Catherine Clarke, Sheila Meloche, Jim Dandy, Alison Parsons, Katie Reimer, Esther VanGorder, Wade Durling, Nancy Rocca, Jeff Lake, Bob Stevens, Rob Hutchison, Michelle Wallis, Margaret Garaughty, Sylvia Wiens, Tuija Johansson, Howard Steiman, Marla Percy, Patricia Fraser, Margie Enns, John Wiebe, Hedy Wiebe

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

*REMEMBER TO PUT "WHAT IS" FOR JEOPARDY QUESTIONS!

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In NOTL, special reasons to **be wary** of America



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

My house is 206 years old, built in part from rubble after the Americans burned it on Dec. 10, 1813.

Out the window is a fine view on the U.S. side of the river of hulking Fort Niagara, built by the French, then occupied by the British and taken over after the revolution by Yanks. It's now operated by the Coast Guard.

Canadians — then made up of British troops, colonists and Indigenous allies — fought a bloody and protracted war with the aggressive, territorial, expansionist, manifest-destiny Americans for a couple of years.

They totally burned NOTL and sacked Fort George. We eventually got to Washington (woo-hoo!) and burned the president's house — which was subsequently painted white.

In the river there were fighting ships. By night there were incursions. The battle front was miles long

up and down the river.

The Americans lost 15,000 soldiers. Our guys counted 8,600 dead. Disease killed more than bullets and ship-borne artillery. Over 20,000 prisoners were taken and 4,500 men were wounded. Between seven and nine thousand First Nations fighters perished.

My street, Prideaux, was apparently within range of the U.S. cannons from across the river. At the moment of the war's outbreak, it was the main commercial thoroughfare. But after the conflict, stores and businesses moved a block south, to Queen Street, the local tour guides say, to be out of range when the next U.S. assault took place.

Why was there a war with America?

Trade restrictions and U.S. expansionism. Britain blockaded U.S. trade with France (they were in conflict). And the president, James Madison, was aggressively pushing out the American borders, instrumental in the Louisiana Purchase, and in acquiring most of Florida from Spain.

The thirst for dirt spilled over the northern border. The Yanks attacked Canada. My house was incinerated.

In the past eight weeks, Donald Trump has said clearly Canada should be the 51st state. He's mocked the PM and called him "Governor" repeatedly. On



The Promenade House was burned to the ground by Americans on Dec. 10, 1813, and later rebuilt.

calls between Trump and Trudeau, plus their officials, the American president has said ...

- The border should be redrawn because the 1908 treaty is not valid.
- Americans should have more control over the water resources, including the Great Lakes.
- U.S. banks should have greater access to the Canadian market.
- The GST is unfair because it makes U.S. imports more expensive.
- Canada floods the U.S. with drugs and migrants.
- The U.S. is victimized because Canadian exports exceed imports.
- He will tariff our goods and break the free trade deal (and did).
- The U.S. should have access to our dairy and poultry markets.
- Canada should be part

of the USA, and "economic force" could be used to force annexation.

Outgoing Justin Trudeau, in the thick of the nascent trade war responded: "What he wants is to see a total collapse of the Canadian economy, because that'll make it easier to annex us."

A few months ago that would have sounded like the ravings of a Canadian leader who fell out of a coconut tree.

The relationship between the two countries, after all, has been just ducky for two centuries. We've helped each other. Fought together. Traded everything. Built stuff together. Defended each other. Aided and comforted each other. And lovingly punched each other at the blue line.

Trump is being an alpha-male, out-of-his-lane, bully who has abandoned his key election promises (make life cheaper and fairer) to become the new James Madison, only better. A king.

It's gone too far. Every act of resistance is justified. Canada cannot be annexed, occupied or held. Americans made a grave error.

Trump will go. The memory will not. There are still scorched timbers in my basement.

