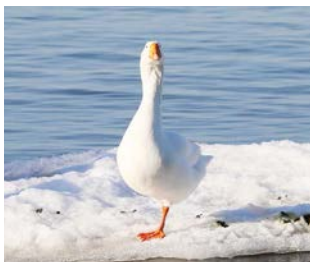


Lakereport.ca / Niagaranow.com
Hyper-local news for Niagara-on-the-Lake



The Lake Report



Farewell Mac: The legacy of a stubborn (yet adored) NOTL goose

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents are grieving the loss of Mac, a beloved goose known for his protective nature and loud presence, said resident Jim Reynolds.

Mac, affectionately named by Sarah Burroughs, was known to those who frequent Niagara-on-the-Lake's dock area — where he lived for 18 years at the mouth of the Niagara River.

Eighteen years ago, Coun. Gary Burroughs and his wife, Sarah, formed a bond with Mac when they rescued him after he got stuck in the ice.

From that moment on, the couple followed his journey closely and watched as he

Continued on Page 8

Ford campaigns in NOTL

Progressive-Conservatives promise \$35M for Shaw Festival



From left, PC leader Doug Ford with Coun. Erwin Wiens, Niagara Falls riding PC candidate Ruth-Ann Nieuwesteeg and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa. Ford visited the Niagara District Airport on Saturday as part of his campaign for the Feb. 27 provincial election. PAIGE SEBURN

Andrew Hawlitzky | The Lake Report

Shaw Festival's executive director says it came as a surprise when Doug Ford announced a whopping \$35 million for the theatre company if he gets re-elected as premier.

Ford made a campaign stop in Niagara-on-the-Lake Saturday, promising increased border security, funding for the Shaw Festival and receiving an endorsement from a town councillor. Ford held a press conference

at the Niagara District Airport, where he promised investments designed to boost tourism in Niagara-on-the-Lake and detailing Ontario's aggressive border security measures in response to Trump's tariff threat.

Among the investments to increase border security, Ford announced two additional H-135 helicopters to support Niagara Regional Police and Windsor's

Continued on Page 3

\$35 million could help Shaw rebuild Royal George

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

On the heels of PC leader Doug Ford's campaign announcement of a \$35-million grant for the

Shaw Festival Theatre if his government is re-elected, some questions have been raised about exactly how the money would be used.

Ford mentioned the investment in passing during a campaign stop in Niagara-

on-the-Lake last Saturday.

In response to a question from The Lake Report, he said, "I was just told we gave \$30-\$35 million for a theatre" but he didn't offer any details.

The Progressive Conser-

vative party subsequently confirmed the grant would be contingent on the Tories winning the election.

After 110 years, the Shaw's Royal George



Continued on Page 3 The Royal George is in need of repairs. PAIGE SEBURN



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Heritage district expansion under review

Evan Loree
The Lake Report

Much of Old Town is under review for its historical value after the Niagara-on-the-Lake town council greenlit a study of its heritage assets.

Town heritage planning manager Steve Burke presented council with a bylaw and appended map at a committee of the whole meeting Feb. 4 which would establish the boundaries of the study area in Old Town.

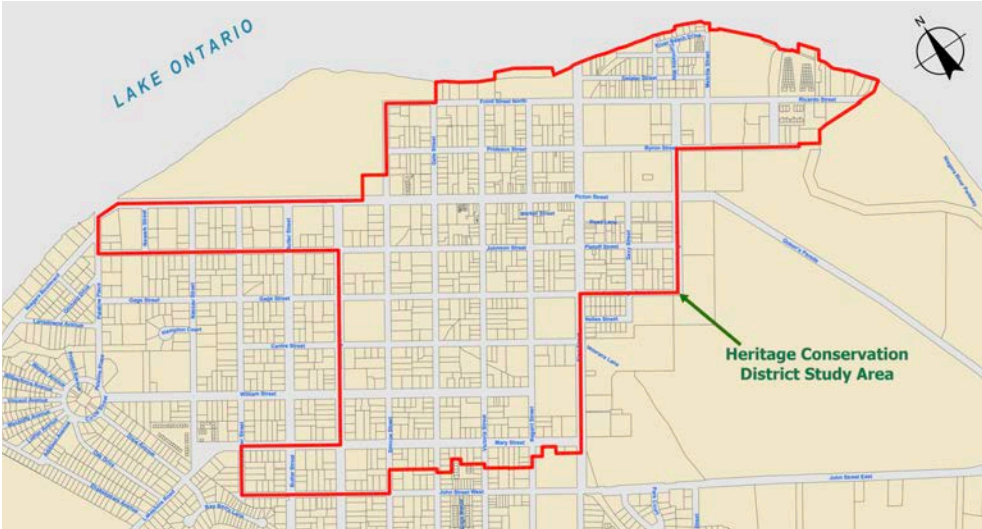
The research is part of an ongoing effort to expand the existing heritage district bound by Byron, Gate, Johnson and Wellington streets.

The study area stretches from Palatine Place to the dock area and from the shores of Lake Ontario to as far south as John Street.

“It’s something that we wanted to do from the beginning,” Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said in an interview.

The heritage district plan was a priority of this council’s strategic plan and a key part of his campaign platform in 2022, Zalepa said.

Expanding the heritage



A map of the proposed study area covers a large part of Old Town. SOURCED

district would help the town get a lot of properties designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, thereby protecting them from development.

The area will be studied for its heritage value for the next year by Ottawa-based heritage consultant Cultural Spaces, which the town has retained for the study.

In the meantime, demolitions, alterations and new development on properties within the study area will be prohibited, Burke told Council.

Some properties, however, will be exempt from the

restrictions.

Burke said these would include properties impacted by bylaw amendments in the last three years and those already designated under the Ontario Heritage Act.

A staff report on the agenda, signed by Burke and two senior staffers, said at least 25 per cent of the properties in a proposed heritage district need to meet the Ontario Heritage Act’s criteria to qualify for the designation.

The report said 75 properties in the study area are on the town’s heritage register.

Burke said the boundaries of the future heritage conservation district will likely be different than those in the study.

Zalepa said he did not think the study’s boundaries should have been adjusted to accommodate other properties, including high-profile heritage assets like the Rand Estate.

The Rand Estate was the subject of another heritage study conducted in 2023.

Zalepa said the town’s consultants did not see value in duplicating the research produced in that study.

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\$35 million could help **rebuild Royal George**

Continued from Front Page

Theatre, on Queen Street, is in critical need of repairs, but it's uncertain if the full \$35-million investment would go to that theatre alone or be to support all of the Shaw's operations.

Built with clay "speed" tile for temporary use during the First World War, the structure was only meant to last about 25 years and was used for lectures and entertainment for officers' training, according to the Shaw's website.

Over time, water seepage has weakened the foundation, Tim Jennings, executive director of the company, said in an interview.

The Royal George, which will close at the end of this year, brings in about \$70 million annually to the town's main street, so he said its closure would impact the whole area.

That's a big reason why the festival wants to rebuild the theatre and has been asking federal and provincial governments for money and seeking support from other donors.

The reconstruction of the Royal George would not only save the building but would add modern features like accessible washrooms and elevators, Jennings said.

Right now, he said, people have to leave the theatre and go down an alley to find accessible washrooms.



Ford's promised \$35 million for the Shaw Festival could help the theatre company rebuild the historic Royal George Theatre, which is in need of repairs. FILE PHOTO

"That's not OK. That has to go. That has to get fixed."

Jennings said repairing or replacing arts facilities, which are as complex as hospitals in design, requires significant investment.

The NDP's Wayne Gates, who is seeking re-election as MPP for Niagara Falls riding (which includes NOTL), wants the full \$35 million to be invested into the Royal George rebuild.

The Shaw community has already raised \$40 million for the project.

Gates felt Ford's announcement was unclear, since government funding can't be allocated until after an election.

"It's disappointing that the premier didn't even know the name of the theatre," he added.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa

also has been advocating for government funding for the Royal George.

"It's amazing news. It's something that myself and the deputy lord mayor have been working on for many, many hours these past two years," Zalepa said.

He said such an investment in the Royal George would create more than 850 new jobs and an estimated growth of over \$80 million for the town.

"That's significant for this economy," he said.

Zalepa and Coun. Erwin Wiens made calls, wrote letters and had in-person meetings to try to secure funding for the theatre. At a fundraiser last month, Zalepa spoke with Ford and minister of tourism.

