Vol. 8, Issue 3

Canada's most-decorated community newspaper

January 23, 2025

U.S. tariffs on wine would be 'devastating,' says export manager

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

U.S. tariffs would have a devastating economic effect on Niagara-on-the-Lake's wineries, says Pillitteri Estate Winery's export manager, Jared Goerz, and at his winery, they're trying to figure out how to brace for impact.

After U.S. President Donald Trump's inauguration on Monday, assuming his second term at the White House, the new leader of America held off on issuing an executive order to levy tariffs on Canada — only to later say he wants to place the 25 per cent tariffs by Feb. 1.

In response, Ontario Premier Doug Ford said all alcoholic beverages will be pulled from LCBO shelves if the tariffs are placed.

The United States is the largest consuming market of wine globally, making for an extremely competitive market for Canadian wineries like Pillitteri, Goerz said in an interview.

Continued on Page 2

Icewine Village brings the chill

Iconic NOTL festival returns for second weekend Jan. 25 and 26



Wesley Driedger, 5, and his sister Olivia, 9, make a new friend on Queen Street — Frosty the Snowman, looking extra icy on Sunday. Find more photos and read about the Icewine Village festival on Page 4. The festival continues this weekend. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Extreme cold threatens grape buds

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The unpredictability of extreme cold weather conditions in Ontario, such as the polar vortex that hit town this week, is creating new challenges for Niagara grape growers — from reduced icewine production to costly adaptations like wind machines, say some in NOTL's grape growing industry.

a unique microclimate that lets grape growers cultivate varieties of grapes that are more sensitive to the cold than others in vineyards elsewhere in the world.

It's designated as prime agricultural land with restrictions on development, allowing grape growing to thrive, said Jamie Slingerland, director of viticulture at Pillitteri Estates Winery. Niagara-on-the-Lake's

The Niagara region has proximity to Lake Ontario rieties, like Merlot, should and the Niagara Escarpment creates warmer conditions in town compared to inland areas of the region.

> Growers select grape varieties based on how they tolerate the cold, market demand and the ability to grow a diverse portfolio of reds and whites for wineries.

More cold-hardy hybrid and vinifera grapes can be grown further from the lake, while the most sensitive vabe grown closer to the lake, where temperatures are more moderate.

However, with climate change causing a rise in extreme weather events and conditions, growers aren't getting the more consistent cold-weather temperatures they need to do their work properly.

"We've seen less oppor-

Continued on Page 6



Growers aren't getting the more consistent cold-weather temperatures they need for proper harvest. PAIGE SEBURN





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Still some time to get ahead of tariffs

Continued from Front Page

In Canada, its competitive edge is icewine, he said.

"That being said, without having that aggressive price point and sharp margins, we really just die on the shelf down there," Goerz said.

Because the process of actually shipping wine has multiple steps, the price to do so becomes quite expensive. With a 25 per cent tariff, sales to the United States would become untenable, Goerz said.

In preparation for the worst, Pillitteri has started planning what to do when the tariffs hit.

"I would say anything is possible at this point, we're certainly planning around it because we have to take things at face value," Goerz said.

One possible way to mitigate large losses is to prepare holiday sales early.

Because the U.S. purchases Canadian wine mostly around Christmas time, wineries have until around July 1 to get things shipped, Goerz said.

"So even if the tariffs were coming into play let's



Jamie Slingerland, director of viticulture at Pillitteri Estates Winery, drives a grape picker. The winery is one of the top exporters of icewine to the U.S. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

say on Feb. 1, we would still have a little bit of time to race against the clock to either get wine there before the tariffs come into play or hold on tight until it gets dealt with," he said.

In response to Ford's promise to stop the sale of American alcohol, Goerz pointed out the trade imbalance between our two countries.

Canada brought in around \$600 million worth of American wine in 2023,

compared to roughly \$12 million worth of Canadian wine going to the U.S., Goerz said.

"In the wine world, it really is an imbalance in favour of the Americans," he said.

In terms of what action governments on this side of the border should take, Goerz hopes there will be programs put in place to balance the losses.

"It would just be to negate the tariff hit, to cancel out the tariffs," he said.

"In addition to that, they would discuss and announce things in advance so the businesses could plan around it. It would be nice to know with a little bit of confidence that there is a plan in place," Goerz said.

If anything, he said he hopes the potential tariffs inspire Canadians to buy more VQA wines.

"That's really the biggest help that anybody can provide us."

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'We won't be able to save anything,' says resident after town settles with Hummel

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The settlement reached between the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and developer Rainer Hummel, which will allow the historic property at 187 Queen St. to be divided into two lots, is a waste of all the hard work put into preserving its heritage, says resident Gracia Janes.

The property, known as the site of the Crysler-Burroughs house, has had a heritage designation under the Ontario Heritage Act for 23 years and the home itself has existed in Old Town for more than two centuries.

During a special council meeting on Jan. 14, councillors went into a closed-session discussion for half an hour, then emerged to vote in favour of a settlement with Hummel to sever the property's land.

Janes, past president of the NOTL Conservancy, presented against the land severance at an August committee of adjustment meeting and expressed her disappointment about the settlement in an interview with The Lake Report.

"This was the final round in trying to protect the heritage of our town," Janes

"We've spent so many years, not just the conservancy or the foundation, but the staff and councillors of past days have worked hard to protect our heritage."

Councillors are ignoring the fact that the settlement will set a new precedent in



The Crysler-Burroughs house has occupied a part of Queen Street since 1822. FILE

what protection heritage properties have against developers, Janes said.

"From now on, we won't be able to save anything," she said.

Coun. Gary Burroughs, former owner of the heritage home, voted against the severance.

"I feel I didn't do enough back when I designated the property in 2002. I thought it was protected and, obviously, it wasn't," Burroughs told The Lake Report.

Burroughs applied to have the property designated under the Ontario Heritage Act while he was the homeowner.

"Personally, I feel to blame for what's happened," he said.

Janes said Burroughs did everything correctly when he applied to have the property designated.

After meeting with the tribunal on Tuesday, Hummel told The Lake Report he is pleased with the settlement

"It was basically what we

asked for originally, so why wouldn't I be fine with it?" he said.