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

garth@garth.ca

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Designation Part 2: Determining a property’s historic value



Brian Marshall
Columnist

After our one-week hiatus to address the appalling clear-cut of about 800 mature trees in Virgil and the shameful neglect of Old Town’s Dockland’s historical artifacts, let’s return to our “quick and dirty” examination of the criteria (started in: “Arch-i-text: A primer on property heritage designation,” Feb. 27) used to assess your property vis-à-vis heritage designation.

In that earlier article, we looked at the categories contained within Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act, which addresses the criteria that consider a property’s design and/or physical value and its contextual value within the setting and community.

This time, we’ll delve into the category which examines a property’s historical and/or associative value.

On occasion, satisfying

the criteria contained in this category can be straightforward, in cases wherein the facts are already established (e.g. the Kirby House on Front Street) or self-evident — however, far more often a significant amount of research is required to identify and interpret the fact of historic or associative value.

So, let’s consider the first criterion in this category, which reads: “The property has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.”

The key words here are “direct” and “significant.”

A direct association cannot be minor, secondary or incidental — the association must be underwritten by good evidence of the property’s relevance to the theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution cited.

Likewise, “significant” must meet the threshold of a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that made a notable, strong, or influential contribution to the development or evolution of the community.

It is possible to satisfy this criterion should the property be a rare or, preferably, a one-of-a-kind example that illustrates a particular



The recently designated Kirby House met and exceeded Category 2 criteria for heritage value. BRIAN MARSHALL

aspect of the community’s history.

Moving on to the second criterion: “The property yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.”

In essence, this is a question of whether the property has, or can provide, evidence of one or more notable or influential aspects of a community’s history or the history of a culture.

The evidence may be new information or simply provide a greater understanding of the community or cultural history.

Further, it could be illustrated through the property itself or the property combined with documentary, material artifacts and even oral tradition.

It should also be stated

that should a property materially contribute to the comparative analysis of similar properties which yields the aforementioned “greater understanding”, it may likely fulfil this criterion.

And, finally, we have the final criterion in this category: “The property demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.”

As distinct from the question of “craftsmanship or artistic merit” — category one, criterion three, outlined in the first article in this series — here the individual architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist portfolio of work is considered in evaluating how the property displays their “work or ideas.”

Furthermore, the property

should notably contribute to understanding or interpreting the importance and contribution that the individual has, or had, made to and within the community.

Here I am reminded of the eminent Niagara architect Don Chapman’s home on Niagara River Parkway — a property which in his writings he considered to be the finest unfettered example of his design ethos amongst all of the projects in his extensive portfolio (see: “Arch-i-text: A masterwork,” Jan. 6, 2021, “Arch-i-text: Slow architecture and from whence it came,” March 23, 2023) — that would fulfil the requirements for this criterion.

At this point, we have finished our 50,000-foot overview of the legislation’s criteria to hopefully provide you with a basic understanding of the nine criteria, only two of which must be met for designation, by which a property’s heritage value is assessed.

Now, should you wish to take the next steps in undertaking a no-cost heritage designation for your property, where should you start?

First, contact the town’s heritage planners. They can provide you with the required paperwork and often some basic historical information (such as a build date) for your property.

Next, talk to the folks at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum. They may have a file on your property, historical photographs and other related materials.

And, speaking to the museum, they are running a workshop on understanding the land registry (notlmu-seum.ca/whats-on/view/id/1024), which is a virtual resource to build a “chain of title” that may identify important historical figures who once owned your house.

Finally, you may reach out to me at homeguide.ca@gmail.com to discuss, decode and simplify the process.

Next week, we will attempt to address the myths, the pros and the cons of heritage designation.

As a closing note, remember that your property does not necessarily have to be perceived as “historic” — the minimum threshold is 40 years — to qualify for Part IV heritage designation, but it does need to meet at least two of the nine criteria defined within the Ontario Heritage Act.

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



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Whatever happened to **old-fashioned debates?** The Carney coronation — what now, Canada?

Dear editor:

Regarding several letters from the Feb. 27 issue (“Letter: Time for Peller to cut ties with disgraced Gretzky,” “Letter: Character goes beyond hockey”) referencing Wayne Gretzky’s name taken off any Canadian business: The first thing I thought of was — this is “out and out” intolerance.