"It's a massive opportunity for the town — to really

cement the Shaw Festival as that cornerstone in the town's cultural tourism strategy," he said.

The festival generates nearly \$300 million annually in tourism-related activity, according to Jennings. It operates on a \$40 million annual budget, with less than 5 per cent of that coming from government funding, he said.

"We significantly fundraise," he said. "When we have to repair or replace things, we do, then, look to the government to help us in a public-private partnership model."

The Shaw also owns another building for rehearsals, set construction and storage. Depending on funding and permits, the site plan may expand to include that building, he said.

Since the Shaw took over the Royal George in 1981, it has helped shape the town's identity and draw visitors — who then support nearby businesses, restaurants and wineries, Jennings added.

"We're now one of Niagara's 20 largest employers," he said. "We're the third-largest producing theatre in North America."

Rebuilding the Royal George isn't just about saving a building — it's about securing the future of the Shaw Festival and what it adds to the town's culture, Jennings said.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

Deputy mayor Wiens **endorses Ford** government

Continued from Front Page

police force in increasing border patrols.

Several Niagara region politicians showed up to support the premier, including Niagara Falls riding PC candidate Ruth-Ann Nieuwesteeg, Niagara Falls mayor Jim Diodati, NOTL Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens.

All endorsed Ford except Zalepa, who told Niagara Now, "I wanted to thank him for all the support, but I really don't think it's the job of the mayor to endorse candidates. I think that's up to residents to decide."

Zalepa emphasized the province has been a strong friend of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

After introducing Ford at the conference, Wiens offered his endorsement.

"We look forward to a continued strong relationship that will move Niagara-on-the-Lake further down



Coun. Erwin Wiens.

the road. We are in talks for a \$35 million investment in the Shaw, investment in the airport and assistance in heritage preservation," said Wiens.

Diodati echoed the sentiment, enthusiastically endorsing Ford and praising Ontario's \$3.6 billion investment in the South Niagara hospital, support for the GO Train and local wineries.

Speaking amid a backdrop of private aircraft, Ford reinforced that Ontario is ready to confront economic risk — including the temporarily postponed yet lingering threat of U.S. tariffs — with decisive action.

"The simple truth is, as long as Donald Trump is

president, the risk of tariffs will never go away," Ford said.

Ford disagreed with Trump's rationale for the tariffs which equates Canada and Mexico's shared responsibility for preventing illegal immigration and fentanyl trafficking. According to Ford, Canada represents only "0.001 per cent of fentanyl that goes into the U.S. compared to Mexico," though he maintained that even that is too much.

Ford spotlighted his government's "Operation Deterrence," an initiative aimed at preventing illegal border crossings and drug trafficking, unveiled last month in response to Trump's threats.

"Two hundred dedicated OPP officers have already conducted 10,000 hours of focused patrol to detect, disrupt and deter illegal cross-border activity. We've already seen real tangible results," said Ford.

So far, Operation Deter-

rence has intercepted eight illegal border crossers, seized 21 illegal firearms, and 624 kilograms of cocaine.

Ford called on Trudeau to meet Trump's demands and appoint a "fentanyl czar" as negotiated by the Prime Minister and U.S. President to avoid 25 per cent tariffs.

Niagara District Airport CEO Dan Pilon and chair Greg Wight celebrated the provincial government's commitment to investing in the terminal.

"We think that the airport has certainly a bigger role to play in growing tourism, and certainly within Niagara, and as part of Ontario," said Pilon.

Niagara Now asked the premier about his remarks on turning Niagara into the "Las Vegas of the North," Ford explained that the only way to fund these aforementioned investments is by boosting tourism — much like the model in Las Vegas.

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If elected, Liberal **Shafoli Kapur** would prioritize health care, housing affordability

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

With less than three weeks before Ontario’s early provincial election on Feb. 27 — and with some voters already casting ballots — the Ontario Liberal Party has named Shafoli Kapur as the candidate for the Niagara Falls riding, which includes Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The abrupt nomination came on the heels of Doug Ford’s decision to call an early election, a move that left the Ontario Liberals with little time to finalize their candidate selection.

In an interview, Kapur said her platform centres on the most pressing issues that matter to Niagara residents: accessible health care, affordable housing and economic opportunities.

“Our healthcare system is struggling — people can’t get appointments, wait times are too long. Too many families are without a family doctor,” Kapur said.

The Niagara region is experiencing a shortage of



Ontario Liberal candidate Shafoli Kapur. SUPPLIED

roughly 100 family doctors compared to the population.

Niagara-on-the-Lake offers a \$25,000 recruitment incentive to compete for family doctors with other municipalities.

Kapur praised the Ontario Liberal Party leader Bonnie Crombie’s plan to make health care accessible to all Ontario residents as it is “what makes Canada special.”

She also plans to tackle the high cost of living and the brain drain of young talent from the region to Toronto and other major cities.

“Why can’t we create opportunities here so that

fresh graduates and young professionals have a reason to stay in Niagara?”

While recognizing she faces an uphill battle with the long-incumbent Wayne Gates, Kapur said that Niagara residents deserve the opportunity to bring a fresh perspective into the office.

“If the people of Niagara are not going to give somebody else a chance, they will never know what somebody else can bring to the table.”

Kapur is a staunch advocate for mental health awareness and women’s rights. Drawing on her volunteer work with women’s shelters and survivors of

abuse, she is committed to breaking down stigmas and expanding access to necessary resources.

“I moved my entire life from a different country to a new country. If I can build myself up to this level, I definitely have the commitment, the courage, and the determination to make anything happen,” she said.

Kapur, born in India and arrived in Canada in 2009, is an experienced local business owner and community advocate.

“I built my life in Canada from the ground up.”

Kapur is the founder and director of TDOT Immigration Services Inc. Her company prioritizes inclusivity and empowerment for people of all backgrounds.

“I’m going to put in 200 per cent. That’s what I’ve always done. That’s the woman I am. I never give up. I give it all that I have in myself. That’s exactly what I’m going to do — and I leave the results on the people of Niagara and God.”

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Gates hosts meet-and-greet at Exchange

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Bella the therapy dog was right by Wayne Gates' side again at a campaign meet-and-greet in Niagara-on-the-Lake last Friday.

Gates is the NDP candidate seeking re-election as MPP for the Niagara Falls riding, which includes Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, in the Feb. 27 provincial election.

He met with the community on Friday at the Exchange Brewery for casual chats.

Henry Wojnarowski, who grew up on York Road, takes his therapy dog Bella around town to provide people with emotional support.

Bella has been to all three of Gates' NOTL campaign parties so far.

Wojnarowski said Bella's calming presence and ability to connect with people makes her an ideal companion for Gates' campaign.



Wayne Gates.

"Bella's become kind of like a mascot for us," Gates told The Lake Report in an interview.

The night was an opportunity for voters to chat with Gates about what matters to them, said Shannon Mitchell, Gates' voter contact manager.

"This is like one of those rare opportunities that we have to speak with voters directly," said Mitchell. "To engage with voters in a really authentic way — that's not part of a survey or a forum or a focus group."

Gates said having conversations, whether about politics or personal topics,

in a relaxed and approachable setting is "really who I am."

He said it's a priority to allow people to be themselves and have fun, while still being able to connect with him as their representative.

Gates supporter Colin Post — who has lived in NOTL since 1977 — said it's also nice to see Gates supporting local businesses.

Post, a labour activist, supports Gates because of his background in fighting for workers' rights. He referred to when Gates was a "committee man" at General Motors and fought for workers while there.

"We advocate on behalf of the worker, because it seems like a lot of people don't," Post said.

Gates mingled with supporters and chatted, then thanked attendees — especially his campaign volunteers.

He noted how dedicated volunteers have been, even risking injury to put up

1,400 signs in two weeks despite icy conditions.

Many are seniors, but they refuse to let bad weather stop them from participating, he said.

Gates also criticized Doug Ford's government for spending \$200 million on an election instead of investing in areas like health care or education.

"There are so many better places to put any kind of money, never mind the \$200 million for an unnecessary election," he told the audience.

Early voting for the Feb. 27 election began Jan. 30 and runs until Feb. 26 at Elections Ontario, 4536 Portage Rd., Niagara Falls, from Monday to Saturday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays.

Voting by mail is also available. You can apply online at votebymail.elections.on.ca/ and return your completed voting kit by Feb. 26.

