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Hyper-local news for Niagara-on-the-Lake



Harvest Classic | Page 12

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Canada's most-awarded community newspaper

October 29, 2026



Mixed fortunes for tourism amid U.S. tariffs

Coleman Molnar
The Lake Report

This year saw no end to the trade war between the U.S. and Canada that kicked off in 2025, nor the economic pressures impacting many people at home and abroad. Here in border-town Niagara-on-the-Lake, it's meant mixed results in tourism levels and engagement for businesses and visitor spots in downtown Old Town.

A \$3,500 piece of Indigenous art might once have been an attractive purchase for an American visitor to Niagara-on-the-Lake. These days, Tom Chapman is encouraging artists to think about making 10 pieces priced at \$350 instead.

The owner of Upper Canada Native Art Gallery on Queen Street is working with Indigenous artists across Canada to produce smaller, more affordable pieces as U.S. tariffs make larger purchases increasingly difficult for American customers.

Chapman estimates a

Continued on Page 8

Goettler gets in

NOTL's next mayor wins with majority, earns 55.1 per cent of votes



Surrounded by supporters, Vaughn Goettler celebrates his election victory at his Ricardo Street home alongside his wife Lauren. The second-time candidate won the lord mayor race with 5,101 votes, while Erwin Wiens and Andrea Kaiser earned 2,870 and 1,287, respectively. RICHARD HARLEY

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Two experienced politicians lost their bid for Niagara-on-the-Lake's top job Monday night, as voters handed the reins to a political newcomer and elected four incumbents to a smaller council.

Vaughn Goettler defeated deputy lord mayor Erwin Wiens and regional councillor Andrea Kaiser in Monday's municipal election with an

outright majority — 55.1 per cent of the vote, or 5,101 votes, according to unofficial results.

Wiens finished second with 2,870 votes, or 31 per cent, while Kaiser received 1,287 votes, or 13.9 per cent.

Incumbent Gary Burroughs topped the council race and will now become deputy lord mayor, while first-time councillors Weston Miller and Steve McGuinness claimed seats alongside four returning incumbents.

Council results

Voter turnout was 52.4 per cent, with 9,262 of NOTL's 17,684 registered voters casting ballots, according to unofficial town results.

Burroughs led the 11-candidate council race with 5,394 votes, followed by fellow incumbent Sandra O'Connor with 4,973.

Newcomer Weston Miller finished third with 4,948 votes, while incumbent An-

Continued on Page 2



Erwin Wiens gives a speech after his loss to Vaughn Goettler at a viewing party at Corks restaurant on Monday night. PAIGE SEBURN



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Three incumbents defeated, three newbies in

Continued from Front Page

drew Niven secured fourth place with 4,413.

Steve McGuinness, another newcomer, was elected with 4,196 votes, and incumbent Tim Balasiuk claimed the sixth and final seat with 4,093.

Five candidates fell short.

Nicholas Colaneri received 3,501 votes, followed by Rick Mills with 2,893, incumbent Maria Mavridis with 2,852, incumbent Adriana Cater-Vizzari with 2,537 and Karen Jones-Taylor with 1,447.

Winners look ahead

For Goettler, the decisive victory was more than a win — it was a message from voters.

“I was truly humbled by the results, the overwhelming support throughout the entire community, and I take that very seriously,” he told The Lake Report.

“I saw it as kind of a mandate to bring the change that the town is requesting.”

Goettler said he hadn’t thought about winning by a majority, focusing instead on securing a victory.

He also welcomed the



A crowd of Goettler supporters watches the election results at his home. RICHARD HARLEY

makeup of the new council, calling it a “very progressive team.”

“I’m excited to work with Gary Burroughs as the deputy lord mayor and all the councillors, both returning and new,” he said.

Goettler said he has watched Burroughs in action over the years and respects his experience at both the municipal and regional levels.

“I’m pretty happy to have Gary Burroughs as the deputy lord mayor,” he said. “But I don’t think there’s anybody who would have been a bad choice.”

For Andrew Niven, the election marked a first.

The only returning councillor who had never previ-

ously been elected, Niven joined the council table by appointment in October 2024 after Nick Ruller’s resignation.

Now, he’s earned a seat through the ballot box.

“I’m incredibly grateful to the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake for their support and the confidence they’ve placed in me,” Niven told The Lake Report in a message following the election.

“I’m excited and ready to get to work, and I look forward to working with my fellow councillors.”

Defeated candidates react

After eight years at the council table, Wiens is leaving town hall.

“I’m disappointed in my loss,” he told The Lake

Report after falling short in his bid for lord mayor.

But Wiens said he isn’t disappearing from community life and is looking ahead to what the incoming council will accomplish.

“We have to have faith in the electorate and we have to have faith in the council,” he said.

Kaiser, meanwhile, thanked the residents who supported her campaign and said she hopes the next council will work together constructively.

“I am hopeful for Niagara-on-the-Lake that we move forward collaboratively, positively,” she said.

Asked about the future of her push to change how Niagara Region divides

policing costs among municipalities, she said she hopes Goettler will carry the effort forward.

Kaiser has been advocating for a review of the current property-assessment-based police cost model, arguing it places a disproportionate tax burden on communities such as NOTL.

“I certainly hope that the new mayor will pick up where I left off,” she said.

How election night unfolded

The first numbers began appearing around 8:40 p.m., showing Goettler leading the mayoral race with 63.5 per cent of the vote, followed by Wiens at 24.2 per cent and Kaiser at 12.3 per cent.

By 9 p.m., with more votes counted, Goettler’s lead had narrowed to 57.4 per cent, while Wiens climbed to 28.9 per cent and Kaiser stood at 13.7 per cent.

The three lord mayoral candidates maintained their positions throughout the evening, with Goettler holding the lead, Wiens in second and Kaiser in third.

Meanwhile, the first council results showed Burroughs, O’Connor, Miller, Niven, McGuinness and Balasiuk in the top six.

By 9 p.m., the same six candidates remained in the top six, a standing they maintained throughout the evening before ultimately securing seats on council.

A new council, a new structure

The election brings a significant change to the makeup of NOTL’s municipal government: the next council will have six councillors rather than eight, while the separate regional councillor position has been eliminated under provincial changes to Niagara’s governance structure.

That makes Goettler the town’s sole elected representative on regional council, where decisions on policing, infrastructure and regional services affect local taxpayers.

The town is scheduled to release its official election results Tuesday, Oct. 27. The new council’s inauguration is scheduled for Nov. 24.

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Niagara-on-the-Lake residents were active at the polls this year, with 52 per cent of eligible voters casting a ballot, or a total of 9,262 of 17,684 registered voters. As of Wednesday, that puts NOTL in 28th in Ontario for turnout. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Voter turnout **52 per cent** in this year's election, up from **47 per cent** in 2022

Zahraa Hmood
The Lake Report

The people of Niagara-on-the-Lake have spoken — at least, 9,262 of them have.

The 2026 municipal election saw an uptick in voter turnout compared to the election four years ago, with around 52 per cent of registered voters casting their ballots, according to official results from the Town of NOTL's website, publicized Tuesday.

In this case, it means 9,262 out of 17,684 registered voters took part in the election. That's compared to 2022's voter turnout of around 47 per cent.

Town clerk Grant Bivol, who oversaw the administration of the municipal election, said it's encouraging to see this bump in voter participation.

"Any increase in participation is positive for local democracy and demonstrates that residents were engaged in the future of our community," he told The Lake Report.

As of Wednesday afternoon, Niagara-on-the-Lake posted the highest voter turnout in the Niagara region — voter turnout results for Lincoln, Pelham and Welland were still pending.

This year, the town introduced internet voting as an option, allowing people to cast their ballots online

from Oct. 5 to 25 — it ended up being a big hit.

Of the 9,262 ballots cast, more than half of them were done online: 4,739. That's 51 per cent.

In the mayoral race, Vaughn Goettler received 5,101 votes, making up 55 per cent of votes cast for the next lord mayor. Of those votes, 2,669 votes were cast online — that's more than half.

Four years ago, after his first attempt to become lord mayor, he came third in the three-candidate race, getting 1,268 votes.

His opponents, current councillor Erwin Wiens and current regional councillor Andrea Kaiser, received 2,870 votes and 1,287 votes, respectively. For Wiens, that's 31 per cent of mayoral votes, and for Kaiser, almost 14 per cent.

Internet voting was also well-utilized by Kaiser's supporters: 653 of her votes were cast online, slightly more than half. For Wiens' supporters, however, a little less than half of their votes were online, at 1,398.

Bivol said the town was happy with the rollout of internet voting.

"We were pleased with the implementation and believe it provided residents with an additional convenient and accessible way to participate in the election," he said. "Online voting saw

strong uptake and was an important component of this year's voting process."

The official results show a breakdown of how people voted at the five polling centres in the five settlements: Old Town, Virgil, Glendale, St. Davids and Queenston.

Looking just at those five polling stations, the numbers indicate that the majority of Goettler's support came from those who voted in Old Town: 1,368 votes were cast from the polling centre at the NOTL Community Centre, more than the total at the other four polling centres combined (1,064).