Anyone having an opinion other than the government, other than the government-funded mainstream media, other than your own ... means that the other must go.

I refer also to Mr. Turner’s Turner Report of Feb. 20, when he reflected on the “intellectual freedom” in our town, which also applies to our country (“The Turner Report: When freedom to speak was no freedom at all”).

He recalled the firing of Cathy Simpson, when she wrote about “Freedom to Read Week” last year, and then got fired for her opinion. “Simpson’s argument that all viewpoints should be heard, was logical, but ...” That’s the key ... but.

If it goes against the mainstream, it is intolerable. Look at what intolerance did for Germany with the National Socialist German Workers’ Party in power.

Look at how Trudeau’s Liberals want to quash free speech with Bill 63, where you can be put in jail for expressing an opinion that may be misinterpreted or different, which Mr. Harley supported last year in an op-ed.

This Bill supposedly aims to prevent child abuse on the internet, however, the Criminal Code of Canada

already has several points to cover that.

What happened to good old debates, using those good old-fashioned things called facts?

Do we even have debate clubs in high schools anymore, or is that too traditional?

How about a debate club at the community centre, based on facts, presented in a controlled and logical manner?

I’d pay to watch that for sure.

**Susan Gerbes
Virgil**

Dear editor:

So Canada has a new prime minister — and Canadians barely know him. Unelected, out of Canada for most of his adult life — what do we expect? What CAN we expect?

A prime minister is responsible for far, far more than the economy — for which he has a finance minister, by the way.

The current government has 39 cabinet positions with diverse portfolios ranging from defence to fishing, agriculture, veterans affairs, health care, education and dozens of others.

Think about it.

What experience does Mark Carney have in any of these areas? What knowledge does he have in politics that might give him even a general understanding?

In fact, at age 59, Carney has shown little desire to break out of the constraints

of his resume. That is of course, aside from leveraging his economic bona fides into the fading world of Net Zero.

With so much damage to undo — damage inflicted by the government he now leads — Canada needs a fresh vision and an inspiring communicator who can bring competence back to government and investment and optimism back to the country.

Given the admitted elitist, globalist lens through which he views the world, it appears he is capable of neither.

Put it all together and Mark Carney has no choice but to fall back on the same gang of rogues and ideologues that spiralled Canada into fiscal oblivion and social turmoil.

An election is on the way. Make an informed decision.

**Don Mustill
NOTL**

America — the **best and the worst** in the world

Dear editor:

Thanks to J. Richard Wright for his article in The Lake Report last week (“Opinion: Canada’s choice — compassion and care or extremism,” March 6), an excellent critique of the MIB-CL (Megalomaniac,

Ignorant Bully who Cheats and Lies) president of the DSA (Disunited States of America).

Indeed, our medical outcomes are better than the U.S. because of their extremes of wealth, the rich and the middle and poor who

can’t pay for health care.

To get money to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy, the president has launched the tariff war.

As my pediatrician colleague, Dr. Peter McMain, said many years ago, “Ah, the U.S.A. — the best in the

world, and the worst in the world.”

I hope that Mr. Carney and the excellent Liberal ministers will pivot and meet the challenge with fortitude and compassion.

**Elizabeth Oliver-Malone
Old Town**

Breaking down **local barriers** to trade

Dear editor:

As the U.S. drags us into a trade war, Canadians are realizing we have senseless trade restrictions within our own borders. Our provincial premiers have committed to knocking down many of these internal trade barriers, potentially adding up to \$200 billion to the Canadian economy.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, we have our own self-imposed barriers to commerce, which raise costs for our citizens and prevent the full flourishing of our town’s economy.

In October 2018, the sale and usage of cannabis was legalized in Canada. In December 2018, our town council at the time opted to disallow the retail sale of cannabis in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

At the time, little was known about how the cannabis markets would look; the subsequent boom and bust of cannabis shops shows there may have been some wisdom in proceeding cautiously.