In-person voting locations will be available after Feb. 14. paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

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Flu cases on the rise across Niagara

Staff
The Lake Report

Niagara Health hospitals are seeing an alarming spike in flu cases, with a growing number of patients requiring hospitalization — including several in intensive care.

“I want to urge people to take flu season seriously and get vaccinated, as this year’s flu shot appears to be highly effective in preventing severe illness,” says Dr. Karim Ali, says the head of infectious diseases at Niagara Health.

In a news release Monday, Ali said this is the worst flu season the region has seen since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

While public attention in recent years has been focused on COVID, he warned that influenza remains a significant threat.

“We are seeing high numbers of flu cases in our hospitals, and people are getting very sick,” Ali said.

“Flu is not just a seasonal nuisance — it can lead to serious complications, and this year is proving that.”

Niagara Health said “several” patients are currently



Niagara Region Public Health is advising people to get a flu shot, amid rising cases across Niagara. FILE

being treated in intensive care, with more admitted to hospital for flu-related complications.

Ali said this should serve as a reminder that influenza is not just a bad cold — it can be life-threatening, especially for seniors, young children and those with underlying health conditions.

Niagara’s medical officer of health Dr. Azim Kasmani urges people to get the flu vaccine.

“With flu season in full swing, it’s important to remember that the flu vac-

cine is an effective tool in protecting yourself and others against the current strain,” said Kasmani.

“While the season is underway, it’s never too late to get vaccinated. The flu shot continues to be the best way to prevent the flu and reduce the risk of severe illness and complications.”

Kasmani added that by layering protection through vaccination, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and staying home when sick, we not only protect ourselves but also those at higher risk of severe outcomes, such

as hospitalization or even death, from getting infected.

Ali said hospitals are bracing for more cases in the weeks ahead, and he hopes people take the necessary steps to stay healthy.

“Flu has always been a serious illness, and this season is proving that,” he said. “We want people to protect themselves.”

Flu shots are available across Niagara at pharmacies, through family doctors or at walk-in clinics. Many local pharmacies offer flu vaccinations, often with walk-in or appointment options.

Tips to stay healthy during flu season

- Get your flu shot as soon as possible.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.
- Throw tissues in the trash, don’t keep them in your pocket or purse.
- Stay home if you’re sick to avoid spreading the virus.
- Disinfect high-touch surfaces like doorknobs and phones.



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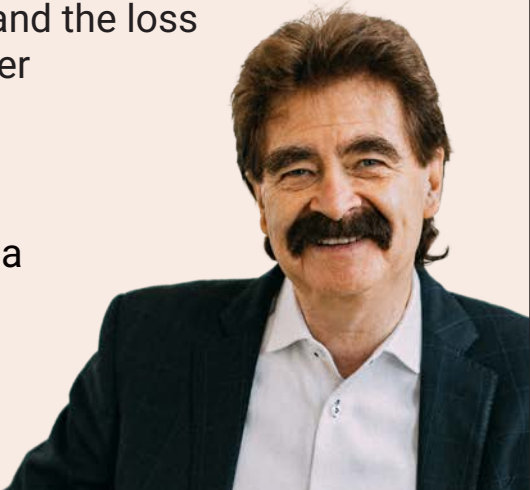
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- ✓ Consistently advocated for the preservation of the Town’s culture assets and heritage
- ✓ Opposed Ford's scheme to force the amalgamation of Niagara-on-the-Lake, which would lead to higher taxes, fewer services, and the loss of local decision-making power

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ELECTION DAY IS FEB 27!

FUN IN THE SNOW



Photographer Dave Van de Laar was out Sunday in the snow shooting photos around town when he came across a group of kids tobogganing at Fort George's "Killer Hill."

Left: Kade Van Berkel, 15, catches some air off the jump as his friends watch.

Below, clockwise from top left: Tyson Birks, 12, braces for impact after hitting the jump. His face says 1,000 words. Matt Benvenuto takes his two-year-old son Mikey for a ride at Locust Grove. Mayla VanNoort, 8, isn't phased by the smaller jump, catching some impressive air. And finally, back to Birks, who seems to have been knocked clean off of his tube toboggan. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Catching some **big air** at 'Killer Hill'





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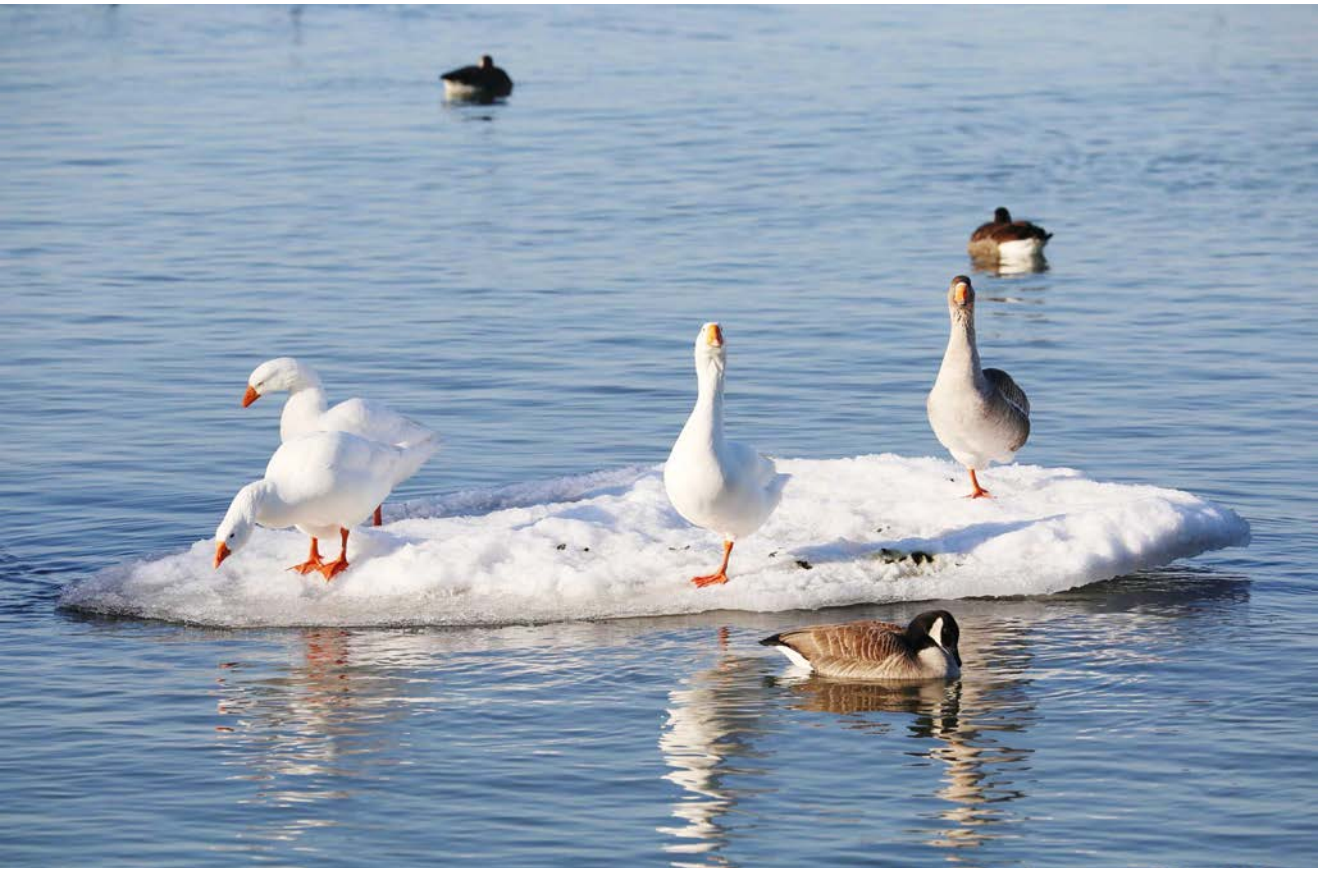
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A heartwarming moment from 2018, when Mac (centre) and his flock were a familiar sight around the community. The geese have brought joy to many NOTL residents and visitors, especially in the dock area. SUPPLIED/RON SIMKUS

Mac the goose will be missed by many

Continued from Front Page

built a family and took on the role of leader among the geese, said Burroughs.

“Not only the leader of the pack,” he said. “But he also knew everybody in the dock area and would come over and greet people.”