Kaiser also received the most number of votes from the Old Town poll, 272 votes, though the total number of votes combined at the other four polls tops that, at 362 votes.

Wiens, in contrast, saw the most success from the poll in Virgil, with 547 votes cast there. In Old Town, he received 486 votes. Combining all the polls except Virgil, 925 votes were cast for him in-person.

The most votes for a single candidate were cast for Gary Burroughs, with 5,394 votes (generally, a councillor gets the most number of votes for a single candidate in NOTL's elections). This makes him NOTL's next deputy lord mayor — Wiens

was the deputy lord mayor these past four years.

Burroughs also fared well in Old Town, with 1,390 votes from that location. Like Goettler, his votes in Old Town outweigh the combined votes he received at the other four locations, but by 78 votes.

Earlier in October, two advance polls were also held at the NOTL Community Centre and Town Hall — those results were sorted into location results for Old Town and Virgil, respectively. At the community centre, 646 ballots were cast, while at Town Hall, 350 votes were cast.

While this election's voter turnout is higher than the last election's, it's not quite as high as the turnout from 2018, when 59 per cent of eligible voters casted their ballot.

Speaking on how the administration of the 2026 election went overall, Bivol said he is "extremely proud" of town staff's work.

"Elections require months of planning and preparation behind the scenes, and staff worked diligently to ensure residents could cast their ballots safely, securely and conveniently," he said.

To view the official election results, visit the Town of NOTL's website, or the results from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.



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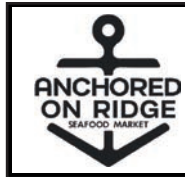
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A look at election night

Goettler was at his home having a party,
Wiens was at Corks with some council members,
Kaiser had a quiet home dinner with her family.
Here's a glimpse into their nights.



Vaughn Goettler celebrates his election win surrounded by campaign supporters at his Ricardo Street home. Here he embraces his wife Lauren moments later. RICHARD HARLEY



Andrea Kaiser had a quiet election night. She watched the results come in from home with her family and got an early sleep after. She earned 1,287 votes. JULIA SACCO

'Absolute, total elation' for Goettler

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The lights were low and hopes were high as supporters gathered at Vaughn Goettler's Ricardo Street home on election night.

Before the polls had even closed, the man who would become Niagara-on-the-Lake's next lord mayor was allowing himself a little optimism.

"I think we might just be able to do this," he said.

By night's end, Goettler had won the three-way race with 5,101 votes — 55.1 per cent of the vote — ahead of Erwin Wiens with 2,870 and Andrea Kaiser with 1,287.

But for now, surrounded by friends and family, he was waiting for the first results.

Among those gathered were Rotary Club leaders and former lord mayor Betty Disero, one of his opponents in the 2022 election that brought Gary Zalepa to office.

Four years later, Goettler's second bid for the job was coming down to the next few hours.

When the polls closed at 8 p.m., supporters clustered around a screen to watch the results.

The first returns gave Goettler a commanding lead. As more polls reported, the excitement in the room grew.

By the ninth poll, the math was clear: his closest rival, Wiens, could no longer catch him.

The champagne corks popped.

With supporters cheering around him, Goettler embraced his wife, Lauren.

Asked to sum up his feelings, he had three words: "absolute, total elation."

"I am so humbled by what has happened tonight.

I have so many supporters, and everybody has contributed to the success of this evening and this campaign," he said.

He credited his campaign committee with putting in long hours, morning and night.

"I have the absolute best campaign committee that a person could want. Everybody has been spectacular. We have worked so well, so hard together, day in, day

out, evenings, mornings. It doesn't matter."

He reserved a special thank-you for Lauren.

"And you know the other person who I have to thank — because without her, none of this would have been possible — is my beautiful wife."

He spoke of the hours she had spent awake at night, worrying, answering emails and figuring out what needed to happen next to keep him on track.

"I'm humbled and honoured to be the next lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake."

One supporter had a more immediate question: "Are you going to work tomorrow morning?"

"I sure am," Goettler said.

After the sparkling wine and celebrations, he headed to the community centre to greet those who had gathered there to watch the results.

Finding it nearly empty, he changed course for the Sandtrap Pub & Grill, where he mingled with a few people before heading home.

editor@niagaranow.com

Kaiser proud of grassroots campaign

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

From start to finish, Andrea Kaiser remained true to herself throughout her campaign for lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Speaking from her home in Queenston shortly after losing the race, Kaiser said she was proud.

"I wanted to give voters a different choice and that's what I did," she said. "I was true to myself which is always important to me."

Just hours earlier, Kaiser had gathered at home with her family to watch the election results roll in and share a meal.

"I've been in an unusual number of elections in the last six years," she said. "In all of those elections, I had big parties, so to speak — and you have a much bigger campaign team."

This mayoral race, which began in May, was grassroots from the beginning.

"I felt that was kind of the right way to do it for us."

Kaiser described her mood as "jittery," saying it was difficult to describe what goes through a per-

son's mind on election day.

The outgoing regional councillor said she reminded herself that she had done the best she could and tried to keep busy.

For Kaiser, that even meant shoe shopping.

"I walked into the parking lot and this woman said to me, 'What are you doing here? It's election night!'" Kaiser said. "It's because I just have to get out of my head and get a breather."

The campaign also brought challenges online and in the news, Kaiser said.

"I would say that this election has been the hardest election I've ever run in," she said. "When I was running federally, a lot of the stuff was directed at the party."

With the town divided, Kaiser hopes the community will share more kindness, regardless of who holds office.

"I've grown up here. I served on council. I have never seen it like this."

Kaiser shared a text she received during election night from a supporter who said they hope NOTL gets the chance to return to its grassroots, with leadership that puts the community first.

"To get that from somebody is very touching for me, and it reminds me why I'm doing this," she said.

"I hope whoever's elected as mayor, if it's not me, that they have the same intention and the same thought about bringing the community back together and to be less divisive," she said.

"That's the Niagara-on-the-Lake that I remember, you remember, that I want for our future, I want for my kids, I want that back."

After the loss, Kaiser said she FaceTimed her daughter and continued watching the results in other races.

"I'm going to regroup with my team probably next week and we're going to go out and celebrate all the work we did," she said.

Kaiser said the results show a common sentiment.

"A lot of that messaging that I see of those who were elected across the board seemed to be very anti-development," she said.

Kaiser thanked her campaign team, the community, volunteers and residents who took time to speak with her. "I have no regrets."

juliasacco@niagaranow.com



Fellow incumbent candidate Maria Mavridis embraces Erwin Wiens at a results party on Monday night at Corks restaurant. Both candidates lost their bids. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Wiens grateful for eight years on council

Paige Seburn

Local Journalism Initiative

The Lake Report

With his bid for lord mayor over, Erwin Wiens thanked supporters gathered at Corks Wine Bar & Eatery Monday night and urged the town to pull together after an election that ended his eight-year run on council.

“We’re all on the same team. We’re better together.”

The outgoing deputy lord mayor acknowledged his disappointment after losing to Vaughn Goettler, who secured 55.1 per cent of the vote. Wiens received 31 per cent, while regional councillor Andrea Kaiser finished third with 13.9 per cent.

Wiens, a retired police officer and grape grower who spent the past four years as deputy lord mayor, said he was proud of the campaign his team ran and the outgoing council’s accomplishments.

“We’ve got the framework in place, so the next council can come into the administration and do a good job,” he told The Lake Report Monday night.

Addressing supporters, Wiens pointed to what he described as several town accomplishments from the past four years, including its official plan, tourism strategy, asset management planning and investments in infrastructure.

He also highlighted funding secured for irrigation infrastructure and the Shaw Festival.

“Those are things that I’m

proud of,” he said.

Wiens credited outgoing Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, who attended the gathering, and described him as a mentor.

He also singled out councillors Maria Mavridis and Adriana Cater-Vizzari, who both lost their re-election bids. Mavridis, whose family owns Corks Wine Bar & Eatery, was also in attendance.

Wiens praised their contributions to the town and acknowledged the criticism they faced while making difficult decisions.

“They took a beating in the media, they took a beating in social media,” he said.

Before the results came in

With the outcome still unknown, Wiens said he was confident but anxious.

“We’re proud of the campaign we ran,” he said in an interview, roughly 30 minutes after polls closed.

Wiens said he would have been willing to work with any councillors elected alongside him, emphasizing his history of collaboration.

“I’m happy to work with anybody.”

He also thanked his campaign supporters and said one of the highlights of campaigning was re-connecting with lifelong acquaintances whose names he recognized while going through the voter list.

What’s next for Wiens?

Although his time on council is coming to an end, Wiens said he and his wife, Dorothy Soo-Wiens, have

no plans to step away from community life.

He said the couple planned to continue volunteering, with the upcoming tractor parade among their next commitments. He also said the family was planning a vacation.

“Rest assured, you haven’t seen the last of Dorothy and I.”

A daughter’s reminder

After the defeat, Wiens’ daughter Mackenzie stepped forward to remind him of something he told her years ago.

She was 15, trying out for a hockey team, and had just played what she believed was one of her best games. Her father was waiting outside the dressing room, expecting good news.

Instead, she emerged in tears.