Burroughs thinks the property will possibly be put up for sale, he said.

"Rainer told us he's not doing it — he just has (the severance) designed and wants the approval to do it," he said.

Hummel said he does not wish to confirm anything Burroughs said.

When asked if he could confirm his next steps with the property, Hummel said, "Not at this point, no."

The controversial severance plan was originally approved by the town's planning committee and then defeated in a tie vote held on July 30.

The town's committee of adjustment then rejected the plan in August.

Karen Taylor-Jones, a lifelong NOTL resident, also made a presentation against the severance at the August meeting

In an interview with The Lake Report, Taylor-Jones

said the settlement was a complete disappointment.

Dissatisfied with how council is currently running, Taylor-Jones said the severance has inspired her to possibly run for council in the next election, scheduled for 2026.

"I'm definitely tempted," she said.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, who voted in favour of allowing the severance, said he was "not prepared" to pay large legal fees at the Ontario Land Tribunal to fight the land severance application.

In September, councillors were advised by legal counsel to settle with Hummel.

Both the town and Hummel finalized the settlement on Tuesday.

After voting in favour of the settlement, allowing for a land severance and a rezoning bylaw amendment, council discussed a heritage designation bylaw the town will introduce to the public in February.

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Chamber seeks nominations for Spirit Awards

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The annual Spirit of Awards is a night to celebrate the individuals in our community who make Niagaraon-the-Lake so great.

Hosted by the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, also known simply as the Spirit Awards, the 2024 awards are accepting nominations until Jan. 31 for all categories.

Categories include the Dan Patterson Award for Youth Leadership, the Community Leadership Award, the Business of the Year Award, the Peter Ling Award for Business Leadership, the Celia Liu



Laurie Harley was named NOTL's Citizen of the Year at the Spirit Awards in 2024. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Award for Excellence in Hospitality and Tourism, the Entrepreneurial Spirit Award, the Christopher Newton Award for Arts and Culture, the Outstanding Achievement in Agriculture Award and the Chamber of Commerce Award.

Nominations for individuals, businesses and organizations are available on the chamber website and are open to any residents or businesses operating within

the municipal boundary, or an employee working at a NOTL business.

Businesses and individuals can be nominated for one or more award, but self-nominations will be disqualified.

Winners announced at this year's celebration on March 6 at White Oaks Resort will follow last year's list of esteemed recipients including Laurie Harley, Huebel Grapes Estates, Andorlie Hillstrom, Karrie Galvin, Sarah Kaufman, Rob and Danielle Begin, Michaiah Ivri, Vintage Hotels, Tim Jennings and Paul MacIntyre.

To access the nomination form, visit chambernotl. com/notlspiritawards.



Icewine Village offers up some delicious pairings

Staff
The Lake Report

This week's polar vortex may have brought a bitter cold into this part of the Niagara peninsula, but for the folks who were out on Queen Street this past weekend, it was all about revelling in everything that can make winter a delight.

The annual Icewine Festival made its return to Niagaraon-the-Lake for its 30th year, turning the town's downtown core into a cozy village for warming up, enjoying hot food and desserts from local vendors and sampling cocktails and some of NOTL's most popular icewines — with free entry.

This was the first of what is a two-weekend affair, starting Jan. 18 and 19, and continuing this weekend on Jan. 25 and 26.

The festival got to a wet start on Saturday with pouring rain for a portion of the day, but Sunday welcomed more scenic snowy weather.

"It was snowy and beautiful and there were a lot of people around," said Kathy Weiss, executive director of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, which puts on the annual Icewine Village in Old Town.

More than a dozen wineries were on Queen Street serving up glasses of their house icewines, vintages from previous seasons — this year's harvest of icewine grapes has already been completed and NOTL wineries will be releasing 2025's vintages later this year.

Guests of all ages lined up for hot grilled cheese sandwiches from Cheese Secrets, tried pulled pork parfaits made in martini glasses, sampled cocktails as part of a competition outside the old Court House and had traditional maple taffy.

To beat the cold, the village had bonfires and warming bubbles fashioned to look like snowglobes for festivalgoers to warm up in while others enjoyed watching master carvers make festive ice sculptures.

Top: Eric Mealind from Cheese Secrets makes up a helping of maple taffy for six-year-olds Black and Liliana Marharyta. Right: Ice carver Rich Reinelt works his magic on Queen Street, taking his chainsaw to a block of ice, shaping it into a smiling snowman, complete with a top hat. Bottom left: Cheese Secrets co-owner Xavier Allard is hard at work grilling up dozens of grilled cheese sandwiches, with generous helpings of cheese. Bottom right: VIP festivalgoers seek respite from Sunday's chilly weather inside a heated snowglobe on Queen Street. DAVE VAN DE LAAR









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Maintaining wind machines presents challenges

Continued from Front Page

tunity to pick icewine," he said

Growers have adapted though, using more mechanized harvesting to quickly collect the limited icewine crop.

Grape buds gradually acclimate to colder temperatures and have better wind tolerance at the peak of the winter and have less tolerance at the start and end of the season.

Growers use large wind machines to draw warm air from above and mix it with the cold air near the ground, raising temperatures by 4 to 5 C.

"I've been using wind machines for about 15, 18 years," said Coun. Erwin Wiens, who is also a grape grower.

"It makes all the difference," he said.

But, maintaining and repairing the machines in cold conditions can be challenging.

"Some of them, for some



The cold weather might be good for icewine grapes, but it has a damaging effect on budding vines. PAIGE SEBURN

reason, they just can't get them started. Other times, a battery will die out unexpectedly," said Slingerland.

Even though he makes sure to carry a booster cable and power pack with him, sometimes it's not enough. Fortunately, he said, the winery does get help from the team at Lakeview Vineyard Equipment.

"They'll have a crew in the middle of the night that'll drive out to that machine," said Slingerland.

The Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute at Brock University provides cold injury testing and monitoring services for grape growers, funded by the Grape Growers of Ontario.

This allows growers to monitor weather forecasts and get on-site temperature data to determine when to turn on their wind machines.