Today, however, it’s clear cannabis shops are respectable, mainstream amenities. Moreover, they provide entrepreneurial opportunities and jobs.

Legal cannabis also has tourism potential for our visitors from more puritanical jurisdictions, whose money is certainly welcome, even if their politics are not.

Cannabis shops are highly regulated and the product is distributed by our own provincial government.

Recreational users can already purchase online

directly from the government, or make the trek to St. Catharines or the Falls to spend their money outside of our town.

Our historic Old Town already has enough ice cream shops and American chain stores. A tasteful and well-designed cannabis shop would help preserve the unique character of our town, while generating municipal tax revenue and jobs and enhancing our ability to “shop local.”

Municipalities can opt-in to allowing cannabis sales at any time by notifying the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario.

I suggest, as we look for ways to fortify or even grow our economy in Niagara-on-the-Lake, that time is now.

**Matthew French
NOTL**

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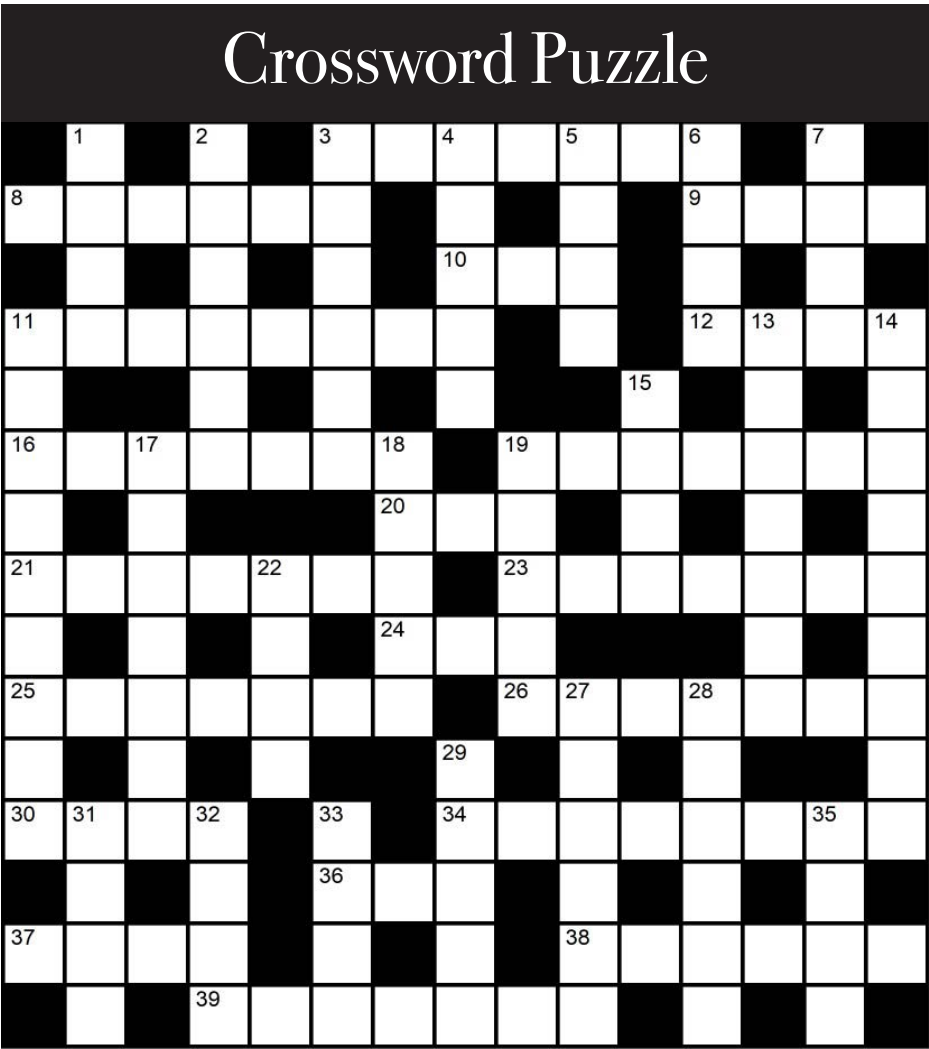
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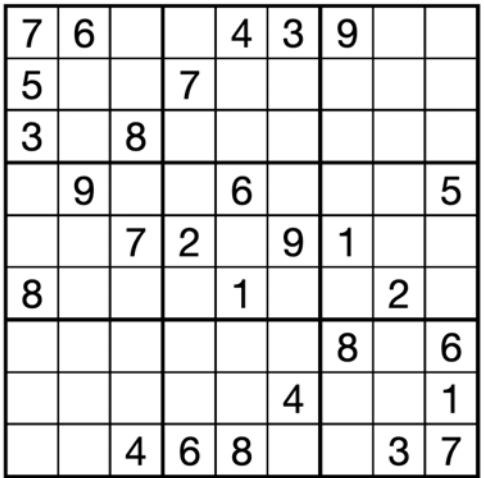
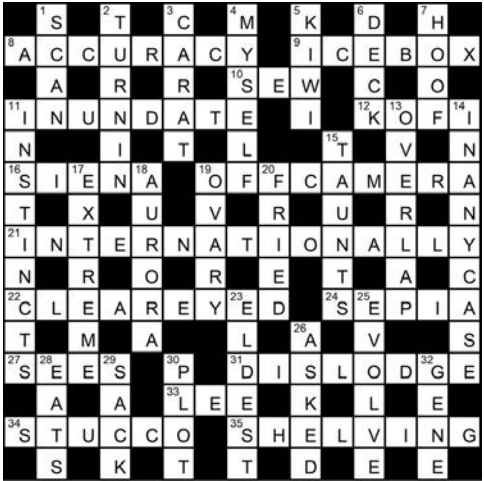