For nearly two decades, Mac’s family of five white geese was a fixture at the dock.

Among those grieving is Dory Karr, a friend of Sarah Burroughs, who documented the life of Mac and his family on her Facebook page in posts titled “Goose-landia.”

“It was just for fun,” Karr said about her posts. They were created for a small group of friends and featured Mac, the other geese, sunrises and daily observations.

Karr said she was incredibly sad to learn of Mac’s passing.

“[Geese] are just amazing creatures. They are sentient beings, no doubt about it. They understand things and they love their mates and their families,” Karr said.

The harsh conditions geese face in the wintertime — like limited food and

cold temperatures — likely contributed to his death, she said.

But even throughout the tough winters he endured, Mac always protected his family, Karr said.

Through it all, Mac remained the leader and ensured his group stayed safe, said Burroughs.

Burroughs and Sarah were devastated and raced to the dock when they received a text with a photograph of the goose frozen in the ice with his head beneath the water.

But the way Mac’s story came full circle — first rescued from the ice and in the end, carried away by it — felt almost fitting to Burroughs.

Reynolds sadly found Mac the morning of Feb. 8.

“Last time I saw him, he seemed to be in relatively good shape,” he said. “It was kind of a shock.”

Reynolds said he likes to remember the days when Mac would gather his flock and protect them fiercely.

“If a dog was within a hundred meters of them, Mac would start shouting ‘dog’ at the top of his lungs — even if the dog was on a leash,” he said. “Just so that

everybody knew that there was a dog in the area.”

Dock-area resident Ron Simkus’ got to know the geese after his neighbour who fed them moved away. The geese began going to his house for food and treats.

As a result, he got to know Mac — as the grumpy yet lovable protector who was always ready to defend the youngins’ if anyone got too close, he said.

“Quite often, you’d see him chasing away the Canada geese that were getting a little bit amorous or attracted to the others,” he said.

Residents and tourists grew fond of Mac and his family because they became a symbol of the community, said Burroughs. Many people returned to the waterfront specifically to check on the geese.

“People that have been coming to Niagara that no longer live here, say, that live in St. Catharines, they would come down two or three times a week just to see them and see if they were okay. It became a community,” he said.

The cause of Mac’s death is unclear, though geese can

sometimes become lethargic and get frozen into the ice, which prevents escape, said Simkus.

The possibility of bird flu has added stress to the situation as well, since it could pose a threat to other geese and to humans too.

The body was not recovered for testing to see if it could have been bird flu.

Losing Mac has left residents closely watching over and cherishing the remaining survivors — the brave pair of the white goose and grey goose, said Reynolds.

These two had been missing for a few days, which had the community in an anxious search, but in happier news — they were found today, he said.

The geese also endured hardship in 2018, when a young hunter killed three of them.

Mac’s death is “a big deal down here,” said Simkus. “These birds have been an icon here for so long.”

Though the two remaining female geese have strong personalities, Karr said they’ll face a tough challenge replacing Mac’s leadership.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com

Niagara Nursery School ordered to close kitchen briefly

Staff
The Lake Report

Niagara Region Public Health ordered Niagara Nursery School to close its kitchen on Feb. 5.

The kitchen was closed due to a “lack of hot po-

table water supply,” according to the region’s website under closures, convictions and orders.

The daycare centre, which operates at 6 Anderson Ln., was permitted to open the kitchen back up on the same day.



Niagara Nursery School. FILE



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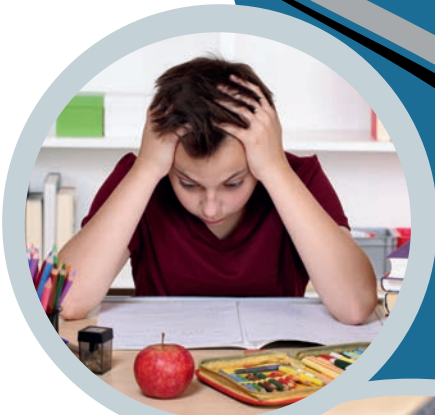
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Contributed by Patty Garriock
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Scoop Dogg drops it like it’s cold

Photographer Dave Van de Laar captured this shot of a town employee named Ryan clearing snow Monday with the town’s plow named “Scoop Dogg.”



Opinion

Spring housing market? **Fuhgeddaboutit**



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner
Columnist

The house on the corner is still for sale. A year now. They got an offer the other day for 90 per cent of the asking price, but signed it back. Full price. Just under four million. The buyers walked.

What’s wrong with NOTL sellers these days?

“We’re in a market that’s been in the buyer’s favour for years now,” says broker Patrick Burke. “You can’t just list, stick with your price and see what happens. Do you want to be for sale, or be sold? It’s that simple.”

Well, maybe. These are complicated times. Incentives to shovel money into real estate are building up. But so are the risks.

Buyers want deals. Sellers think 2021 is coming back. And, of course, NOTL is a weird place.

Most sales here happen between March and July — a short window. This is also the only place in the region where average values have been north of a million bucks for several years.

Overall last year prices



Top-end, pricy NOTL homes can take a year to sell, says realtor Patrick Burke. Trump may make things even worse.

dipped about 3 per cent, to \$1.1 million. The Old Town was a hundred grand more expensive — down year over year a whopping 9 per cent. But look at Virgil. The average there was just one used Hyundai south of a million and homes appreciated almost 8 per cent.

If a certain orange guy were not in the headlines daily, screwing up the courage to make an offer would be easier.

After all, most houses are selling for less. Thirty-year amortizations are now available for newbie buyers, reducing monthly payments (but increasing the interest paid).

CMHC now offers mortgage insurance on places worth up to \$1.5 million. That’s huge, since minimum downpayments on more expensive places are now 60 per cent less. And mortgage rates are pivotal. Two years ago a five-year

term cost over 6 per cent. Now you can get one for less than four.

There’s more. New buyers can raid their RRSPs for tax-free house money and delay making repayments for years. That crazy First Home Savings Account lets people deduct contributions (eight thousand a year) from taxable income like an RRSP, then take it out to buy a house without any tax, like a TFSA.

It’s a gift, on top of taxpayer-backed mortgage insurance which keep rates low.

Given all this, the Bosley broker admits spring 2025 should be a boffo comeback year for houses.

But probably not.

“If tariffs kick in during early March, then that’s going to be a challenge,” says Burke.

“But we have to see if this is going to be a one-month fistfight. Or longer. Maybe

an event for all of 2025. But when you look out over the past decade, this is about as fascinating a spring market as we’ve ever had.”

Bay Street economists are singing the same song lately. Steel and aluminum duties are the latest assault. Rising unemployment and falling rates are now likely. In fact, we could get back to COVID-era mortgages of less than 2 per cent. That was when real estate went nuts, despite the fact we were all going to die.

The unknown is how long this trade war might last and how effectively Canada will respond. If we make imports more expensive while suffering a lower dollar, inflation roars back. The central bank will stop chopping and might hike again.

So, a hot mess.

Already it takes an average of almost 250 days to sell a more expensive house in this town. Listings have been piling up.

When Trump granted us a 30-day stay of execution, there was a flurry of showings and activity, but mostly for cheaper digs. You know, the stuff average folks can afford. But now that window’s closing.

Moral: don’t stick millions in a house. This may not end well.

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

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Why not make old hospital a showcase of Canada?

Dear editor:
Regarding the idea of converting the old hospital into yet another community hub, why not convert the hospital into a showcase of all

of Canada, where each province and territory would display its cultural history, attractions, etc?
It could be called "Canada House."
The town could lease

the space to each province/territory — this would generate income. Tourists would get a taste of Canada. The federal government would assist financially.

In NOTL, we need to think about some new tourist attractions to generate income for the town.
**Irene and Paul Chumak
NOTL**

Doug Ford's track record speaks for itself



David Israelson
Special to The Lake Report

I guess I should be pleased that Doug Ford came to Niagara District Airport on Feb. 8 to tell Ontarians how he'll resist Donald Trump, but it's not enough of a reason to vote for him in the Feb. 27 provincial election.

The Progressive Conservative leader deserves credit for speaking loudly and repeatedly about how he'll protect our province. But the measures he proposes are only part of what we need to thrive, and the announcements he made, while perhaps a step forward, are underwhelming.

Ford announced that the province will provide two additional H-135 helicopters to support Niagara Regional Police and Windsor's police force to boost border patrols.