The low-temperature exotherm percentages indicate the temperatures at which 10 per cent, 50 per cent and 90 per cent of the buds would be damaged.

"Growers don't just say: 'Ah, I think I'm going to

turn it on,' because those machines are very expensive to operate, said Slingerland.

Since the machines require significant fuel and operating costs, growers still aim to activate them proactively — before temperatures drop too low.

Beyond what extreme cold weather means for growing and harvesting grapes, it also affects the traffic of visitors who come to NOTL's wineries.

Nearly half of all wine sales occur at the retail stores inside wineries, which Slingerland said highlights the importance of the experience wineries provide

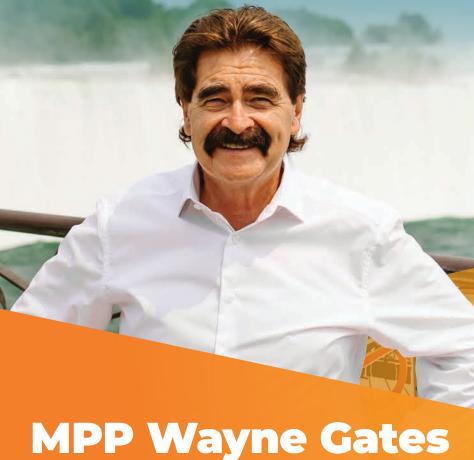
Sure, there are countless Chardonnays worldwide.

But visitors are drawn to wineries for the unique experiences they offer, not just for the wine, he said.

"That's why it's such a delicate situation if something happens," he said about extreme cold weather. "It really hits us."

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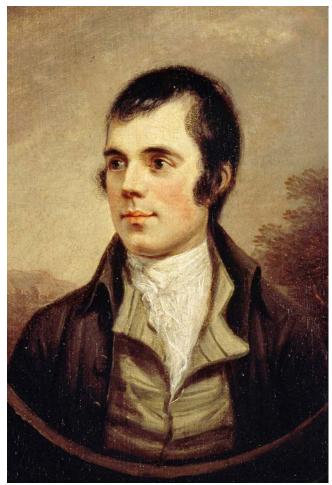
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Inaugural Robbie Burns night supports kids



Robbie Burns was a Scottish poet and lyricist. He is widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland and is celebrated worldwide. The first Robbie Burns night at the NOTL Sailing Club is Saturday. WIKIMEDIA

Julia Sacco Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Sailing Club is hosting its inaugural Robbie Burns night in support of a worthy cause.

The three-course meal featuring highland dancers, a piper, a silent auction and live entertainment is set to begin at 6 p.m. on Saturday at the club.

"It's a beautiful building with a beautiful view of Toronto. At night it's lovely out there, so we thought we should use that," co-organizer Kathy Edwards told The Lake Report.

Edwards and her cofounder Lisa Brillon had no problem selling tickets fast at \$70 per person and all proceeds raised will go to the junior sailing program along with No One Goes Hungry, an organization that provides meals to teens.

The junior sailing program is funded through a bursary which supports

a number of kids to go through the three week sailing program.

"There are kids in our area where parents want to put their kids in something but they can't come up with the funds," Edwards said.

Edwards has been a volunteer with No One Goes Hungry for the past four years, cooking close to 2,000 meals once a month for three high schools in the area, she said.

"That's totally run on donations, they aren't funded by anything," she said.

If NOTLers missed the chance to grab tickets, the organization has a GoFund-Me page accepting monetary donations at https://www.gofundme.com/f/fmu5hf-no-one-goes-hungry.

Details on how to enrol in the junior sailing program is also available on the sailing club's website.

As well, if anyone wishes to donate to the Robbie Burns silent auction, contact organizers by calling or texting 289-686-9604.



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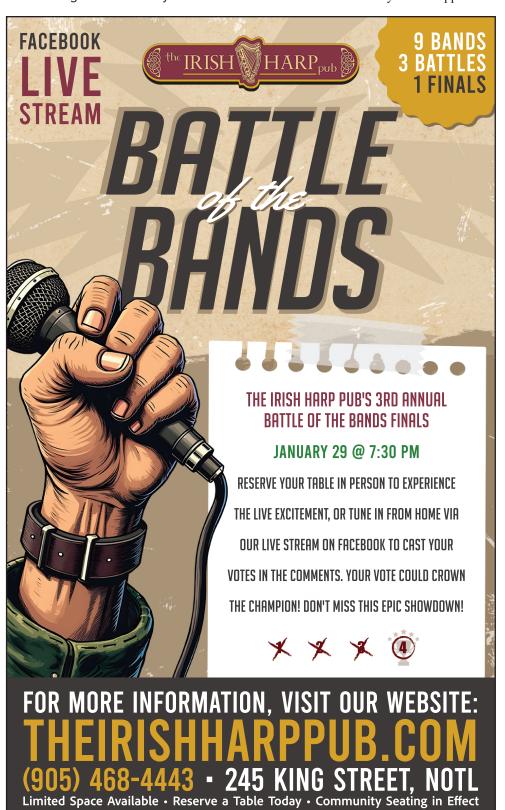
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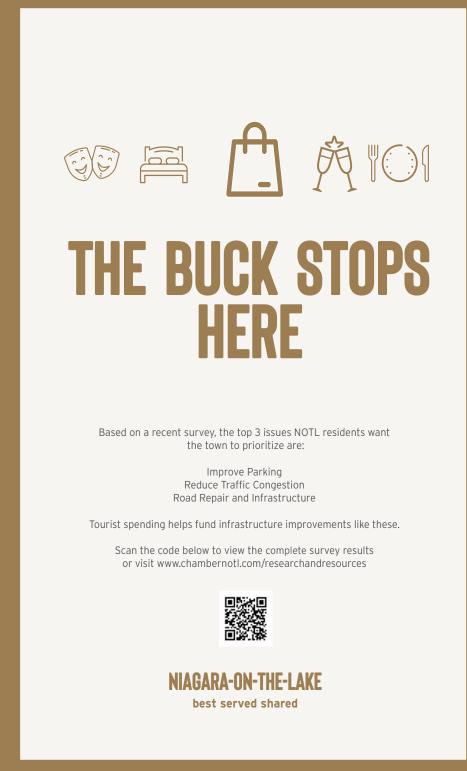
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New NOTL 'Haven' for office workers

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

When Reggie Tan and Madaline Zannes moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake from Toronto last year, they wanted to find a way to separate their work from their home life.