“Dad, I just got cut,” she recalled telling him.

On the drive home, Wiens offered advice she never forgot.

“Things that matter should hurt when you don’t get them.”

On Monday night, Mackenzie brought those words back to her father in front of his supporters.

“I hope you know that there’s nothing you could have done different,” she told him.

And although the election hadn’t ended the way the family hoped, she found something to look forward to.

“We’re gonna have more time with our parents.”

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com



Gary Burroughs was at the community centre for the results before heading to the Sandtrap.



Sandra O'Connor was at the community centre with a small crowd to watch the results come in.



Weston Miller was having a watch party with supporters at the home of Richard James and his wife Marie.



Andrew Niven watched the election results come in from home with his wife and children.



Steve McGuinness was at the Irish Harp Pub watching and celebrating results with friends and supporters.



Tim Balasiuk was at the community centre, where he embraced supporters after results came in.

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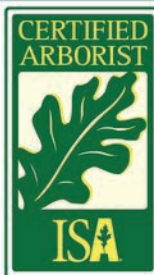
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Post-election, NOTL residents and councillors brace for change

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

As the clock struck 8 p.m. on Monday evening and the polling stations across Niagara-on-the-Lake began to close, dozens of residents — and a few candidates — made their way inside the main auditorium of the NOTL Community Centre, to watch their political future take shape.

Inside the auditorium, everyone gathered in front of a large screen set up at the front, where the results would be shared live as they rolled in.

About an hour and 15 minutes later, they would find out that Vaughn Goettler would become Niagara-on-the-Lake's new lord mayor, alongside Gary Burroughs as deputy lord mayor and councillors-elect Sandra O'Connor, Weston Miller, Andrew Niven, Steve McGuinness and Tim Balasiuk.

After the polls closed at 8 p.m., half an hour elapsed before the numbers began to show up on the big screen.

The Town of NOTL's spokesperson, Quinton Ascah, told The Lake Report this was because election staff were working to collect, verify and post the results.

A few factors influenced their speed: voters who were already in line when the polls closed at 8 p.m. were still entitled to cast their ballots; after voting is done, each location has to balance and reconcile the results; then, a representative from each centre has to transport the tabulator to town hall, where the results are process by the election technology provider, Neuvote.

"This process takes time, particularly given the geographic distance between polling locations across Niagara-on-the-Lake. Rather than waiting for all results to be received, staff worked to make results available progressively as they were processed and verified," he said.

He said the first results



For a small group of Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, the community centre was the place to be on Monday night to take in the election spectacle. After about a half-hour delay, the voting numbers began streaming in on the big screen, and people watched intently as the future of their community took shape with Vaughn Goettler at the helm. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

were posted after 8:30 p.m., with six updates afterwards, until the final results were posted at 9:15 p.m.

Leading up to the results, Burroughs was nervous, he said.

"The next four years are going to be incredibly important and challenging, so I'm hoping there'll be a terrific team for our town," he said.

"If it goes the way I want, then I'm very positive. But if it doesn't, not so much."

Sandra O'Connor said she was feeling both anxious and excited.

"I think that if things go the way I hope, we could accomplish so many good things in the future," she said.

"Like I say in my campaign, I want to build a brighter future together with the residents."

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa was also at the community centre as the results came in, before heading to Corks Wine Bar & Eatery on Queen Street after 9 p.m., where Erwin Wiens' election party was held.

Watching the large screen in the auditorium intently, he reflected on his time in office.

"It's been a great four years," he said. "We have a lot of positive things going on in our community. We're very blessed and lucky."

"We have a lot of good things going on, no matter who gets elected."

With online voting and advance poll results, the numbers added up quickly.

Resident Forrest Miller tracked the results on the screen as, at 9:13 p.m., nine of 11 polls reported a lead for Goettler in the mayoral race.

Miller said there were a few surprises.

"There was a lot of hype about splitting votes, especially for the mayor. That doesn't look like it — Vaughn's out quite a bit in front," he said. "That may not have even been an issue."

"Everyone wanted the breaks on development, just thought it was too much too quick," Miller said. "I think they're getting the message."

Around 9:15 p.m., Terry Mactaggart said the results were looking "so far, so good."

"I think it's leaning toward where it needs to go," he said.

Then, just moments later, with the closing of all 11 polls, the room seemed to reach a consensus: Goettler would become the next lord mayor, with Burroughs as deputy lord mayor.

Thus, the celebrations began: candidates turned to each other to exchange congratulations and hugs.

"It's, as much as one can say, a dream team," Mactaggart said.

Burroughs said he was excited to meet with the

new lord mayor in the coming days.

"I like his approach, I like what he's been saying, and I think we have a terrific team going forward," he said.

Elsewhere in Old Town, at Richard and Marie James' home in Chautauqua, councillor-elect Weston Miller, head of the Chautauqua Residents Association, celebrated with family and friends.

"I'm so thrilled to see Gary Burroughs as deputy lord mayor and Sandra O'Connor right behind him," Miller said. "To be in third place with two councils of that calibre is pretty special for me."

"Gary Burroughs, to me, is an icon and an institution in town. He was lord mayor for most of my childhood."

Amid the celebrations, Miller's friends and campaign team serenaded him with a personalized cover of "Theme From New York, New York."

Campaign manager Arlyn Levy organized the performance.

"He loves the 30s and 40s, he loves Sinatra. He's a young man with an old soul," she said.

Miller thanked the team members who dedicated their time to his campaign.

"As far as I'm concerned, none of this would have been possible without them," he said.

juliasacco@niagaranow.com

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NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE / MUNICIPAL ELECTION 2026

Results at a glance

52.4%

VOTER TURNOUT

9,262 of 17,684 registered voters

+4.6

percentage points

from 47.8% in 2022

28th

highest voter turnout

Among 322 Ontario municipalities reporting (Provisional)

LORD MAYOR

One seat

Vaughn Goettler

ELECTED

5,101

55.1%

Erwin Wiens

2,870

31.0%

Andrea Kaiser

1,287

13.9%

2,231

Goettler's winning margin

8,422 registered voters did not vote

TOWN COUNCIL

Six seats | Bold names and dots indicate elected

Gary Burroughs

5,394

Sandra O'Connor

4,973

Weston Miller

4,948

Andrew Niven

4,413

Steve McGuinness

4,196

Tim Balasiuk

4,093

Nicholas Colaneri

3,501

Rick Mills

2,893

Maria Mavridis

2,852

Adriana Cater-Vizzari

2,537

Karen Taylor-Jones

1,447

Burroughs very confident in new team

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's new deputy lord mayor, Gary Burroughs, says residents have voted to be heard — and the incoming council needs to listen and explain its decisions clearly.

Burroughs, who earned the most votes among council candidates, said he is excited to work with incoming lord mayor Vaughn Goettler and the newly elected councillors, while warning the town faces challenges protecting its interests at the regional level.

"It was a long haul, but I'm very excited and I'm looking forward to working with Vaughn and the team," he said in an election-night interview at the Sandtrap Pub & Grill after the results came in.

Burroughs said he previously served as deputy lord mayor in 1989. Returning to the role, he sees an opportunity for council to work together and respond to residents who feel their voices have been missing from town decisions.

"We have issues in our town, and the residents need to be heard," he said. "And so I think that's what the message was. They just feel they haven't been."

For Burroughs, that means more than giving people an opportunity to speak.

"People are voting to be

Veteran councillor Gary Burroughs received the highest number of votes of any council candidate in Monday's election, earning him the title of deputy lord mayor — one he also held in 1989. He said he is "very optimistic" to work with the next slate of councillors. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

heard, and also much more than just be heard, have things explained to them in a proper way," he said.

He described himself as "very optimistic" about the incoming council, pointing to Goettler's business background and the importance of bringing people together.

"To me, what I'm looking forward to is this group will be an outstanding team," he said.

While some candidates he had hoped to see elected did not win seats, Burroughs

roughs said he did not.

That emphasis on teamwork also shapes his outlook on regional government, where he worries Niagara-on-the-Lake will struggle to secure support for local priorities.

Asked about the town having only one voice on regional council, Burroughs said it would have less of a say.

"Two of my concerns are both heritage and the Greenbelt," he said.

He worries those issues will not receive the same attention from other Niagara mayors.

"The other 11 mayors aren't really that concerned about heritage or the Greenbelt," he said. "So when issues come up for us, it's going to be hard to get support."

With changes to how the region operates, Burroughs said a united town council will be important in supporting Goettler's work at the regional table.

"I think that we're going to need a team, and Vaughn's going to need a strong voice with him when he's going forward," he said.

For all his optimism, Burroughs acknowledged the work of turning the election result into action is still ahead.

"So I'm excited," he said. "We haven't done anything yet."

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BETHANY MENNONITE CHURCH

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Mixed fortunes for NOTL tourism amid U.S. tariffs

Continued from Front Page

\$10,000 sculpture could cost an American buyer another \$5,000 to bring home. The shop has also stopped shipping to the U.S., citing increased paperwork and changes to the duty-free exemption for low-value shipments.