First, isn't patrolling the border the job of Canada Border Service Agency?

And if CBSA needs more help — which might be the case — shouldn't we call on our military before we ask the local police to take on more work?

Secondly, is this the best that Ford can offer to Niagara, a region that would be particularly hard-bitten if the U.S. president imposes tariffs on Canadian products and services and we're forced to retaliate?

Local politicians gushed about Ford's government being "in talks" for a \$35 million investment in the Shaw Festival, its \$3.6 billion investment in the South Niagara Hospital and investment in the airport, support for the GO Train and local wineries and "assistance in heritage preservation."

Really? Support for the Shaw would be most welcome, and Niagara residents should be glad that the hospital is finally going up after what feels like a generation's worth of talk. But it takes a special kind of gall for local officials to praise Ford for transit support and heritage preservation.

Let's remember: Ford was the premier who promised that "we won't touch the Greenbelt." Then he did. When he was caught, he backtracked, but it appears that well-connected developers acquired land within the Greenbelt before Ford and his minions tried to carve it up.

Now the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are investigating. Conveniently, their investigation might not be concluded until after the provincial election.

On transportation, Ford's record is no better, and his promises are either vague or counterproductive. He plans to spend as much as \$28 billion on highways, including ramming a massive multi-lane road that would cut right through the Greenbelt and which studies have already said would do little or nothing to cut congestion.

Meanwhile, GO Train service to Niagara Region, while better than it used to be, is still embryonic and sporadic compared to what Niagara residents and visitors need. Where is Ford on that?

Let's not even get into the chronic underfunding Ontarians — including Niagara residents — suffer when it comes to health care services and schools, including postsecondary schools. And housing and heritage protection: under Ford's direction, local governments and local decision making have been disemboweled.

Affordable housing just hasn't happened since Ford took office, and policies have been forced on municipalities that encourage the kind of ugly sprawl that would weaken Niagara's appeal for residents and visitors alike. We have seen some of the results in Niagara-on-the-Lake already, where several highly unpopular, discouraging decisions have been made.

This is not to endorse or discredit any of the candidates in the provincial election. While I have been involved in previous elections, this time I'm not.

The point is this: whoever aspires to govern Ontario and be premier does need to show leadership in opposing the destructive cross-border policies of Donald Trump and fighting for Canada. But running Ontario will take more than this — a lot more.

Ford deserves some credit on the Trump-fighting front, but on all the other fronts, voters should ask: Where's the beef?


David Israelson is a writer and non-practising lawyer who lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

A good time to put Doug Ford regime in the past

Dear editor:
Great editorial by Kevin MacLean, "An unnecessary provincial election," on Jan. 30.
We do not need a provincial election but we do need a leadership election to allow Mr. Ford to move on — perhaps to his construction and development interests that would love to

pave our Green Belt.
We do not need another highway. All studies essentially show more highways fill up with more traffic and do not solve the basic problem (we need more rail infrastructure, both freight and passenger — and frequent services).
We have the 407 that we taxpayers paid \$1.6 billion

for and was sold for \$3 billion. Coincidentally, the cost of Mr. Ford's \$200 bribe to voters was interestingly \$3 billion.
It appears high time the Progressive Conservatives got a leadership upgrade. Perhaps a change from "Buck-a-Beer" Doug would be welcome.
**Barry Solomon
NOTL**



Doug Ford.



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.
Category: ALL ABOUT HAIR

Tiny muscles called arrector pili in our follicles make our hair literally do this, as a ghost in Shakespeare promises to do.

Last issue: ROYAL HISTORY
Clue: Mary, Queen of Scots was the mother of King James I, the first king of England from this dynastic family.
Answer: Who are the Stuarts?
Answered first by: Bill Hamilton
Also answered correctly (in order) by: Bob Wheatley, Susan Hamilton, Jane Morris, Jim Dandy, Esther VanGorder, Lynda Collet, Jeff Lake, Howard Jones, Mike Gander, Marla Percy, Nancy Rocca, Rob Hutchison, Catherine Clarke, Katie Reimer, Edna Groff, David Spencer

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Points of interest and stormwater infrastructure



Brian Marshall
Columnist

We opened the month of February under the threat of tariffs issued by U.S. President Donald Trump's executive order. Then, by 5 p.m. on Feb. 3, we got a 30-day "stay of execution."

But make no mistake, this is only Trump's opening salvo in a four-year battle.

Read his book "Trump: The Art of the Deal" and you will understand that if you show weakness, if you give him a lever, he will use it without mercy to get whatever he wants — preferably, everything you've got.

Should the status quo be maintained in this country — inter-provincial trade barriers, no EU trade deal, lack of east-west pipelines for Alberta and Saskatchewan, etc. — and we attempt

to appease Trump, we will suffer "death by a thousand cuts."

We must act now, united, politics aside, to protect Canada's sovereignty.

That said, I cannot say how proud the people of this wonderful country have made me feel in the two days between Feb. 1 and 3.

Vive le Canada — strong and free.

Now, let's shift our focus from the international theatre back to our wee little town where, for the past several months, three individuals — two eminently qualified engineers and an internationally recognized expert on water resource management — have been toiling selflessly in an attempt to educate both council and staff on the probable downsides of the proposed Parliament Oak hotel vis-à-vis our infrastructure.

We will not revisit the issue that the developer's engineering firm, R.V. Anderson Associates, disclaimed all liability for any decisions made by a third party (including the town) since it has been covered in this publication before ("Engineering reports used to approve zone changes



Two NOTL engineers have been vocal about problems with water output plans for the Parliament Oak hotel. Brian Marshall writes that the town could be liable for damages.

for Parliament Oak under scrutiny," Nov. 7).

Nor will we wonder why this firm used a two-year design storm rather than the current five-year storm required by NOTL's current municipal engineering standards and ignored section 6.2, which prohibits new storm sewer outlets to be connected to existing storm sewers.

Instead, let's consider just where all the new, additional water (and there will be significantly more) is going to be directed: One Mile Creek.

R.V. Anderson identifies One Mile Creek as a "watercourse," implying it is capable of handling the increased flow of stormwater and the water output resulting from dewatering

processes required to protect the proposed underground garage. A proper 100-year-storm has not been considered in the report.

As anyone who has ever walked this watercourse knows — due to sedimentation, obstructions, undersized culverts, etc. — this proposition is ridiculous and will inevitably result in exacerbating the already extensive flooding events that properties bordering the creek periodically suffer from.

These observations are echoed and underwritten by the three experts petitioning the town.

Moreover, case law in Ontario suggests water "cannot by artificial drains or ditches" be collected and moved downgradient to the

"downgradient property owner's injury."

So, one has to wonder just who will be sued when the inevitable downstream flooding occurs?

I suppose if the stormwater drain pipe were to be constructed and paid for by the property developer, the owner, then the liability would rest on them.

However, should the municipality construct and own that pipe, legal experts opine that the town could bear all or a part of that liability.

The town could, at an astronomical cost, correct all the existing issues with the One Mile Creek natural watercourse — provided the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and property owners along the creek agree — to allow it to safely manage the increased water to the 100-year-storm criteria.

Or, at any even higher ticket price, make One Mile Creek a municipal drain, re-engineer its water handling capacity and be on the hook for the annual maintenance requirements.

While our three experts have met with limited success in educating members of the town council, during

a recent meeting with town staff, they were able to get a commitment to pass their multiple concerns on to the firm, Associated Engineering, that is conducting the peer review of the R.V. Anderson report.

I do hope that commitment transpires.

And, let's end this week with a fun fact regarding water and infrastructure.

As a result of the Walkerton water debacle 25 years ago, Ontario passed two pieces of legislation — the Safe Drinking Water Act 2002 and the Clean Water Act 2006 — specifically crafted to protect the province's drinking water and the source water it is derived from.

Contained in the legislation is the conveyance of personal liability onto elected municipal officials and staff in the event actions taken by the municipality adversely affects either drinking water or the source water.

A fact that should be considered when infrastructure decisions are being made.

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

Optimism, religion, immortality, Oliver Sacks and me



Dr. William Brown
Columnist

The question of whether immortality in any form exists has long been both a question and challenge for philosophers, theoretical physicists and writers, and in some versions, a claim and faith for many religions past and present.

And not just them, most people, including me, wonder whether anything of us will survive the grave.

One of my favorite authors is Oliver Sacks, both for the clarity and poetic artistry with which he wrote, and his passion for life, science and especially for him, the periodic table.