Tan, a marketing officer, and Zannes, a lawyer, both work from home. And they noticed NOTL lacked a modern co-working space — an idea that has grown in popularity post-COVID with more people now working from home.

"It was very difficult to find an office space," said Zannes. "A desk, even. It was pretty impossible."

Then, an aha moment — they seized on the opportunity to fill that gap.

The couple has now launched NOTL's first co-working office, Haven Workspace.

Located at 242 Mary St. beside Avondale on the second floor of the Garrison Plaza, the office serves as a professional hub for anyone who is looking for a place to work, Zannes said.

"When you work remote-



Haven founders Reggie Tan and Madaline Zannes. The new office space is open for business. PAIGE SEBURN

ly, it's great to be at home and all, but there comes a point where you need to get out and get productive," she said.

The office is open Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and offers free parking, internet, meeting rooms and collaborative areas.

There is also a dedicated desk rental available, allowing workers to store their belongings in a locked space.

Zannes said the coworking space can also be helpful with professional networking, as working from home limits opportunities to connect with others both within and beyond your industry.

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Haven also aims to be more than a co-working space, hosting weekly events and discussions.

Tuesday Mixers at 6 p.m. is a weekly networking event for members to connect, share ideas and collaborate in a casual setting.

On Thursdays at 6:30 p.m., there's Haven Keynotes, where experts host AI-focused lectures on trending topics.

Coming up on Jan. 23 is a discussion on AI's impact on careers and on Jan. 30, tips on integrating AI for business efficiency, hosted by Tan.

Memberships are now available in tiers, with perks for early supporters.

Those perks include dis-

counted rates and an NFC metal card, a smart business card engraved with your name. It can be tapped on a smartphone to share your personalized digital business card and profile.

For information on membership rates, people can chat with Garrison, the AI assistant designed to help members learn more about Haven. It's named after Garrison Plaza.

Garrison provides instant answers on amenities, pricing, availability and more through WhatsApp and the Telegram app.

To connect with Garrison, visit havenworkspace.ca, scroll down to the section titled "Meet Garrison, Your AI Assistant" and click the box to start a chat on either WhatsApp or Telegram.

With plans to stay in Niagara-on-the-Lake, not only as a business but also as residents, Zannes and Tan are looking forward to opening up more Haven locations in town in the future.

For those interested in joining, or booking a tour of the office, visit havenwork-space.ca.

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Town partners with youth collective to expand programs

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Friday nights at the local community centre just got a lot more exciting for Niagara-on-the-Lake's school-aged population.

Thanks to a collaboration between the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the NOTL Youth Collective, there's now a free, weekly, indoor place to play sports like volleyball, pickleball and more for kids in town — and the people behind this program want to make it stick.

Caroline Polgrabia, chair of the collective's planning committee, is developing a plan to figure out what activities and services young people in Niagara-on-the-Lake are lacking.

The plan will also look at what partnerships the collective should develop with local groups and organizations and create a full calendar of activities and events for kids.

The open-court gym nights haven't yet been finalized as a weekly event -Polgrabia says the collective



Kids in Niagara-on-the-Lake can come out to the community centre on Friday evenings to play volleyball, pickleball and other sports inside the gym. FILE

is working with the town to keep them running until March Break and free of charge for the time being.

After the pandemic, Niagara-on-the-Lake parents saw an urgent need to help kids reconnect socially and move away from screens, Polgrabia said.

Teaming up with Cornerstone Community Church,

the collective launched youth programs in January 2023, offering after-school activities, skills workshops and celebration events for holidays such as Halloween, Diwali and Chinese New Year.

The collective's programs have grown to meet the needs of different age groups with the support of the town's parks and recreation division.

What started as a volunteer-run initiative now includes administrative support to help with the growing number of kids now taking part in the activities and events.

At a committee of the whole planning meeting on Jan. 14, Polgrabia talked about the distinct needs of three age groups of children taking part in after-school activities.

Toddlers, she said, need specialized care from professionals, while kids in grades 3 to 7 benefit from a mix of structure and flexibility. Kids in grades 7 and over, meanwhile, need an open space to use for independent activities.

Coun. Adriana Vizzari praises the collective's growth and its efforts to clarify the needs of each age range, noting the value of these insights for the parks and recreation department.

Polgrabia is working with the town to create a more structured model that relieves pressure on parents who are organizing the after-school activities, with

support from staff members like Emily Kujbida, recreation program co-ordinator and Kevin Turcotte, manager of parks and recreation, who "have been instrumental in supporting these efforts," she said.

As the youth collective enters its third year, it's focused on building and keeping sustainable partnerships within NOTL to continue hosting events and activities.

Its holiday open court program saw a turnout of 24 and 22 participants on two Friday nights, with minimal promotion beforehand.

Coun. Maria Mavridis commented on the Friday night drop-ins at the community centre, where activities like pickleball and volleyball energized the space.

"The community centre was alive and vibrant," said Mavridis. "The mission was to prove that there's a need for it — and I think there definitely is a need for it."

Alongside having a space to play, Coun. Gary Burroughs said young people also need better transportation options.

Polgrabia raised concerns

about the current on-demand transit system, with anecdotal issues including her children being stranded due to unreliable service, while alternatives like Uber are more expensive than public transit.

She said the NOTL Youth Collective's plan to address what activities and services kids in town don't have will also look at transportation needs, challenges in education and creating a dedicated indoor space for winter activities, also aiming to use community spaces such as schools.

Despite the eagerness of partners to collaborate, Polgrabia said time and resources remain the biggest challenges.

"The biggest lesson we learned was — time is precious, particularly for families," she said.

Mavridis said town support, particularly under Kujbida's leadership, is crucial to easing this burden on parents who have been dedicating late-night hours to volunteering with the youth collective, despite the clear value of their efforts.