“Hey, can you scale this down? Make it more travel-friendly and approachable for a first-time buyer,” Chapman said, describing a typical conversations with an artist. “It’s smaller, it’s more economical when it comes into the gallery. It broadens our and their ability to keep the wheels turning.”

Despite the challenges, Chapman estimates gallery foot traffic has increased by more than 20 per cent this year.

Across Old Town, Niagara-on-the-Lake’s visitor ambassador program recorded more than 79,000 engagements between May 15 and Oct. 17, compared with about 62,000 during the same period in 2025, an increase of roughly 27 per cent.

“That’s when one of our



Upper Canada Native Art Gallery on Queen Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Owner Tom Chapman says he is working with Indigenous artists to offer smaller, more affordable pieces as U.S. tariffs complicate sales to American customers. COLEMAN MOLNAR

ambassadors actually has a conversation with someone,” said Laurie Harley, the program’s lead, adding that visits to the courthouse also count as engagements. The program tracked visitors from 118 countries this

year, up from 103 last year, with Harley personally noting “a lot more cultural diversity and a lot more families.”

Kathy Weiss, CEO of Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake, said approximately

44,000 more visitor touchpoints were recorded so far in 2026 compared with the same period last year. Touchpoints include visitors to the courthouse information centre, the bus lot near Fort George and people

speaking with ambassadors outside the courthouse.

Weiss said the town is working with a consultant to build its data-capturing system over the coming years.

“We want to know more things like how many people are staying overnight, how much are they spending, that kind of thing,” she said.

At the Shaw Festival, executive director Tim Jennings paints a picture of a different tourist season: following strong advance sales, attendance decreased in July and August, particularly among American visitors.

Jennings said headlines about severe flooding in Niagara may have discouraged visitors coming from far away. He compared it to the summer of 2023, when images of wildfire smoke across Canada and parts of the U.S. kept some tourists from crossing the border.

Rising costs are another concern that Jennings said visitors are increasingly aware of.

“Maybe they’ll vacation for three days instead of four days,” he said. “And so from our point of view, that’s a reduction of 25 per

cent in terms of the number of shows they take in. And it’s ... one less night in hotels, it’s probably two to three less meals, and maybe a day less shopping and going to the wineries.”

In a typical year, about 30 per cent of Shaw attendees come from the U.S., with another two to three per cent from overseas.

Meanwhile, Katherine McMichael, owner of Lady Lou Collective on Queen Street, sells mostly smaller items priced under \$100, all sourced from Canadian businesses. She said has seen more traffic this year than last.

“Luckily for us, [the tariffs] don’t impact us because we focus on Canadian small businesses. We’re buying product from Canada, but some of our artists design in Canada and then make overseas, so they’ve had to deal with some tariffs, and they’ve lost sales,” McMichael said.

“I’m sure there’s an element of price increase a little bit on our side, but I don’t have to deal with tariffs on the day-to-day because I keep all of my buying within the country.”

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TRUNK OR TREAT

It was a day off school for the kids, election night for the rest, and Niagara Motors decided to inject a little more Halloween into October, by bringing Virgil businesses together for a special “trunk or treat” afternoon. Trunks were all dressed up in spooky and silly Halloween costumes as businesses like Twisted Bar, Virgil Pet-Valu, Foodland NOTL, Purple Perk Coffee truck, NOTL firefighters and more handed out sweet treats and coffee for the parents. Some places even ran out of candy, it was so popular. Niagara Motors owners Dave Dick and son John said they were really happy with the turnout, and plan to do it again next year if there ends up being another day off school in August. RICHARD HARLEY PHOTOS

NOTL could see tax relief on policing costs next term: Kaiser

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A push to ease Niagara-on-the-Lake’s hefty policing bill is gaining ground, with the Niagara Police Service Board agreeing to help Niagara Region explore alternative ways to divide policing costs.

But regional councillor Andrea Kaiser says residents should expect to wait at least another two years for any tax relief.

Niagara divides policing costs among its 12 municipalities based on property assessments.

Kaiser said she began examining the system six months after being elected to regional council in October 2022. She argues

it places a disproportionate burden on municipalities such as NOTL, where property values are relatively high.

According to figures Kaiser provided, policing costs based on average residential assessments in 2024 were approximately \$786 per household in NOTL, compared with \$255 in Welland and \$458 in Grimsby.

In June 2025, regional council approved her motion calling for staff to examine alternatives to the current system.

Last month, the police board agreed to help the region explore other ways to divide policing costs among municipalities, including by sharing operational information and financial data.



In 2024, NOTL paid \$786 per household for policing services. Andrea Kaiser says a new funding model could combine property values with the number of calls for police service in the community to determine a more fair and equitable taxation system. FILE

That support advances a review. It does not approve a new formula or guarantee savings.

Changing how municipalities split policing costs could also require provincial approval, Kaiser said.

In July, regional council supported seeking changes to provincial law to allow for alternative ways of dividing the bill.

As for what a new funding model could look like, Kaiser suggested basing

part of each municipality’s police bill on property values and part on how many calls for police service it receives.

“This is just one idea to consider.”

Kaiser said other municipi-

palities would have to make up the difference if NOTL paid less.

“That is why it is so significant that the resolution was passed and then also now supported by the police board,” she said.

She pointed to similar concerns about policing costs elsewhere in Ontario, including Peel Region, as another reason change may be possible.

Still, Kaiser cautioned that residents should not expect immediate tax relief.

“I would suggest it would realistically take at least another two years to see change in taxation impacts to residents,” she said.

“But I do believe it is possible within next term of council.”

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

Nominations open for Candlelight Stroll fundraising recipients, close on Nov. 17

Staff
The Lake Report

With the holiday season just around the corner, the date for this year's Candlelight Stroll has been announced, and nominations are now open for Niagara-on-the-Lake residents to suggest who they would like to receive the funds raised from the event.

The Candlelight Stroll is set for Friday, Dec. 4 and will take place from 7 to 10 p.m. in downtown Old Town.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce is inviting nominations for this year's fundraising recipients, with proceeds from candle sales supporting local people and groups in need.

Community members can nominate local individuals, families and organizations by emailing the chamber's



For every candle that's sold at the Candlelight Stroll on Dec. 4, the proceeds will go to support a person, family or organization in need. FILE

special events co-ordinator, Dalton Patterson, at dalton@niagaraonthelake.com.

Nominations close Nov. 17, with the selected recipients expected to be an-

nounced the following week. The annual holiday tradition features thousands of candles, live music, local carollers and festive entertainment throughout the historic downtown.

Last year, hundreds gathered in downtown NOTL for the annual event, which raised \$14,500 for Pink Pearl Canada, an organization supporting young women with cancer.

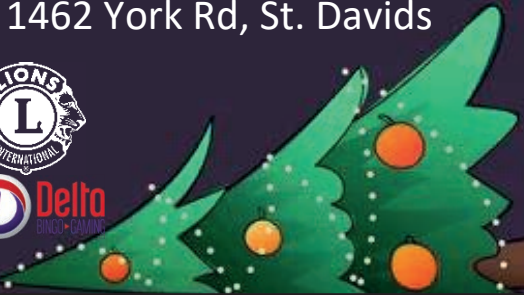
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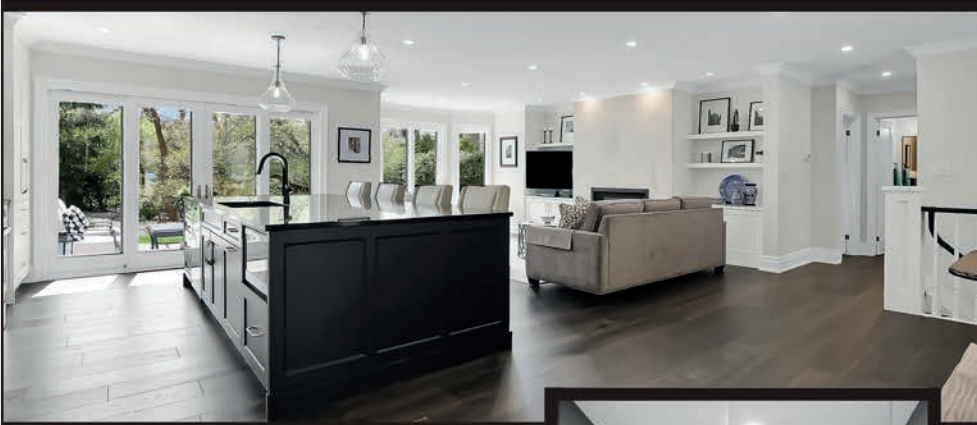
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HARVEST CLASSIC

Two NOTL teams take top spots in annual hockey tournament

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Wolves had a triumphant weekend at the annual Harvest Classic hockey tournament, with two teams winning their division championships.

The NOTL Minor Hockey Association, meanwhile, is satisfied after hosting another Harvest Classic that went off without a hitch.

Hosted at Meridian Credit Union Arena, the tournament saw the Wolves' U15, U16 and U18 teams reach the championship finals. The U15 and U16 teams took home the titles.

The U15 team defeated the Norfolk Knights 6-0, while the U16 team beat Glancaster 3-1.