Some of his best writing came toward the end of his life when in the growing shadow of metastatic melanoma, he wrote his last and my favorite book, "Grati-

tude," in which he summed up what it meant to him to be a sentient being:

"I have been increasingly conscious, for the last 10 years or so, of deaths among my contemporaries. My generation is on the way out, and each death I have felt as an abrupt, a tearing away of part of myself. There will be no one like anyone else, ever. When people die, they cannot be replaced. They leave holes that cannot be filled, for it is the fate — the genetic and neural fate — of every human being to be a unique individual, to find his (or her) own path, to live his (or her) own life, to die his (or her) own death."

Sacks was born into an Orthodox Jewish family and neighborhood in London, U.K., from which family and roots he was cast out when he revealed that he was gay.

Until the end of his life nearly six decades later he lived in the United States where he became a neurologist, scientist and chronicler of human nature, and wrote his book, "Awakenings."

The latter became a movie

that chronicled life for those with severe brain disorders especially late-stage Parkinsonian disorders.

The book, movie and his fascination with bizarre cases in neurology such as "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat" made him a favorite of the New York Times, National Public Radio and the public.

When Sacks learned that his cousin Marjorie — a practising physician until her ninety-eighth year, and a protégé of his mother — was nearing death, Sacks phoned her and was in turn invited together with his partner to Israel to celebrate her hundredth birthday.

With that invitation and visit, almost 60 years of separation from his Orthodox family came to an end — and just in time before Sacks' own death.

Throughout his life, he remained a cultural Jew at heart well versed in the traditions of his cultural origins but no believer in God or any version of an afterlife, save what records he left behind in his writings.

Not long before his death

he wrote these moving lines, which gather together his cultural roots in the Sabbath, science, life and his end:

"And now, weak, short of breath, my once-firm muscles melted away by cancer, I find my thoughts increasingly, not on the supernatural or spiritual, but on what is meant by living a good and worthwhile life — achieving a sense of peace within oneself. I find my thoughts drifting to the Sabbath, the day of rest, the seventh day of the week, and perhaps the seventh day of one's life as well, when one can feel that one's work is done, and one may, in good conscience, rest."

That's Sacks' take on immortality, which mirrors my own — no heaven and no hell except on Earth, of which there is an abundance of both in the best and worst of the human spirit and behavior.

No God in the narrow sense with which most traditions see God, and no immortality for the body or soul.

Only ephemeral memories

in the minds of those who follow us and what survives for a generation or two of the memorabilia we leave behind.

Immortality is not the fate of the universe, not for particles, not for atoms, molecules, not for life, whether simple or highly complex social species such as ours, or anything that exists writ large in the case of the universe or tiny in the case of the subatomic universe.

All are products of a mystery as yet unresolved: What preceded the Big Bang? Going further, how will our universe end, and are there other universes? All are unanswerable questions for the foreseeable future at least and perhaps for the lifetime of our species going forward.

Oliver Sacks was both a realist and optimist about life, as I hope I am in my better moments.

Like him, I think it's important to sort out as best as we can what's important in life, celebrate that life and those of others, learn and be curious, and remember that we are players on a giant

stage in space and time with roles to play between our beginnings and endings.

That's our legacy and the only form of immortality open to us as sentient beings.

No other species, except probably the neanderthals, dwell on the hereafter and some version of immortality in their creation stories.

Those stories were based on their experience fueled by their powers of speech and vivid imagination to explain and enhance the worlds they inhabited.

Those same cognitive powers disciplined by the methods of science, further expanded our understanding of the natural world to the limits of what science can do.

Sacks was part of that contradiction between culture and science and for him at least found peace in the tension between the two.

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.



Carmichael column ignored Trump’s character

Dear editor:
The back-to-back opinion articles in last week’s Lake Report, “Other nations beware, Canada is a test for Trump” by Keith McNenly and “Canada should limit retaliation to potential Trump tariffs” by Ted Carmichael, were interesting. Taking a level-headed ap-

proach to U.S. tariffs might be in Canada’s best interests was the gist of the Carmichael article, while the McNenly article focused on the necessity of putting aside interprovincial party differences in the face of threats against our sovereignty. Having carefully read both articles twice, I believe

the McNenly article to be level-headed. I feel that the Carmichael article glosses over the character, the lies, the threats and insults of the U.S. president and his team of advisors. President Trump seems much more than just bombastic. He seems dangerous to me. According to the Wall

Street Journal, he and his team are leading the dumbest tariff war in history. I would feel better, if the C.D. Howe Institute and other formal business institutes would loudly acknowledge and denounce the threats to our sovereignty.
**Brian Emes
NOTL**

We should expect more from the town on climate action

Dear editor:
Thank you for reporting on Lord Mayor Zalepa’s response to my question at the recent Virgil village meeting. I submitted the question on behalf of Seniors for Climate in Niagara.

My question was based on observing that although the town’s Climate Change Adaptation Plan was approved in 2022, nothing much has been done to implement it. I therefore asked: “When will the Lord Mayor and Council prioritize the official plan’s targets for “environment”?”

As you reported, Zalepa answered that the climate change co-ordinator position (to advance the climate action plan) has been filled as of Monday, Feb. 3 (the day of the meeting).

This was good news because the position was not funded in the 2023 budget, and although approved in the 2024 budget, it wasn’t filled until 2025. This delay demonstrates that for a full two years the town’s leadership has been content to deprioritize action on one of the most pressing concerns of our era.

At the meeting, Zalepa

went on to say that the town has 27 climate change items in various stages of completion. That sounded good, and I was curious to get a better understanding of what it meant, so I turned to Coun. Sandra O’Connor for help.

She explained: “Pages 16 to 19 of the climate change adaptation plan list six goals with a combined total of 27 actions. These, I assume, are what Zalepa was referring to. Of these actions, two are on target. As far as I know, the remainder haven’t been started.

NOTL’s strategic plan lists several other environmental initiatives that have not yet been started.

Many municipalities are working consistently to make life in their communities healthier, safer and more sustainable in the face of climate change. Meanwhile, NOTL council has deferred and delayed. At Seniors for Climate in Niagara, we look forward to a better result during the final two years of its term.

**Lidijo Biro
Seniors for Climate in
Niagara**

Lord mayor must hear residents’ voices, not just listen

Dear editor:
Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa apparently believes that the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is listening to the concerns being expressed by its taxpayers. And in fairness to the mayor, he is speaking to residents at open houses being held in the various communities encompassed by the municipality.

However, the actions of the mayor, most members of council and town staff over the past two plus years make it clear that they’re either not hearing what residents are saying or don’t care.

It galls me to read that the mayor is gung-ho about updating the town’s official plan, when he, council and staff have consistently ignored the current one. If they had respected the spirit and letter of our official



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

plan, the Parliament Oak School would still be standing and the land on which it sat would still be zoned institutional.

Implying that the rezoning of the property and subsequent demolition of the building, along with other egregious planning decisions made by the town, were OK because “you’ve got an application that’s

somewhat not in the rules, but the professional planners think it might be in alignment (with provincial guidelines)” is not on. It’s wrong and it sets a precedent that I believe endangers the future of NOTL.

A few weeks ago, Coun. Erwin Wiens commented on a number of things that NOTL will need in the future, which he believes increased development could support. One of those things was a new high school. But instead of standing firm against rezoning the Parliament Oak site and questioning whether there were options for the building to be repurposed as a high school, he supported a proposal to build a luxury hotel on the land. Go figure.

Neither the hotel, nor the new condo apartments on Mary and King streets,

will be harmonious with the residential community that they will overshadow. They will put NOTL at risk of losing its unique charm and historic feel, qualities that have helped to make our town a popular tourist destination and a great place to live.

All this, and yet another significant municipal tax increase is coming — despite the new revenue coming into town coffers as a result of the accommodation tax.

I’d hoped for more from the current council. Now I worry that the updates being considered to the official plan can only make matters worse and that there is little residents can do or say that will cause the current mayor and council to change course.

**Terry Davis
NOTL**



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NOTL has **no plans** to buy only Canadian

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

While the City of Welland has introduced a temporary rule to prioritize Canadian-made goods in the city's purchases due to tariff concerns, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is not considering a similar shift in its procurement policy.

But the town is closely monitoring the situation and remains focused on supporting its businesses, said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa in an interview with The Lake Report.