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Linda Fritz, Patty Garriock, Steve Hardaker, Brian Marshall, NOTL Museum, Ross Robinson, Julia Sacco, Paige Seburn, Kyra Simone, Tim Taylor, Jill Troyer, Garth Turner, Dave Van de Laar, Janice White, Joanne Young and many more members of the community



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#12: If you have unused coupons, leave them beside the items in the store so the next person can benefit.

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



Contributed by Patty Garriock

"Although wherever you are going is always in front of you, there is no such thing as only straight ahead." - Jeanette Winterson

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Angels in the snow field

A rarity for this visitor from the sunshine state — Debbie McCarthy, visiting Niagara-on-the-Lake from Florida, makes the most of Monday's snowfall, hanging out at Queen's Royal Park and making snow angels.

DAVE VAN DE LAAR



Opinion

Shooting it out with the tourist cartel



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner Columnist

We'll get to Tariff Man's impact on NOTL soon.

First, a more pressing issue. Phil's leaving. At least he wants to. Back to the womb. Oakville, of all places.

"I moved from there nine years ago and am looking to go back!" he tells me.

"Everything here caters to the tourist trade! A real town no more. I've been saying exactly the same thing (nearly exactly) as you since becoming acclimated to the town. It didn't take long. I was heartened when Betty (Disero) was voted in and perhaps a voice of reason would prevail but COVID hit in her term and she was railroaded out of office."

Too many visitors, he says. Too many Airbnb GTA refugees. Even the Upper Canada Heritage Trail is a war zone.

"In summers it can be quite onerous as you walk the trail (road) with dog in tow and compete for space against groups on e-bikes whizzing by as if it were on an amusement ride at Disney. Can't wait to move



U.S. visitors could soon be demanding — and receiving — a far bigger premium than local stores are offering, after the Trump effect on the American dollar. GARTH TURNER

out of here although I have made many friends, then come back as a tourist and rock and roll!"

What's worse than NOTL becoming a theme park?

Why, turning into a cartel, of course. David Gilchrist says it's already here, aided by the bandidos at town hall.

"The sheer hypocrisy of the owners of so many short-term rentals in our town is a travesty," he says. "Our town staff simply, for too long now, caters to the 'tourist cartel' too much and this has resulted in the loss of a town that once supported so many young families."

And let's hear from Brian Crow. He fearlessly led the Chautauqua Residents Association when it tried to stop the infectious spread of short-term rentals in that unique enclave with a few submissions to the local political gods. He lost. "We never even received a response," he adds.

The group came up with half a dozen asks: Unhosted short-term rental owners run a business, so they should pay commercial real estate taxes. The number of short-term rentals in an area should be capped (already more than 10 per cent of the homes in Chautauqua are tourist rentals), and the number of allowed guests controlled.

And, above all, the rules must be enforced. (As mentioned here last week, the feds are offering money for exactly that — Burlington is applying for it and passing a tough law banning unhosted units.)

Why are people getting steamy over this?

Like Phil, they're tired of fighting tourists for sidewalk space or trailway rights. Like Brian, they think unhosted visitor rentals hollow out a neighbourhood, commercialize houses, jack up prices and suck away potential longterm rentals.

"Chautauqua's sense of community is being eroded by non-owner-occupied short term rentals," he told the town. "Where we were once a vibrant mix of families of all ages, we are now in danger of becoming a tourist lodging destination."

Well, finally, here's a note from Sam Young, who has turned into my BFF since this pathetic column started appearing. I don't know him well, but he sounds kinda Trumpy.

"NOTL is past the point of no return for the worst. Overtourism will be its death knell. Now we are catching up with the worldwide Smash & Grab Crowd Culture. What next: A tent encampment in Simcoe Park or the Commons? It may be only months away."

Meanwhile, the swish stores on Queen Street will have to change the signs they've posted for visitors. Notes saying "American exchange rate \$1.20" are so 2024. With the Orange Guy in the White House, the greenback now equals \$1.45 — which is one heck of an incentive to cross the river and snorfle gelato.

This summer could be epic.

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

garth@garth.ca





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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Don't elected officials represent the electorate?

Dear editor

I promised my wife months ago that I would resist writing any more letters to the editor, after years of doing so.

However, after reading about the lord mayor's first open house in St. Davids ("First of Zalepa's open house sparks debate on roundabout," Jan. 16), I am once again compelled to comment.

First of all, I would like to

congratulate the lord mayor for having the intestinal fortitude to put himself out there — at the mercy of the residents.

From all indications, the meeting became a little heated during the discussion related to the infamous roundabout in St. Davids.

Several residents were very upset with this controversial issue and explanations from the lord mayor were not sufficient. It was at this point that the mayor suggested that residents could take matters into their own hands if they were not satisfied. This was the lord mayor's response:

"If you want to do something differently, you can put your name on a ballot and go knock on a bunch of doors and get yourself elected."

Wow! Is the lord mayor suggesting that if we as residents, have a personal

agenda, and want certain things accomplished, we can only do so by being on council?

I always assumed that our elected officials represent us — the electorate?

I doubt that the mayor truly meant it that way, but under the stressful atmosphere of the meeting, I will give him the benefit of the

> Buddy Andres NOTL

Patios should have to meet standard of excellence

Dear editor:

The Jan. 16 edition of The Lake Report indicated that the "patio program will stay" for as long as it takes council to approve a new permanent patio program for Queen Street.

For an initiative that was designed to help restaurants during and after COVID, from what was to be a one-year program, it has now turned into years of extensions, extensions, extensions. It does not appear that this program is about to end any time soon.

Niagara-on-the-Lake should embrace a standard of excellence instead of a standard of mediocrity.

At present, there are no outdoor patios along Queen Street that are aesthetically attractive in my opinion. Outdoor patios should complement the character of the

community and contribute to the well-known identity of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Our identity is our built heritage, beautiful annual displays along Queen Street, well-maintained gardens and parks, attractive streetscapes and many other attributes that help to make our town special.