- Across**
- 3. Very evil (7)
 - 8. Feeling of guilt (6)
 - 9. Norway's "Tiger City" (4)
 - 10. Statute (3)
 - 11. Like a shirt or guitar (8)
 - 12. A long way off (4)
 - 16. Save a bit (3,4)
 - 19. Rectify sin so as to expose a former President's wife (7)
 - 20. Outs partner (3)
 - 21. American ornithologist and artist (7)
 - 23. Spicy Spanish banger (7)
 - 24. Civil aeronautics overseer (1,1,1)
 - 25. Unsettled (2,5)
 - 26. Governments in power (7)
 - 30. World-beating writer who was also a WW2 fighter pilot (4)
 - 34. Old records (8)
 - 36. Type of raid (3)
 - 37. Neck and neck (4)
 - 38. Calculate (6)
 - 39. Indignity (7)
- Down**
- 1. Global women's empowerment organization (1,1,1,1)
 - 2. How some suspects are released (2,4)
 - 3. Refuses to admit (6)
 - 4. Financial wherewithal (5)
 - 5. Military partnership (1,1,1,1)
 - 6. Fizzy drink (4)
 - 7. Napoleon escaped from here (4)
 - 11. All over the shop (9)
 - 13. Totalitarian type of government (7)
 - 14. Presses on in chaos to get answers (9)
 - 15. Pudding sounds like a way to start something (4)
 - 17. European Jewish vernacular (7)
 - 18. Because (5)
 - 19. Richard's "Sound of Music" collaborator (5)
 - 22. Defeat (4)
 - 27. An accompanist, perhaps? (6)
 - 28. Foolishness (6)
 - 29. Cuban dance (5)
 - 31. Ugandan despot (4)
 - 32. "--- and the Swan" (Greek mythology) (4)
 - 33. Faculty senior, in short (4)
 - 35. Cupid (4)

Have some fun



Last issue's answers



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EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM



St. Patrick's Day

Our photo features Dunguaire Castle in Galway, Ireland which was painted by former resident and artist Margaret Peake Benton. Niagara-on-the-Lake has an interesting history in connection with Ireland. In fact, we had a whole section known as “Irish Town.” This area was located around Rye, Niagara, Green and Flynn Street. Many Irish immigrants settled here following their arrival in 1847 during the Irish Famine.