The U18 Wolves finished with a 1-2 loss to the Cassel-

man-Embrun Icedogs. NOTL's U11 and U13 teams also reached the semifinals.

The action-packed weekend took months of planning before the first face-off Friday.

NOTL Minor Hockey president Pete Flynn said preparations for the tournament began in June.

"There are lots of volunteers and lots of workers helping us out," he said.

NOTL youth, many of whom are former Wolves players, are paid to run the timebox and keep score, Flynn said. A large team of volunteers also helps with the annual barbecue.

"We get a lot of kids that are learning to come out, make some money, work and learn to be responsible."

Tournament director James Cadeau said the event



The NOTL Wolves had a successful Harvest Classic weekend, with two teams taking home their respective championship titles. Organizers credit much of the tournament's success to the volunteers and community members who make it possible. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

depends on the community's efforts.

"It's a lot of people putting in a lot of hours. Referees and parents," he said. "Everybody puts in

what they can, and we make it work," he said.

Sam Skubel served as the tournament's volunteer coordinator for the first time this year.

"Everyone does something different," she said.

"We're such a small-town community and it's so nice to see the kids all cheer on their other teams."

Flynn said all funds raised support the NOTL Hockey Foundation, which pays for ice time, equipment and referees.

The tournament also brings visitors to Niagara-on-the-Lake, with 32 teams travelling from different parts of Canada, including Casselman and Kemptville.

"We just like the fact that they all come and we're able to help businesses and restaurants get business. We like people coming, supporting our restaurants and our hotels," Flynn said.

Elaina Wilkinson helped run the barbecue outside the arena and praised the tournament's organization.

Wilkinson said after seven years of helping run tournaments, the Harvest Classic stands out.

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Poppy Project returns to town



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Volunteers helped adorn the Court House, NOTL Legion Branch 124, RiverBrink Art Museum and the NOTL Museum with poppies Monday morning, continuing a tradition that started in 2021 with museum members knitting thousands of poppies. Now there are more than 10,000 poppies in the four displays, taking 40+ volunteers 6,000+ hours of hand labour. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

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Contributed by Patty Garriock
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- Yahia Lababidi

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The haunting of NOTL fort

There have been quite a few tales of paranormal activity taking place at the Fort George National Historic Site. As part of the site’s Halloween annual ghost tours, Kyle Upton takes people through the fort and shares the stories of people who have come and gone through this place. In the shadowy halls of the soldiers’ barracks, those on the tour may feel the presence of spirits hidden just around the corner.
JULIA SACCO

Comment
Election marks new era in NOTL

Kevin MacLean
Editor Emeritus

Ch-ch-ch-changes come fast and furious in the blood sport of politics.

Witness Niagara region where several mayors and council veterans were unceremoniously handed their retirement papers Monday night.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, the suspense lasted less than 40 minutes.

When the initial results for the Oct. 26 municipal election were posted on a large viewing screen at the NOTL Community Centre at about 8:38 p.m., a brief, audible gasp erupted.

It’s unclear whether it was positive or negative but most of those on hand seemed to be favouring Vaughn Goettler and the initial numbers gave him a few-hundred-vote lead in the race for lord mayor.

The outgoing deputy lord mayor, Coun. Erwin Wiens, was in second spot and regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser was behind him in third.

Goettler never looked back. He built an insurmountable lead and his election heralds a new era, a sea change, in NOTL politics.

And it seems apparent that many of NOTL’s newer, politically engaged residents, got their wish: A changing of the guard.

While a lot of those people live in historic Old Town (including yours truly), the incoming lord mayor garnered support right across the municipality from residents new and old.



NOTL’s got a new mayor and a new slate of councillors.

People embraced Goettler and his populist platform, which included going slower on growth and tourism, greater transparency and heritage preservation.

Does this mean the newer voices, many of them well-off retirees who chose to move to NOTL, now hold the balance of power that once was the purview of longtime residents and those from the agricultural community?

It certainly looks that way, for now. However, NOTL voters are notoriously fickle, as no mayoral incumbents have been re-elected in recent years.

Looking ahead, the new council has no obvious voice for the farming community. That’s a voice council will have to find.

Over the final two weeks of the campaign, both the Goettler and Wiens camps were talking about a razor-thin, tight race to the finish line.

Except, really, it wasn’t close.

Back at the community centre, by the time the 11th of 11 polls was projected on the big screen at 9:14 p.m., many in the crowd of about 60 residents constantly

staring at their smartphones had already done the math: it was a Goettler victory in a landslide. In the end, he won 55 per cent of the 9,262 votes registered.

Minutes after those numbers went up, the auditorium was emptying out as the contented crowd acknowledged the voters had overwhelmingly opted for change.

The electorate also defeated two incumbent councillors (Maria Mavridis and Adriana Cater Vizzari) and gave council a blood transfusion in the form of Weston Miller and Steve McGuinness, the latter who ran an aggressive, take-no-prisoners campaign. Now he’ll be accountable as one of the councillors running the town.

As well, an elated Gary Burroughs topped the polls and will be the new deputy lord mayor. He’ll be an experienced and valuable right-hand for Goettler.

Incumbents Sandra O’Connor (now the lone woman on council), Andrew Niven and Tim Balasiuk round out the roster.

The real work is about to begin, though the new council won’t be sworn in until

Tuesday, Nov. 24. Meanwhile, the winners must not forget they need to make good on all those promises they made. Change must happen and this council needs to show signs quickly how it will be different. That’s the message from voters.

It is really unfortunate that earlier this year, under pressure from Premier Doug Ford, NOTL reduced its councillor numbers to six from eight.

It was a needless, populist move designed to appease Ford, who was musing about amalgamating Niagara’s smaller municipalities under the umbrella of two or three larger ones.

Amalgamation remains a threat and it is a fight Goettler et al. must prepare for.

Personally, I had reservations about Goettler, a philanthropist and hugely successful CEO. His lack of public sector experience was a concern. Ensuring, among other things, that potholes are filled, basements don’t flood and tax dollars are used wisely is not the same as running a mega-corp.

But none of that matters now. The people have spoken and, if you believe in democracy, they’re never wrong (except in the case of that Trump guy in Canada’s 11th province).

Here’s hoping that Goettler and his new council can live up to all their pledges and lead us into the new era that voters loudly showed they want.

That change starts now.
kevin@niagaranow.com

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Elections remind us who holds the power

Dear editor:
The elections in NOTL are always interesting because they should remind councillors that it is the residents who elect them or throw them out of office and not the developers, tourists, the owners of commercial cottage rentals in residential area, mer-

chants or the Chamber of Commerce, the Shaw or other lobby groups.
May the councillors remember this so that they might earn the right for another term: serve the residents well and we will love you and support you.

Bill Garriock
NOTL



NOTL residents made their choice on Monday.

The man with a dog and a mission



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

After I was whacked and kicked in the head in a NOTL ditch, one of the first people I heard from was Donald Combe.

"We are all appalled and saddened by the event that severely disturbed and injured you yesterday," he emailed me.

The next day in June, I saw an ambulance in front of the 94-year-old's quaint little home and sent him a note hoping all was well.

"I am having some kidney stone problems," he replied. "It is a kind of 'wait with pain' time. I too was highly impressed with the care and attention from the health system."

His pain was treated, but too soon thereafter, his life ended. Donald died last week. He was 95.

I didn't know him as others did. At first, it was seeing the old guy with a pair of perfect Scottie dogs trooping around Old Town. Later it was just one pooch, Maggie, walked by a slower man with a cane. Sometimes a cape.

Then came the cemetery.

Dorothy and I signed up for a tour of St Mark's incredible graveyard one afternoon, and there was



Donald, in a bow tie, providing colour commentary on the inhabitants. The stories were engaging. The storyteller just perfect.

Then, the flag.

At a Toronto art house auction appeared a massive but beaten-up red ensign with a funny crest sewn in the middle, attributed to "the parish at St Mark's in Niagara." Five hundred bucks. I bought it, and a few days later it was gracing the side of our 207-year-old pile of bricks in Old Town.

What was the story of this 10-foot-long piece of cloth? Were those really bullet holes? How old was this thing? Why did the church dump it?

Turns out Donald Combe, as church archivist, Sexton, historian, author and repository of all NOTL knowledge, was the guy to ask. So I did. He soon sent me a photo and description of that flag displayed in the church a century and a quarter ago, dating it to 1873.

"This is all we know about the flag," he wrote.

"There is no indication,

that we can find any of its provenance. For years it was crammed into a cupboard under the stairs and many times there were threats to just put it into the trash; however, we kept it.

"Long before the entire archive went to the museum we thought to perhaps send the flag to auction as we could see no possible way of displaying or making use of it. It may well have been purchased for one of the special events mentioned, but who knows? I am just deeply relieved to know that it has a good new home. Maggie and I will walk by and gaze upon it."

I met this man in the final years of his life. Thus, I didn't know about all that had gone on before. Donald Combe cared for the oldest cemetery in the province. He wrote books — many of them — on Canadian history and genealogy. He studied at the Royal Academy for Dramatic Arts in England, taught speech and drama in Toronto, and was an actor who migrated half a century ago to Niagara.