Our identity will not be enhanced with the retention or addition of more outdoor patios along Queen Street. With no plans in place as to how many curbside patios should be permitted along Queen Street, things will only get worse. Plain and simple.

During a recent trip to Palm Springs, Calif., there are still a few patios intermittently found along Palm Canyon Drive, the main street of this city.

This community has experienced some of the same

issues that Niagara-on-the-Lake has encountered in the past. Tourism is a very important economic engine for us as well as Palm Springs.

Here, dining establishments need to apply for a permit and have it carefully reviewed by the architectural review committee.
This committee thoroughly reviews every design as well as the applicants' attention to operational standards.

Palm Springs has excellent design and operational standards for their "parklets" — that's what curbside patios are called in this city. Each business, as of October 2023, is required to pay \$1.85 per square foot per month for the privilege of having an outdoor patio on public property.

Finally, it's important to note that some of the other merchants along Palm Canyon Drive who are not involved in food services are not happy about the preferential treatment given to restauranteurs as valuable parking space is taken away for potential customers who might like to otherwise patronize their stores for business.

The town needs to carefully think about what makes Niagara-on-the-Lake special to us and others. The town needs to protect the identity of our community in the long term and continue to embrace a standard of excellence, not mediocrity.

We are not like other communities and our uniqueness should be preserved. Council needs to consider these factors when making future decisions. Enough said.

John Morley NOTL

Development issues pale in comparison to rising taxes

Dear editor:

I respectfully disagree with Kevin MacLean's contention that development pressures remain NOTL's biggest issue.

While these pressures are real and a challenge to any growing community they pale in comparison to the unsustainable tax increases imposed on us over the last few years.

Fortunately, it is not too late for council to back away from this year's proposed 14.4 per cent increase

and instruct town management to formulate a budget much closer to the current two per cent inflation rate.

In a previous letter, I

listed a number of tangible changes that could and should be implemented as part of this process ("Letter: Here's how council can avoid the 14.4 tax hike," Dec. 4, 2024). These changes would not be easy, but they are possible and absolutely essential.

Perhaps the most obvious of them is a hiring freeze and

although this has now been proposed by Coun. Wendy Cheropita, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa apparently doesn't even support this modest measure and still wants to see all positions filled.

But here's the financial reality: If the proposed increase goes through, Zalepa will have presided over the biggest three-year tax increase in the history of NOTL. A truly staggering increase of almost one-third: 32.37 per cent, to be precise.

How can anyone think this is sustainable and how can council consider it remotely acceptable to the citizens of NOTL they were elected to represent?

I would suggest that the combination of unsustainable tax increases and no serious attempts to reign in spending represents a financial crisis. I hope that a majority of council are prepared to act to restore financial sanity.

Jonathan Household Old Town



We welcome your letters

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



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style. Category: DOG TALES

In a story set in the 19th century, a mad wolf with rabies is the last fight this faithful title canine has — and now I'm crying.

Last issue: PURE BREAD

Clue: This palindromic bread is all the rage when served with vindaloo or tikka masala.

Answer: What is naan?

Answered first by: Bill Hamilton

Also answered correctly (in order) by:
Lynda Collet, Bob Wheatley, Susan Hamilton,
Claudia Grimwood, Esther VanGorder,
Maria Janeiro, Katie Reimer, Alison Parsons,
Wade Durling, Kathy Humphries, Jim Dandy,
Michelle Gallacher, Sylvia Wiens, Jeff Lake,
Gail Benjafield, Jane Morris, Catherine Clarke,
Nancy Rocca, Lynda Hosty, Marla Percy,
Udayan Sahgal, Lorna Leitner, Kristy Bareuther,
Pamela Dowling, Tuija Johansson,
Sheila Meloche, Heather Hannan,
Sue Rautenberg

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Disparities in enforcement of Building Code Act



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall Columnist

We ended last week's column (Jan. 16, "Arch-itext: Property standards and demolition by neglect") by taking a look at the potential fines detailed in the Building Code Act that could be levied against property owners who failed to comply with a binding property standards order — maximum fines that ranged from up to \$50,000 all the way to \$200,000 and an additional fine of up to \$10,000 per day for every day the offence continues after the compliance deadline included in the order.

Interestingly, the highest fines (\$100,000 for an individual and \$200,000 for a corporation) are levied

for "subsequent" offences and the act defines that as being: "For the purposes of subsections (3) and (4), an offence is a subsequent offence if there has been a previous conviction under this act."

Therefore, should an individual or corporation have been previously found guilty and fined as a result of violating the Building Code Act anywhere in Ontario, any new conviction is a "subsequent offence."

So, by way of a simple illustration, Company XYZ is issued a property standards order to correct a series of issues with a building the corporation owns, the order becomes binding and they fail to comply by the specified deadline.

Further, their failure to comply extends 20 days past the deadline included in the order.

If it is their first offence, the company can be fined a maximum of \$100,000 plus an additional \$200,000 for a total of \$300,000.

However, if it is a subsequent offence under the act, the company could be liable for fines of up to \$200,000



Another property in NOTL facing the threat of demolition by neglect is this house at 240 East & West Line, built circa 1903 — Brian Marshall says it's crumbling and derelict.

plus an additional \$200,000 for a total of \$400,000.

Now, it is my observation that, while there are large corporations who may consider these fines as the "cost of doing business," for most companies these fines are sufficiently punitive to ensure compliance.

Having established that the building code provides sufficient "teeth" to underwrite a property standards bylaw, the question then must devolve upon all facets related to the enforcement of said bylaw.

The act specifies the maximum penalty which can be applied, not the specific amount of the fine, this has been left to the discretion of the municipalities.

And it seems municipalities are all over the map — starting with silly amounts as low as \$250. In researching this question, I discovered that very few actual fines levied have been placed in the public realm — or reported on by news media.

However, I was able to ascertain that fines have been levied well into the tens of thousands of dollars — in some cases, by the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

Clearly, the province has recognized the serious nature of a conviction under the building code and has provided a sledgehammer to enforce it but, far too often, municipalities have bypassed the sledgehammer in favour of a fly swatter — something routinely ignored by those guilty of violating the law.