In anticipation of their arrival, the town council, known then as the Board of Police, received orders to appoint a Board of Health — many of the immigrants were arriving with diseases. The early minute books in the museum’s collection detail the physicians, nurses, pharmacists, medicines, groceries, coffins and gravediggers who would aid those with disease. It also listed information on over 200 immigrants who arrived here.

When the new arrivals docked at our wharf, the Inspector of Immigrants, Beaver Bonner, would visit the steamboats and report verbally to their conditions and needs. The sick were sent to a makeshift hospital while temporary lodging was found for those who were in good health. Unfortunately, a hospital wouldn’t be established here until after the First World War.

Many locals pitched in with donations of money, food and clothing. The Board of Health had a few rules for the new arrivals: No relief was provided for those who were in possession of more than \$5, those who refused to work, anyone who was begging or who was found to be intoxicated.

Many of these refugees found jobs as labourers or servants for very low wages. The families who settled there included the Murphys, O’Briens, McManns, Flynn, Lynches, Campbells and the Fellows, among others.

We could go on with more history but we will let you get on with your Guinness instead. Happy St. Patrick’s Day!

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A guide to pruning your roses so they stay healthy and blooming



GROWING TOGETHER 

Joanne Young
Columnist

I know that it is only the middle of March, and we could still get snow, but watching the snow melt away does the heart good and tells me that spring is on the way. I even noticed that my crocuses were starting to make an appearance this past week.

There is always such a list of garden chores that need to be tackled as spring arrives. One of those jobs is pruning your roses.

Proper pruning not only keeps your rose bushes looking neat and well-maintained but also ensures they remain healthy, vibrant and capable of producing abundant blooms.

Why prune roses?
Encouraging healthy growth: Regular pruning removes dead, damaged, or diseased wood, which helps prevent the spread of pests and diseases. By pruning away unhealthy sections, the plant can then spend that energy on producing new growth and vibrant blooms.

Promoting better air circulation: Pruning away crowded stems improves air circulation around the plant. This helps to prevent fungal diseases like powdery mildew and black spot, which thrive in stagnant environments.

Enhancing flowering: Pruning encourages more flowers. When you remove spent flowers and old growth, the plant responds by producing new growth that then will produce more flower buds.

When to prune
It is best not to do any pruning on your roses in



Joanne Young says it's best to prune roses at a 45 degree angle just above the buds.

the fall, but to leave the last flowers of the season remain on the plant.

By letting the end-of-season flowers remain on the plant, it signals to the plant its time has finished for the season and it is time for it to go dormant for the winter.

Roses are slow to go dormant in late fall and early winter. You will often see them still blooming into December and with their leaves still being green into January.

Therefore, you should always let the last flowers of the fall remain on the plant because this signals the rose bush that it is time for them to go to sleep for the winter.

Pruning in the fall will stimulate them to keep growing into the winter and will result in more dieback on the canes.

The best time to prune your roses is late dormant period-early spring just as the leaf buds are starting to swell. A good indicator of the proper pruning time is when the Forsythia plants come into bloom.

How to prune hybrid teas, grandiflora and floribunda roses

Step 1: Remove any dead, diseased or damaged branches first. Cut any diseased or damaged back past the damaged area to just above a healthy bud.

Step 2: Cut off any weak branches, or branches that are coming out from below the graft area (knuckle at bottom of stems).

Step 3: Remove stems that are closely crossing each other or branches that are rubbing against each other.

Step 4: Remove stems that cross through the center of the plant.

Step 5: Prune back remain canes, cutting to just above a healthy, outward-facing bud. By pruning to an outward-facing bud, it controls the direction of growth to go out from the plant, instead of it growing back through the center of the plant.

This helps improve air circulation which helps to cut down on diseases. Leave at least three to five buds from the base of the plant and up.