The love of Donald Combe's life was his Scottish terrier, Maggie. His passion was NOTL's roots and preservation of its history. DONALD COMBE

In town he was a driver behind the Niagara Pump-house Arts Centre and the historical society. He's the reason all those mature trees behind the church are healthy and the historic stones below restored. He was named a Living Landmark by the NOTL Foundation 20 years ago, wrote local newspaper columns and was always proud of his United Empire Loyalist stock.

One day, Donald sent me a picture of Maggie. Just because he loved her. I hear she may be at his memorial service this Saturday.

Along the path behind St Mark's, on a slight knoll near a trench dug during the 1812 war, Donald set his simple stone some years ago. Proudly etched with his year of birth was his title. "Sexton." You cannot walk there without seeing it.

"I got an excellent spot," he told me. "That will work out well."

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

garth@garth.ca



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style
Category: WORD ORIGINS

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

Last issue category: MUSICAL THEATRE

Clue: The tender ballad "Not While I'm Around" is from this musical about a murderous barber.

Answer: What is Sweeney Todd?

Answered first by: Tuija Johansson

Also answered correctly (in order) by:

Wade Durling, Lynda Collet, Susan Hamilton, Sue Rautenberg, Jane Morris, Bob Wheatley, Emma Balsas, Catherine Clarke, Hugh Lundy, Rob Hutchison, Claudia Grimwood, James Wells, Nancy Rocca, Sheila Meloche, Marla Percy, Jim Dandy, Donna Pearce, Hedy Wiebe, Peter Molson, Jeff Lake, Howard Jones, Katie Reimer, Sylvia Wiens, Esther VanGorder, Margie Enns

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

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With election over, let's return to all things architecture



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall
Columnist

So, the election is done, the voters have spoken and the results are now known: our new lord mayor, having garnered 55.1 per cent of the ballots cast, will be Vaughan Goettler.

Our council will be comprised of four incumbents (Gary Burroughs, Sandra O'Connor, Andrew Nivens and Tim Balasuik) together with Weston Miller and Steve McGuinness as new folks at the table.

While a substantial number of voters chose to cast their ballots online, I have a distinct preference for actually marking a paper ballot and watching it be added to the count. Hence, at 10 a.m. on election day, I found myself in a notable lineup at the NOTL Community Centre polling station. And, I thought, if this early queue is any indication, we should have a very strong turnout

of eligible voters.

Now, we didn't hit the high-water mark of voter turnout established in the 2018 election (59 per cent), but 52.4 per cent of Niagara-on-the-Lake's eligible voters did manage to exercise their franchise.

Perhaps we can take some comfort from the fact that this municipality's electoral turnout was amongst the highest in the province. At the same time, that's a pretty sorry commentary on the state of our democracy — the health of which depends entirely on citizens making their voices heard.

In any case, our elected representatives have, largely without exception, promised to base their decisions in putting "residents first" and we shall wait to see if they adhere to that commitment as they shoulder their responsibilities over the next four years.

Since the electorate has now spoken, allow me to breathe a sigh of relief that this writer can return to the roots of the Arch-i-text column — at least for the present — without political noise.

To that end, I believe it is fair to say that the historical streetscapes of Niagara-on-the-Lake were at least partially informed by a



And now, back to Brian Marshall's regularly scheduled programming. This week, he discusses the porch's history as a feature of North American homes. Today, they're much less common, with some exceptions, like this 21st-century home in Niagara-on-the-Lake. BRIAN MARSHALL

consideration of designing homes and buildings that supported engagement with the neighbours and the community at large.

In the early days of the 1800s, aside from the very practical requirement of growing the food for the household in a large backyard, this influence generally took the form of pushing the façade of the building forward on the lot such that the steps to the front door were at, or almost on, the lot line.

This proximity to the street aided in the expression of the occupant's availability to neighbours, friends and visitors.

As the 19th century proceeded, the dependency on intensive backyard gardens (and small livestock) lessened, and the new homes being constructed gradually moved further back from the streets, allowing space for porches.

So, let's take a moment to define what a porch actually is in contrast to what it is not.

In short, a porch is a roofed and defined exterior space that contains the main entrance to a building; this space may be taken from

the interior to form a "vestibule" recess within the main wall, or built projecting off the façade. The roof may be an extension of the main roof or more commonly a separate roof.

Properly, a porch must be large enough to comfortably accommodate seating for the householder(s) and visitors. It can be open, partially open or completely delineated by railings, a screen wall section(s) or other more defining elements and is typically more than two steps above grade.

In contrast, a verandah is an open, roofed gallery or platform (which may or may not be enclosed by a railing) that ran the full width of a façade, or might wrap around two, three or all sides of a building.

It may or may not include the main entry to a building. Normally accessible from at least two points, but may have multiple entry options or be open to access at any point around the form. Generally only one or two steps above grade.

Any roofed exterior space leading to a building's main entry that is too small to accommodate seating is, if the roof supports are columns, a portico and, if columns are absent with the roof supported by brackets (or similar), a flying portico.

Finally, a small staircase and platform leading to a building's front entrance that is not roofed over is correctly a stoep (or stoop).

Between the mid-1800s and the 1940s, porches were the venue that connected private homes to public life — an open invitation for folks to stop by, sit and visit in a comfortable, informal space.

Three things led to the general demise of the porch after 1945.

First, automobiles made streets noisy, dirty and less friendly to pedestrians. Second, telephone conversations and television programs displaced "stop by for a chat" behaviour.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, the rise of tract housing developments designed around cars and seeking to maximize the number of houses per acre, pushed the growing trend towards isolationism further by shifting entertainment space to a private patio in the backyard giving the householders control over when to see other people.

We lost something vital when porches largely disappeared. It would be nice to see them come back.

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



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Hats off to the volunteers who make our elections work



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson
Columnist

So many elections in so many parts of our world recently: England, the Big Apple, Toronto, British Columbia, Alberta again. Many municipalities, provinces, nations, hither and yon. To be quite repetitive, we NOTLers are so fortunate to live in an area where “somehow, we seem to get along.”

This was the theme of the late, erudite Ken Dryden’s thought-provoking book “Becoming Canada,” published in 2010. Canadians have arrived here from many parts of the world.

Different values, different religions, so diverse in so many ways. “Back home,” our ancestors may be hating each other, but here in Canada, in most cases we find a way to live together and move forward.

This might be a good place to take our hats off to each and every person who threw their hat in the ring and ran for political office in our town. There are only so many spots available, but in my rambling opinion, there are no losers.

Yes, there may unfortunately have been some cross and unfair words uttered, but somehow we muddled through and a new town council is in place.

Like previous councils, they will do their best.

Allow me to ponder about the cost of our democracy. And the mechanics of putting the elections together. I used to plan events, and it’s difficult. So many components dependant on enthusiastic and intelligent helpers to present a meticu-



People line up to vote in advance polls at town hall.

lously planned event once or perhaps twice a year.

The cost of municipal and other elections is enormous but, in my opinion, worth every penny. Canada is envied around the world, and we take our election processes for granted.

On election day earlier this week, I looked around the main room at our relatively new NOTL Community Centre, and saw a miracle had again unfolded. And this scene was repeating itself in municipalities across Ontario.

Here in NOTL, some 58

people working at the polling station. They have all been trained and prepared for voting day, and were all so darned helpful and efficient.

Old-fashioned as I am, I have never voted in an advance poll. What if a candidate says or does something really inappropriate or dumb after the date of the advance poll, but before the actual election day? I understand I have to get with the program, or risk getting totally left behind.

And the whole concept of online voting deserves a few words. Old-fashioned me again, but I actually look forward to going to the voting place, and “casting my ballot.” The updated and accurate voter rolls are yet another miracle, and from there we are directed to select a desk with a big piece of cardboard placed to provide a secret ballot.

Here, I have to ask how the election meisters manage to print so many classy ballots. Not on cheap

paper stock, but on full colour card stock. The cost, and then the complicated logistics of delivering so many ballots to so many polling stations. How is this possible? And where do they store the vote counting machines?

I went over my ballot with a fine-tooth comb, and it seems that each and every name was spelled accurately. Listed in alphabetical order, which seems a bit unfair, but so be it.

And still, in the year 2026, we have two parallel school boards? Costly, and a dilution of talent in a province with so few people.

Am I the only NOTLer who wonders about this stuff? It just seems to happen, but the planning and logistics for each election must be ginormous. We can only attempt to imagine the costs. Millions.

And we have just had another example of the electorate spanking a political leader who calls a snap election. Out in B.C.,

now-former premier David Eby thought he could pull a fast one when his NDP party seemed to be firmly in control.

To strike off in another direction, I wish I had a better understanding of the U.S. midterm elections. What are they? Why are they? What do they accomplish? It seems to be very complicated, with so much money involved.

Perhaps it would be better for Ross the Rambler to stay local, and hope for success at the local Royal Canadian Legion on King Street. Branch 124 has been missed by many of us since the devastating flooding, and their leaders have been “fighting the good fight” to reopen.

Hear me again. “Vote here and votez ici.”

This year again, many of us local folks made the effort to exercise our patriotic right to help control our futures.