Moreover, in many municipalities — including Niagara-on-the-Lake — bylaw enforcement is reactive rather than proactive.

In other words, bylaw enforcement investigation in the area of property standards is initiated by complaint(s) received from concerned citizen(s). In these municipalities, there does not appear to be any type of standard procedure for non-complaint-driven review of properties by enforcement personnel.

Now, to be fair, proactive enforcement would, initially, be more labour-intensive – at least until property owners understood the higher standards of enforcement.

That said, it is obvious that teeth don't matter if you're never bit or never bit hard.

In contrast, the township of Clearview's (south of Georgian Bay) proactive enforcement measures resulted in the issuance of 44 property standards orders between May 1, 2023 and Sept. 1, 2023.

Of these orders, three were successfully appealed and, by Sept. 28, 2023 (the date of the staff report by the supervisor of bylaw enforcement, Joseph Paddock), only two orders remain in violation.

The real kicker in this report was that 12 buildings that staff noted as "dilapidated, dangerous, unsecure and vacant" were successfully dealt with — off-hand, I can personally think of far more than 12 buildings in NOTL (including a number of historic dwellings) that would fit this description but, apparently, continue to be unaddressed or unresolved.

Interestingly, some of these buildings were addressed by the property owners and, in some cases, by the municipality.

Hang in and we'll look at the powers of the municipality next week.

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

Could the avian flu, H5N1, become the next pandemic?



Dr. William Brown Columnist

Avian flu (H5N1) was considered a potential risk for a pandemic in 2019, the same year that COVID-19 burst on the scene in China and swiftly swept throughout the world, killing many millions and leaving in its wake 10 percent of the cases with an enigmatic chronic debilitating disorder called long COVID.

The toll of COVID would have been far worse without the willing acceptance by most of the public of the importance of social distancing and masking, which stemmed the spread of virus between late 2019 and early 2021 when effective vaccines became widely available and further reduced transmission of the virus and the need for COVID-related hospitalizations.

By the two-year mark, public support for social distancing and masking in public spaces and vaccines began to wane, fuelled by growing internet-fed misinformation about the need for public health restrictions, especially masking, and false claims that the vaccines were not only ineffective but associated with risky side effects.

The result was increasingly politized opposition to public health measures and vaccination programs in the face of the emergence of new variants.

For the majority, COVID has become a ho-hum affair and updated vaccines of little interest, except for the old or other higher-risk groups. But for the rest, most treat COVID as no more of a risk than the common cold and no reason to restrict their social activities.

That might change with the emergence of H5N1 as a potential threat to humans.

These days the attention of some public health experts has shifted. To quote Kai Kupferschmidt writing in Science (Dec. 13, 2024), "If the world finds itself in a flu pandemic in a few months, it won't be a big surprise. Birds have been spreading a clade of the



H5N1 avian influenza viru 2.3.4.4b around the world since 2021."

That tone is reflected in the views of many virologists and infectious disease experts who were alarmed at the spillover of H5N1 to cattle in the United States last year and subsequent spread to hundreds of farms.

There were earlier encounters with avian flu such as the 1997 H5N1 outbreak, which killed 6 of 18 infected humans who had been in contact with infected poultry. But so far, fortunately, there has been no evidence of direct human-to-human transmission.

But some experts believe it's only a matter of time before mutant versions of the H5N1 virus target humans, especially the respiratory tract, while at the same time evading the body's immune system, much as COVID did.

The virus's genome has been mapped many times. Three mutation targets stand out.

One, a polymerase enzyme, is responsible for replicating the virus, mutant versions of which might be more effective at cranking out viral copies.

A second target for mutation could be hemagglutin, which might make the virus more infectious.

The third plausible target is neuraminidase, which helps new viral buds detach from infected cells — thus spreading the infection more efficiently.

Those are the three mutant possibilities we know about, but there could be other targets we don't know about for H5N1 that could make human-to-human transmission more likely and others that might adversely affect human immunological responses to the virus.

The point is that H5N1 has moved much closer to humans through transmission to animals with which

humans are in contact on a regular basis — and might mutate to make animal-to-human transmission much easier and prompt the risk of further mutations, which could make human-to-human transmission as easy as was the case with COVID.

That would put us at risk for a second pandemic in less than a decade, and this time, the political climate has changed and might hobble our response to a possible pandemic.

For one, the new administration in the U.S. is skeptical of public health measures and vaccines in general. With COVID, at least the major players were on the same team in the urgency with which they responded in Donald Trump's first term.

Now, the National Institute of Health, which was a key player in the response to COVID, may be subject to defunding and unsettling reorganization. Making matters worse is the growing skepticism about science in general and vaccines among the public.

Corralling worldwide pandemics require cooperation and collaboration with other governments and health care agencies. Without that, it's hard to see how keeping up with changes in viruses will be possible, especially if the responsible agencies are underfunded and unsupported. None of that was in doubt with COVID but is now.

It's not just a matter of COVID or H5N1 — it's any virus that potentially could threaten humans.

Risks increase with rising numbers of humans in close contact with birds and other vectors in which reservoirs of viruses have many more opportunities to mutate their way to making the jump to humans easier and possibly opening the door to direct human-to-human transmission and even the emergence of lethal variants.

Finally, in this era of gene editing, it's easy to create more lethal, spreadable infectious agents in the lab with little investment. Imagine those tools in the hands of ISIS or other renegade parties.

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.





Wealthy developers need to be responsible and co-operative

This town has a major problem with over-running legal fee budgets supporting appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal.

I am not a NIMBY opposed to any and all future development in our town. But we should also call on wealthy land developers, especially those living right here in our community, to commit to submitting responsible planning proposals to council.

These proposals should balance off their profit motives against their neighbours' consensus aspirations, preferences and vision for our town. This town is unique in Ontario in terms of its historic character.

I also call on these developers to commit to undertaking local negotiations with council to avoid the need for referring these decisions to a provincial

Co-operation is better than antagonism and pursuing adversarial resolution approaches.

Observation: Some developers appear to be using their wealth to purchase undue influence with the provincial politicians that control the tribunal. This increases the perception that the playing field is not

Developers who invite the premier to meetings, behind their closed estate gates, provoke suspicions that the system is rigged.