Canada and the U.S. agreed to delay imposing 25 per cent tariffs on each other's imports for 30 days on Monday.

Procurement changes are a long-term consideration and any significant updates require a public process, Zalepa said.

Some municipalities, like Welland, may have options within their bylaws to act quickly, he said.

In NOTL, changes to the procurement bylaw would need to be carefully reviewed and involve community input, said Zalepa.



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa says while the town is encouraging people to shop locally amid U.S. tariff threats, the town has no plan to switch to Canadian-only purchasing. FILE

"That'd be a more long-term reaction — if we had to," he said.

Instead, the town's economic development staff, led by Ashleigh Myers, have been collecting data on local businesses that export to the U.S., to gain a better understanding of how to offer support if the situation evolves, he said.

The town's chief administrative officer Bruce Zvani-

ga has also been discussing the tariff threat at meetings with CAOs of the other 11 Niagara municipalities, with their last meeting Feb. 5.

Living in a border town has left residents and businesses particularly affected, he said.

The proximity of the Queenston-Lewiston border makes the tariff situation more personal for residents — many of which have

family in the U.S. or work across the border, said Zalepa.

"It's just more visible for us," he said.

Zalepa said he hasn't heard any push from residents for a policy change like Welland's, or for any change at all. But the town is prepared to ask the province or federal government for help if needed.

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MP Baldinelli talks politics at winter skate

Andrew Hawlitzky
The Lake Report

Tony Baldinelli hosted his second annual Winter Whirl Ice Skating event at Wayne Gretzky Estates this Sunday, discussing the importance of community fun and some exclusive insight into federal politics.

The skating event was Baldinelli's initiative to bring Niagara residents together for a fun day of casual skating and a live performance amid national issues impacting the region, including Trump's tariff threat.

Families and locals — including NOTL mayor Gary Zalepa — enjoyed the free admission, hot chocolate and baked goods.

Alyssa Cross, a competitive figure skater, coach and actor from the Niagara Centre Skating Club, delivered a standout performance that captivated the crowd. With graceful precision and effortless control, she glided across the ice executing spins and jumps that took full advantage of her skill and artistry.

Baldinelli warmly welcomed the chilly attendees



MP Tony Baldinelli, third from left, held a free skate day on Sunday. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

as he introduced the event. "What better way to celebrate being with family and friends and being out together, skating on a beautiful winter day?" Baldinelli said.

Away from the rink, Baldinelli addressed national concerns in an exclusive conversation with The Lake Report/Niagara Now.

Despite certain positive statistics coming to light, like Canada's unemployment rate decreasing to 6.6 per cent in January, Baldinelli pointed out there is still considerable work to do federally and locally. "One in seven people

in Niagara are using food banks," said Baldinelli.

In 2024, the number of Niagara Falls residents relying on Project SHARE increased by 136 per cent.

Baldinelli criticized the federal response to Trump's tariff threats, questioning why it took U.S. pressure for the Liberals to act on cross-border drug trafficking.

"The fentanyl situation is completely unacceptable. We've been talking about these steps for years."

He suggested that proactive Conservative policies could have shut down Trump's tariff threats before they started.

Baldinelli defended Pierre Poilievre's refusal to receive classified briefings on foreign interference, which is customary for the opposition leader, saying it reflects an issue with national transparency rather than a political stunt.

The MP said if he were in Poilievre's shoes, he'd be taking the same action, and stood firm that foreign threats to Canada should be fully disclosed.

"All we want are the names. And why aren't those names public in the first place?" said Baldinelli.

andrew@niagaranow.com

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the care and support each resident needs so they don't have to worry about moving again," says Cynthia Hare.

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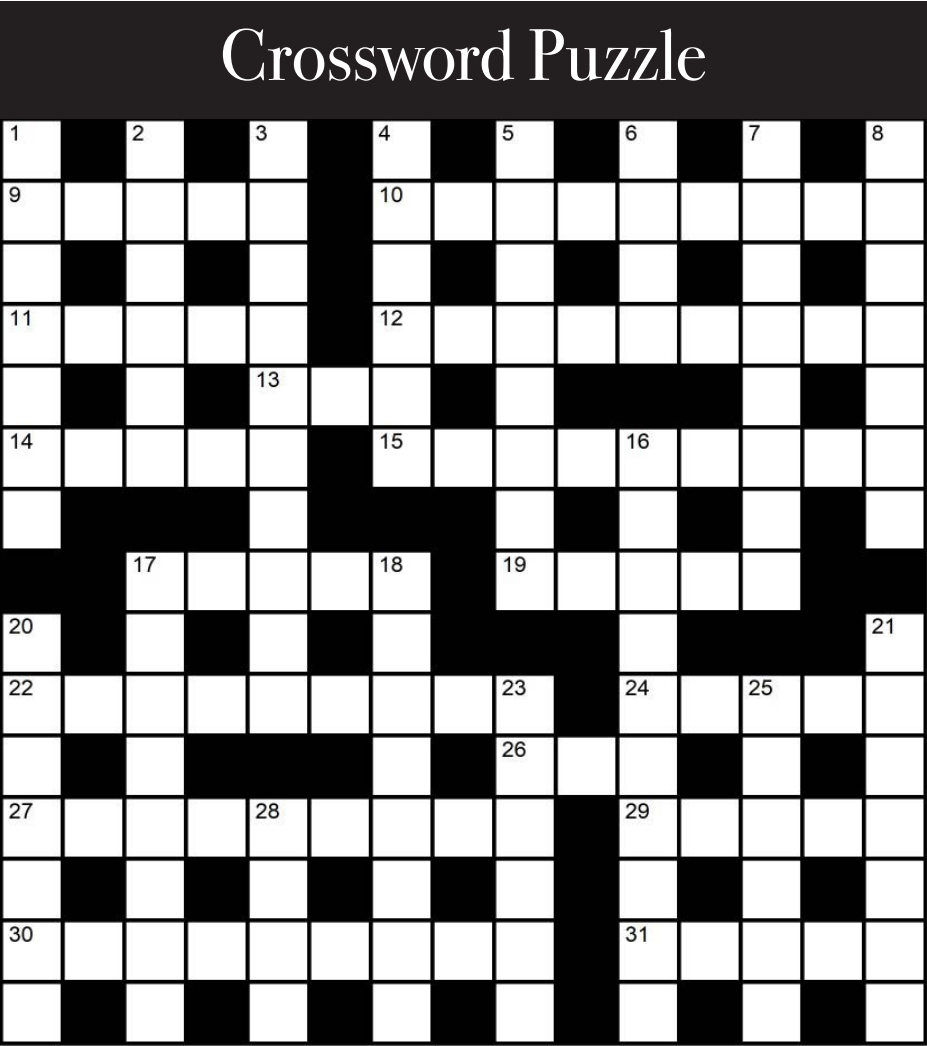
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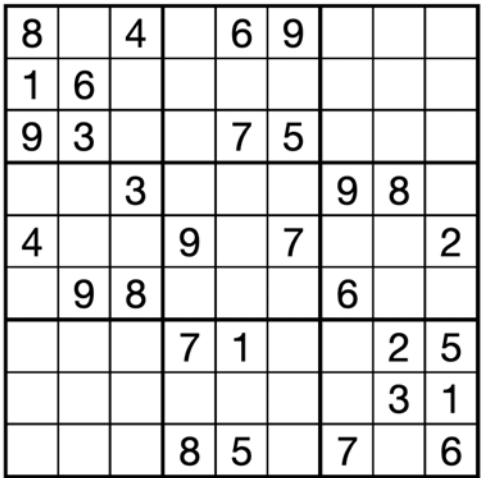
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- Across**
- 9. Inverted slow-mover (5)
 - 10. Hyped too high (9)
 - 11. Carton containing other cartons (5)
 - 12. Exciting experience (9)
 - 13. Teetotal (3)
 - 14. Once the subject of a financial bubble (5)
 - 15. House of worship (9)
 - 17. Explode (5)
 - 19. It's white for a new Pope (5)
 - 22. Construction sites with slipways (9)
 - 24. Informal greeting (3,2)
 - 26. Temporary home for many serious cases (1-1,1)
 - 27. Most employees think this of themselves (9)
 - 29. Goes for gold? (5)
 - 30. Lofty (9)
 - 31. Military subdivisions (5)
- Down**
- 1. Dates (7)
 - 2. Backpackers' stopover (6)
 - 3. Neither you nor me but the other guy (5,5)
 - 4. Sudden attacks (6)
 - 5. Portions (8)
 - 6. Left behind after a cat vanishes (4)
 - 7. Conflict (8)
 - 8. Stuck redhead goes crazy (7)
 - 16. Pleasant mood (4,6)
 - 17. Beneficiary of a Biblical miracle (5,3)
 - 18. Corrida star (8)
 - 20. Soften minced sausage (7)
 - 21. Hold (7)
 - 23. The "Ice Age" 9 Across (6)
 - 25. Advantageous to both sides (3-3)
 - 28. Harassed persistently (4)