Thank you. Merci. Be kind. Soit gentil.

rossrocket9@gmail.com



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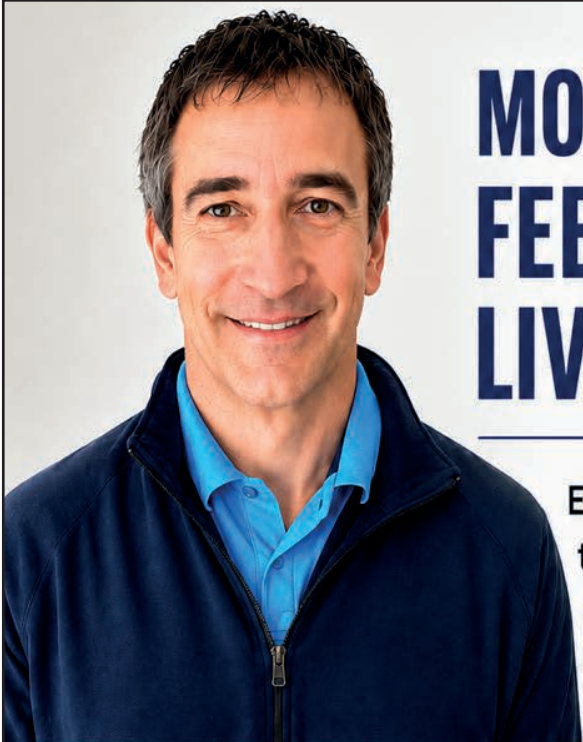
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After eight years on council, my advice for our new leaders

The Lake Report asked outgoing Coun. Wendy Cheropita for her opinion on the election outcome and how council must now move forward. Here's what she had to say.



Coun. Wendy Cheropita
Special to The Lake Report

After eight years and two council terms as a Niagara-on-the-Lake town councillor, I decided not to run in the 2026 election. So, when election day arrived, I woke up with mixed feelings. No longer would I participate in the election day excitement and the nail-biting apprehension that I felt on election days in 2018 and 2022. Close friends visited me

to get together for a glass of wine while we listened to the CKTB pre-election discussions and predictions. The excitement started to grow, as we discussed our thoughts on what might happen. Shortly after, we headed to the community centre to watch the results come in. We waited and waited in the lobby, people gathered and finally the auditorium doors opened and the screen was visible. There was a lot less people than in previous years. Sandra O'Connor, Gary Burroughs, Tim Balasiuk and Rick Mills and their supporters were present. When the final results were in, it was clear that the residents overwhelmingly wanted change. Fifty-two per cent voter participation, the highest in the region and possibly in Ontario. What surprised me the most was the big gap in the number of votes between those that won and those that did not. The lawn signs



Coun. Wendy Cheropita looks back fondly at the last eight years she spent serving the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake as a member of council. FILE/RICHARD HARLEY

might not have indicated the actual results. My first thought was for my council colleagues that suffered a devastating loss, a few of them that I have worked with for eight years. My heart went out to them. It takes a lot of courage to run. It takes a lot of energy and a team behind you to run and its very hard work. I admire anyone that runs in a municipal. For a while, I stood with Gary Burroughs and his

lovely family as we watch Gary gain the highest number of votes to become deputy lord mayor. I was so happy for Gary. He was one of the people that called me out of the blue in 2018 and said I am supporting you and Clare Cameron. That was when our relationship started. I learned a lot from Gary in those early days. I had a chance to give Tim Balasiuk a big bear hug, congratulate Sandra O'Connor

and chat with Rick Mills — such a nice man. He did well for his first time. My sincere congratulations go out to Vaughn Goettler, Andrew Niven, Weston Miller, Steve McGuinness. I was pleased to read some consistent priorities expressed by many of the elected officials. I hope you will make infrastructure investment and management a top priority. It's not sexy, but it is critical

and financial gaps exist. Flooding is an issue — culverts need regular cleaning, many need to be replaced, phragmites requires investment to get it under control or water can't flow through ditches. The hospital property, in my opinion, should remain institutional zoning and become an arts, culture and education hub. Please protect this valuable property. Our taxes are high — not the mill rate, but the amount of property tax we pay in NOTL, with the combined region and municipality. Take a fresh look to see where efficiencies can be found. In this term of council, we did accomplish a lot. One project we did not get to was to create a town-wide plan for what needs to be developed and where. This will help developers, staff and council work with together and not at odds. All my very best to the newly elected council and lord mayor.

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To Our Niagara-on-the-Lake Community

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

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

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

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

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

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



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The election is over, now let's **move forward**

Dear editor:

The electioneering is, thankfully, over. The people have spoken, and a new, smaller council has been elected.

Congratulations to Vaughn, Gary, Sandra, Weston, Andrew, Steve and Tim. You have been entrusted with helping guide Niagara-on-the-Lake into the next stage of its evolution, at a time when public confidence in politics and politicians is being challenged.

You have been given an opportunity that few people experience: to put yourselves under constant public scrutiny in the hope of making a positive difference for the greater good.

NOTL faces several issues that will require your immediate attention.

First, there is the need to secure provincial approval of the town's official plan. That final step must not be forgotten. Without provincial approval, the new plan remains unfinished, and the town continues to operate under the 2017 plan.

Second, stormwater continues to flow into places it was never intended to reach:



Our new council has its work cut out for it, writes former councillor and NOTL Residents Association director Norm Arsenault. Now is the time to work together.

people's basements. Finding effective solutions must be a priority. It will not be an easy task, but residents deserve to see meaningful progress.

And those are just two of the challenges ahead. Planning and development, zoning, bylaw enforcement, parking, overtourism and the escalating cost of police services are among the many other issues that will demand attention. The list goes on.

As our new council begins tackling these and other challenges, let's remember that those elected are our friends, our neighbours and residents just like the rest of us.

Many have made significant personal sacrifices, including putting their retirement plans and personal time on hold, to help make our community a better place to live. They deserve our support and respect for stepping forward to serve.

Whether you voted for these individuals or not, let's dial back the social media nastiness, the snide remarks and, in some cases, the downright offensive personal attacks. We can disagree without being disagreeable. We are better than that.

To those who worked hard but were not elected, Erwin, Maria and Adriana, thank you for your contributions

and past service. And to Rick, Nicholas and Karen, thank you for stepping up to the plate and putting yourselves forward for public service. You represented yourselves well, and your willingness to participate in our democratic process deserves recognition.

Finally, I want to thank my colleagues on the board of directors of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association, our dedicated committee members and the volunteers who helped organize our all-candidates forums and provided residents with important election information.

Your efforts have helped residents become better informed about the issues and the choices before them. Your contributions have not gone unnoticed.

The election is behind us. The real work begins now. Let's give our new council the opportunity to do that work, hold it accountable for its decisions and remember that respect and civility must remain part of the process.

Norm Arsenault
Director
NOTL Residents Association

Take In An Exhibition:

Unintentional City: Leslie Parker

November 1 - 30, 2026
Joyner Gallery



Leslie Parker, Nothing to see here, move along

Common Ground: NOTL Arts Collective Group Exhibit

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- Across**
- 1. Gossamer (6)
 - 5. Like many Sherpas (8)
 - 9. Affliction of cats and other fur-lickers (8)
 - 10. Skin condition sought by beachgoers (6)
 - 11. Science of logic, quantity, shape and arrangement (Abbr.) (5)
 - 12. Tacit (7)
 - 15. Owner of a business (10)
 - 17. Inert gaseous element (4)
 - 18. Sour (4)
 - 20. Place for American children in the holidays (6,4)
 - 22. Galilee native (7)
 - 23. Spread out (5)
 - 27. Small restaurant (6)
 - 28. Elongate (8)
 - 29. South American boa (8)
 - 30. Person in the petroleum industry (6)
- Down**
- 2. D-Day beach (5)
 - 3. Navy vessel (7)
 - 4. Spoiled child (4)
 - 5. World's longest river (4)
 - 6. Autopsy (4-6)
 - 7. Wool fat (7)
 - 8. Private room on a passenger ship (9)
 - 13. Hollywood (10)
 - 14. Stub (5)
 - 16. Economic decline (9)
 - 19. Severe (7)
 - 21. Uppercase (7)
 - 24. Cub leader (5)
 - 25. Entreaty (4)
 - 26. Keen on (4)

Have some fun



Crossword Puzzle

1	2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
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Last issue's answers

1	S	C	R	A	M	4	A	S	S	6	I	S	T	A	N	T
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The Ansley sisters

In 1920, six sisters opened a pioneering home and school for children who needed specialized care and education. At a time when few women ran their own businesses, Birdie, Kate, Nora, Del, Gladys and Olga Ansley went against the advice of family and medical professionals to build something new. “The Ansley School & Home for Children Who Deviate from the Normal” first operated in St. Catharines before moving to what is now Riverbend Inn at 249 John St. E in 1927. The sisters combined their skills in teaching, nursing, health, nutrition, music and recreation to create a home-like environment where children could receive individual care, learn new skills, play and develop socially. The Ansley sisters helped break new ground in the care and education of children with different learning and support needs. Their school challenged expectations at a time when few services existed for these children and their commitment shaped the lives of the families they served.