Pruning climbing roses
Climbing roses do not need to be cut back as hard as hybrid teas, grandifloras and floribundas.

In fact, with climbing roses, the training of the rose is just as important as the pruning. With climbers, you want to start training the main canes from the time that you plan it.

The main canes need to be trained in a fanned-out shape, training them to run horizontally. By doing this,

not only will you get flowers at the tip of the cane, but you will get flowers all along the cane.

Step 1: Remove any dead, diseased or damaged branches. Also, remove any weak canes or canes that are growing out away from the structure that you are training the rose on.

Step 2: Fasten any remaining main canes to structure in a horizontal fashion

Step 3: Off of the main canes, you will have lateral stems growing — prune back the lateral stems to two or three buds.

So, once you see the yellow forsythias coming into bloom, you will know it is time to go out and prune your roses. Hopefully, with a bit more confidence.

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

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society is pleased to be hosting a series of Saturday morning gardening classes, available to the public. They will be facilitated by Joanne Young starting on March 1 and will run until May 31. Join us for the classes that interest you. For all the details and to pre-register for the classes, visit notlhortociety.com/classes.

Obituaries

Sharon Tiessen



Sharon Lee Tiessen
(Connolly)
Dec. 9, 1952 – March 3, 2025

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Sharon Tiessen, daughter of the late Norm and Joyce Connolly. Beloved and true love wife of Dave Tiessen of fifty-three years. Loving Mother to Chris (Julia), Trevor (Cheryl) and Kelly (Darren). Much loved sister to Gary (Leslie). Cherished Grandma to Logan, Zach, Adelyn, Cameron, Reagan, and Amelia. Treasured Aunt and Great Aunt to Oliver (Erin) (Arthur), Lara (Geoff) (Claire).

Sharon was born on Dec. 9, 1952, in St. Catharines, Ontario and was raised near the old town of Niagara-on-the-lake. In 1971 she married her high school sweetheart Dave Tiessen and raised a family in the farming community just outside of Virgil. Sharon was a much beloved school bus driver of fifteen years with a reliable smile to all the adoring children she picked up every day. Sharon moved on and worked at Penner's Home Hardware where she oversaw the paint department and was fondly known as simply "the paint lady."

After Sharon's retirement, she enjoyed thrifting in St. Jacob's, antique stores searching for the perfect piece for her next project. Sharon would delight in spending time with her close friends while enjoying a good glass of white wine, coffee, laughter, or tears. She was everywhere in our community, the local florist, restaurant, market, hockey arena always with kindness to everyone she met but her true love was in her home with her family and her grandchildren. Sharon's pride, joy and love were her six precious grandchildren. She put her endless love into every detail of every plant, every cookie she baked, every gift she wrapped, every occasion she planned, every photo she put up, every hug she gave – her love was enduring.

Sharon will be forever dearly loved, adored, and missed. Our world and community is a better place because of her kindness, empathy, and compassion. May she rest in peace.

A visitation will be held at Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-lake, Ontario on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, from 3 to 7 p.m. In honour of her strength as a brave breast cancer survivor, we kindly request that, in lieu of flowers, donations made to Breast Cancer Canada. Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



The Lake Report welcomes your letters to the editor. Please, write early and often. Letters ideally should be under 400 words long. Occasionally, longer letters may be published. All letters may be edited for conciseness, accuracy, libel and defamation. Please include your full name, street address and a daytime telephone number so that authorship can be authenticated. Only names and general addresses (eg. Virgil, St. Davids, NOTL) will be published. Send your letters to editor@niagaranow.com or drop them by our office at 496 Mississagua St., NOTL.

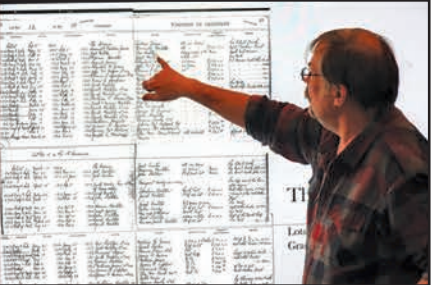


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