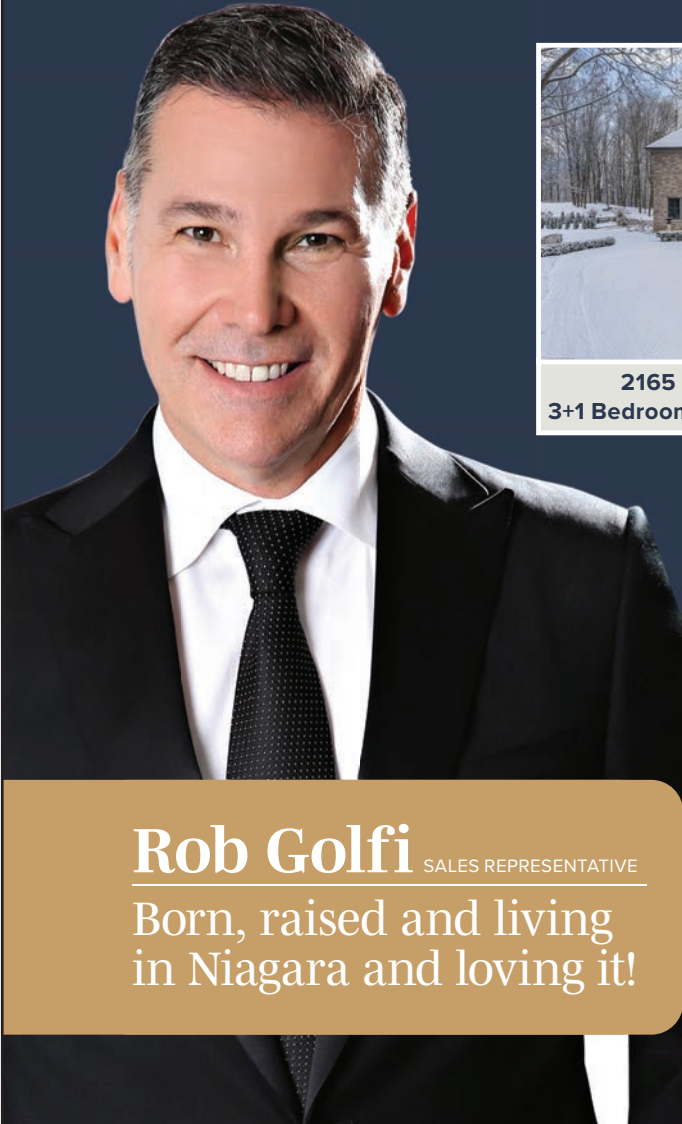
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Last issue's answers



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EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM

A Love of Friendship, c. 1828


This week's image shows a classic Valentine from the 1900s. Unfortunately, finding Valentines from the 1820s can be tricky. We have included the image to help showcase a beautiful poem by Eliza Henry, daughter of the lighthouse keeper Dominic Henry, and War of 1812 heroine Mary Henry. She wrote this poem in 1828 for her friends Agnes McEwan and Elijah Lyman. The three pals would sit under a thorn tree in her garden and sing together in the pleasant moments of friendship. The poem was a beautiful token of love towards one's friends. Happy Valentine's Day!

*When you to your friends do return
Will you ever think of me
Will you think of this garden so pleasant and green
And, likewise this little thorn tree.*

*Though Rivers and mountains should us divide
My thoughts will oft' wonder to thee
With pleasure I'll think of the moments I've passed
With you under the little thorn tree.*


*And when to the house of God I go
Upon my bended knee
Will I pray that my friend may enjoy as good health
As he now does beneath the thorn tree.*

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Exciting new shrubs for your garden



GROWING TOGETHER

Joanne Young
Columnist

Are you looking for something new and exciting in your garden this year? Here are a few new varieties that are a must-have for your garden.

Bubbly Wine weigela
(*Weigela florida* 'Bubbly Wine')

You are going to love Bubbly Wine weigela. There is just so much colorful detail packed into each leaf.

Its bright yellow and green variegation make the perfect statement for the front of the border as edging or as a low hedge.

A sprinkle of pale orchid, trumpet-shaped blooms arrive in the late spring complementing the burgundy stems, drawing our eyes to them.

It's slow-growing, compact habit makes it an easy-care plant. Its flowers attract bees and butterflies as well as hummingbirds.

Bubbly Wine grows best in a light shade to full sun location. It works great in a shrub border, planted in groupings and in containers.



Pinky Winky Prime panicle hydrangea. JOANNE YOUNG

Its flowers are best pruned immediately after flowering. Growing only 18 to 30 inches high and wide, they can add colour to any sized garden.

Pinky Winky Prime panicle hydrangea
(*Hydrangea paniculata* 'ILVOHPPRM')

Can there possibly be room for another new cultivar of hydrangea? Sure, why not?

Pinky Winky Prime in an improved cultivar of ... you guessed it, Pinky Winky.

It is a panicle-type hydrangea with large cone-like clusters of flowers. Pinky Winky Prime has truly massive clusters of white blooms that set it apart from other recent introductions.

The lower florets start to age to a deep dusty-rose pink colour leaving the tip of the panicles with white florets, giving it a unique look.

While other plants are going smaller, they have gone big with Pinky Winky Prime hydrangea. It grows to be six to eight feet in height and width.

It's the perfect size for use

as a specimen or a hedge, and with its incredible colour show, it'll be the talk of the town.

Scentara Double Blue lilac
(*Syringa hyacinthiflora* 'Scentara Double Blue')

Tie your shoes tight — the fragrance of this lilac will knock your socks off!

The species of *Syringa hyacinthiflora* (hyacinth-like fragrance) is the queen of them all when it comes to fragrance and Scentara Double Blue the most fragrant lilac yet!

The cool purple blooms take on a blue tone in the spring sunshine, each one full of petals for a delicate, seashell-like effect.

This very heavy bloomer exhibits excellent disease resistance and a handsome, appealing shape that will look right at home in your landscape.

Scentara Double Blue will grow to be eight to 10 feet high and wide and does best in full sun or a light shade.

Fizzy Mizzy sweetspire
(*Itea virginica* 'SMNIVMM')

Sweetspire is an adaptable and versatile native shrub

that will grow in sun or shade and in regular or wet soils.

Their spikes are fragrant flowers are always a welcomed feature in mid to late spring. The cultivar Fizzy Mizzy adds a new look to these shrubs.

Unlike other sweetspire, whose blooms cascade downward, Fizzy Mizzy has flower spikes that stand upright in an exceptional and long-blooming display.

Fizzy Mizzy is a compact grower, standing two to three feet tall and wide and has thick, dark green leaves that show off the fragrant white blooms appearing in late spring and will put on a fall show turning shades of burgundy and red.

The blooms attract pollinators to the garden, but deer find them unappealing!

Fizzy Mizzy itea is one of the most shade tolerant of shrubs, though flowering and fall colour will be best with at least some sun.

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.

Obituary

Margaret Catling



CATLING, Margaret Elaine (née Boyer)
June 24, 1944 – February 9, 2025

Margaret Catling passed away peacefully on Sunday, February 9, 2025, at Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington. She was predeceased by her beloved husband, Paul Catling (2021), and her parents, Pansy (2003) and Kenneth (1993).

Margaret is lovingly remembered by her brother Murray (Viivi) of Burlington, her brother-in-law Michael Catling (Ruby), as well as her many cherished nieces and nephews.

Born in Toronto, Margaret dedicated her career to education as a long-time teacher with the Toronto-Scarborough Board of Education. Following retirement, she and Paul settled in Niagara-on-the-Lake, where they built lasting friendships and enjoyed the beauty of the region.

In accordance with Margaret's wishes, private family arrangements have been made. Cremation has taken place, and her final resting place will be Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com.

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