Before celebrating Alzheimer’s treatment, a word of caution



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Every once in a while, some oddball treatment for difficult to treat diseases emerges. In my career, one example was the Zamboni treatment for multiple sclerosis, which took the MS world of patients, caregivers and some governments by storm, especially in Canada in 2009.

Paolo Zamboni was an Italian vascular surgeon who proposed the radical idea that MS was caused by obstructions of draining views from the brain and spinal cord, for which he proposed opening the veins by balloon catheters inserted into the affected veins and then inflating them. His evidence was based on before-and-after graphic venograms illustrating blocked veins, opened up by surgery and patient claims that they were much better following the treatment — evidence which was compellingly impressive to patients, their families and some physicians.

And who could blame them? Treatment for MS

was based on an autoimmune hypothesis for the disease, and while the drugs of the day reduced relapses somewhat, they barely touched the cumulative disability associated with MS. And as many patients and families from those days might recall, treatment wasn’t without troublesome side effects such as fatigue, in a disease already plagued with fatigue.

At the time, a colleague and I managed roughly 1,500 MS patients in north-western Ontario working out of a clinic in Thunder Bay. It wasn’t long after a lot of publicity surrounding the effectiveness of the Zamboni treatment, especially in Canada, that some patients clamored to have the treatment, even if they had to travel abroad to find a surgeon willing to carry out the procedure and pay high bills in the process. Some provinces paid for the treatment and other patients were helped by communities who raised money to support the new treatment.

I met Zamboni twice and both times he was convinced he was right and keen to participate in clinical trials to prove his point. Unfortunately, later clinical trials failed to support his hypothesis and in no time, the Zamboni treatment disappeared into history, despite the initial widespread enthusiasm, especially in Canada, and claims by some patients that



A new and experimental microsurgery procedure showed some promise after some initially successful operations, but Dr. William Brown warns how enthusiasm for treatment ideas like these may exceed evidence of its efficacy. UNSPLASH

they were better.

Looking back, it was one of those perfect storms of patients desperate to find an effective treatment, someone like Zamboni who was equally desperate to help his wife and others with MS, the lack of any truly effective treatment and, I should add, more than a little arrogance on the part of some MS clinics, which failed to grasp how desperate some of their patients were and fed up with the then current treatments offered by MS clinics and pharmaceutical companies.

We may be about to repeat an equivalent crisis: millions of patients with dementia, especially of the Alzheimer’s type and their families are desperate to find an effective treatment to significantly slow, even stop, the progression of the dementia and perhaps, if given early enough before the earliest symptoms emerge, a low-risk treatment

that might stop dementia from developing.

Unfortunately, despite the claims of pharmaceutical companies that this or that drug designed to clear the brain of beta amyloid (or these days, tau) no drug has been shown to meaningfully slow or stop cognitive decline in all its forms in Alzheimer’s — whatever the claims of the pharmaceutical companies.

The trouble is that the underlying hypothesis for Alzheimer’s based on the toxic accumulation of beta amyloid and tau in the brain may be wrong. Certainly both occur, and both can be reduced by treatment, but as Richard Feynman, one of America’s best theoretical physicists repeatedly pointed out, the most promising theory, if not supported by strong experimental evidence, is wrong.

And that’s the problem now in Alzheimer’s disease — the lack of robust evidence to support it.

Which brings me to a paper in Nature, one of the very best general science journals in the world, from August, titled “A Controversial Alzheimer Surgery is Getting A Closer Look” accompanied by the additional comment, “Jaw-dropping patient videos and miraculous testimonials ignited a frenzy in China over a technique that was said to reverse the symptoms of the disease. Now it is entering trials worldwide.”

The tone of the article takes me back to Zamboni days. So, what’s on offer here?

The surgical technique involves microsurgical methods to link lymphatic-like tributaries draining the brain with venous outflow from the brain for the purpose of enhancing drainage of beta-amyloid from the brains of patients with Alzheimer’s disease.

It sounds fanciful, but was tried by a Chinese microsurgeon in 2020 as a way of treating Alzheimer’s disease in an 80-year-old man. The results were documented by serial videos, which revealed a dramatic improvement from a man who before surgery “was slumped in his hospital bed, to days later, when he was alert and recognized his father, to by the eighth month ... walking briskly and [being] able to recite a Maoist military anthem from memory.”

The videos went viral, as they say, and it wasn’t long before other microsurgeons in China were trying the same procedure and word got out to surgeons in the U.S., U.K. and elsewhere of this novel way of treating Alzheimer’s disease, possibly by facilitating amyloid clearance from the brain.

The trouble is that as exciting as the initial and hundreds of later similar operations (chiefly in China) were, there was a stunning absence of evidence. Only now, several years later, are suitable clinical trials

underway to see whether the initial enthusiasm is justified.

The story is amazingly similar to the Zamboni story — surgical treatment of the drainage systems of the brain and the results will probably be the same.

The skill required to link up tiny lymphatics with views draining the brain would be a challenge for most surgeons, which why in China at least, most of the operations were carried out by “microsurgeons” — a terrible word, which some might mistake for tiny surgeons, but are surgeons trained in handling tiny vessels in complicated small spaces, hence presenting a real surgical challenge, unlike Zamboni’s opening up of much larger draining veins from the brain and spinal cord.

This case illustrates how enthusiasm for a procedure can spread internationally, in this case to mainstream hospitals such as the Cleveland clinic, with little concrete evidence that it works. Few of those Chinese patients were part of what would be considered proper studies.

Let’s hope for clarity and, should it work, an explanation that makes sense for how it works.

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.

Obituary

John Long



LONG, John Joseph —
It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of John Long on Oct. 23, 2026, at Marotta Family Hospital, at the age of 79. John will be dearly missed by his beloved wife of 57 years, Susan (née White); his children, Karen (Ryan Jusko), David (Melanie Keyser), and Kevin (Leslie, née McLean); and his eight grandchildren. He will also be missed by his brothers, Tom (Ricki), Jim (Margot), Terry (Eileen, who recently passed away), and Frances Long. John will also be fondly remembered by his many nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

In his professional life, John was a partner at Arthur Andersen and Deloitte accounting firms. He was a well-respected member of the audit practice and particularly enjoyed recruiting and mentoring new members of the team. John also valued being an active member of his communities. He served as an usher at St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish in Mississauga and St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and as a baseball and hockey coach and treasurer with the Erindale Hockey Association. There were few things he enjoyed more than a game of bridge or, earlier in his life, a game of golf.

In keeping with John's wishes, cremation has taken place. A Funeral Mass will be held at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 73 Picton Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Friday, October 30, 2026, at 2:00 p.m., followed by interment in the church cremation garden. Following the interment, family and friends are invited to gather at Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, to be together and to share memories of John. Refreshments will be served. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



What's on for Halloween

Staff
The Lake Report

Whether you're chasing ghosts, dressing to impress or just in it for the candy, Halloween weekend is here — and Niagara-on-the-Lake has plenty of ways to get into the spirit.

From spooky theatre to family-friendly firehall parties, here are a few ways to celebrate.

Ghost Radio Theatre, Oct. 29 and 30: Revisit the golden age of radio with haunting tales and live sound effects at the Shaw Festival's "Ghost Radio Theatre for Adult Ghouls." Shows begin at 9 p.m. at the Shaw Artists' Village digital lab. Tickets: \$30 plus tax at shawfest.com.

Irish Harp, Oct. 30 to Nov. 1: The pub at 245 King St. celebrates Samhain with three days of music and Halloween fun. Friday features Patsy & The Muscle and prizes for Irish-themed costumes. Saturday brings Jack Van Ginger and prizes for best costume and best couple costume. Both parties start at 8 p.m., with music at 8:30 p.m. Sunday wraps up with Hedley & Walker at 2 p.m., specialty hot drinks and Irish food.

Admission is free; ages 19-plus. Reservations recommended at theirishharp.pub.



Tickets for the Oct. 31 ghost tours through downtown NOTL are sold out, but you can still scoop up tickets for the Nov. 1 tours. FILE

Comedy night, Oct. 30: Trade screams for laughs at "Boos, Brews & Banter" at the Exchange Brewery, 7 Queen St. Aaron Wry and Andrew Chapman perform alongside special guest Trevor Cumming and host David Green. Doors open at 7:30 p.m., with the show from 8 to 10 p.m. Tickets are \$34, or \$90 with dinner, at exchangebrewery.com.

Two firehall parties, Oct. 31: Little ghosts and goblins can head to Queenston's firehall, 5 Dumfries St., for a barbecue, refreshments, candy, prizes and a

costume parade. Bring non-perishable food donations for Project SHARE. St. Davids' firehall, 745 Warner Rd., hosts its own family-friendly costume contest with prizes and refreshments. Both open at 7 p.m., with costume activities at 7:15 p.m.

Ghost Walks, Nov. 1: Keep the chills coming with a walk through Old Town's haunted history, featuring tales of the Prince of Wales Hotel, Niagara Apothecary and Olde Angel Inn. Tours run at 7, 7:15 and 7:30 p.m. Tickets: ghost-walks.com/niagara-on-the-lake.

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