> Steve McGuinness Virgil



A sonnet to bid adieu to Willow Cakes

Dear editor:

A song for the Willow, from earlier, pre-COVID times: - Fine Brush Strokes -

Butter brushed to tawny croissant tone, Early early Sunday pearly silky satin air, Willow's welcome, with a comfy wicker chair, Nice nose notes coffee's there, or will be soon, Dark and rich with lines of chocolate boon, Soft strings of music filaments aware, And nuance drawn that maybe Mozart's there, In back, assisting sotto sifts of sugar spoon. Up front, the fabled Sunday New York Times, Freshly tabled, value added from the store, All the news its layers fit, just ready for, An hour of quiet blissfull sip sublime. Apron'd Mozart says, "Sir, not open yet, But pay a smile and you may come and sit."

> **Brian Emes** Old Town

Battle of Queenston Heights Dinner with the Lord Mayor "LIVE FROM 1812" With Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa A Charity Event with the Friends of Fort George Saturday, February 1, 2025, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. Navy Hall, 305 Ricardo St, NOTL Tickets \$160 The evening will feature a 3-course meal by Events by Kristin, wines sponsored by the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake, an auction, historic artifacts on display, a cannon firing, and post-dinner entertainment. Proceeds will go to supporting 2025 Youth Staffing at Brock's Monument and Fort George. To purchase your event tickets, visit friendsoffortgeorge.square.site, email admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca, or call 905-468-6621.

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GROWING TOGETHER

Joanne Young Columnist

If you look through any gardening magazine or follow any of the top gardening blogs, you will be familiar with the term "outdoor living spaces."

In the busy world we live in and with our hectic schedules, we are all looking to have that little oasis where we can spend some time relaxing and destress-

What better place to go to than your very own backyard? With outdoor fireplaces, outdoor kitchens, and even outdoor TVs, what more do you need?

The properly designed patio or deck, or combination of both patio and deck,

home. It is that extra space that is often under-used.

I have been to so many homes where you walk into their backyards and there is absolutely nothing there. No gardens, no trees and nowhere to sit and relax.

When I ask them what they use the backyard for, the answer is often, "Well, we really don't use it for anything."

What a shame it is to have a space to enjoy the great outdoors and not make use

Before adding a deck or patio, certain things need to be considered. Here are just a few of those things to think about.

The first consideration is what you want to use that space for. Do you want just a couple of comfortable chairs or are you looking for an outdoor kitchen complete with a smoker and pizza oven?

Do you want just a dining area and barbeque area or do you like the idea of a dining and living room

Deciding on these details ahead of time is essential. I find that most people make their living spaces too small

I can't tell you how many people I have spoken with who installed a 10-by-10foot patio or deck but soon regretted their decision.

The scale of outdoor furniture and barbeques has gotten larger and larger over the years. Careful planning is needed to make sure that you have adequate space.

This is where a scaled drawing (either by hand or by computer) comes in handy. A possible scale to use would be: One-quarter inch equals one foot or half an inch equals one foot.

Draw on the outline of the house, including windows and doors and any other features such as air conditioner, meters, vents and window wells. If you already have all of your furniture pieces, take their measurements and cut out scaled templates for each piece.

If you don't have your outdoor kitchen yet, spend some time researching, get an idea of what is available and include it in your plans. You don't want to go to all that expense to find out that your deck or patio is too small to meet your needs.

We all have a need for a sense of enclosure. We all have a need to feel secure and not exposed. So, another consideration for your deck or patio area is privacy.

No one wants to be sitting out in their little oasis and be in the direct view of all the neighbours. We don't mind speaking to our neighbours in the front yard, but we prefer a bit more privacy in the backyard to sit and read our book.

Remember, with decks, they are typically a minimum of one to two feet above grade. Therefore, when you are out standing on your deck you are looking over the fence at your neighbours.

If this is an issue, you may want to consider installing a patio instead, bringing you back down to ground level. Or, you can build screens or use plant material to provide the privacy that you require.

Just make sure that you leave the space required to give you the privacy you desire.

The last consideration for this article is style. A deck or patio should echo the style of your home and/ or the style that you wish to

Just like you decorate the rooms inside your home



Consider what kind of style you want for your outdoor space. If contemporary is your look, larger rectangular pavers would complement your style. SUPPLIED

to convey a certain style, the same applies to your outdoor spaces.

If your style is more rustic, maybe flagstone is a suitable look. If contemporary is more your look, larger rectangular pavers would complement your

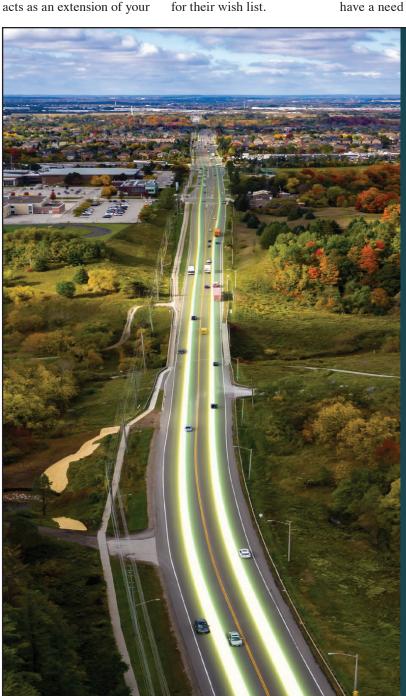
The biggest piece of advice that I can give you is to do your homework. It pays to invest in a designer who will take all of your wishes and needs and fit them into your space.

Patios and decks are one of the largest expenses you will have outside your home. When looking for a contractor, get more than one quote.

Do your homework and ask for references. Make sure that you are comfortable with who you hire. As my dad would say, "Do it right and do it once."

Happy planning.

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



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Wolves struggle in tough tournament, but remain optimistic

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The U9 Niagara-on-the-Lake Wolves knew moving from half-ice to full-ice would be no small feat.

And they got a sense of just how challenging it could be after a hard-fought loss in their annual Winter Classic tournament in NOTL last weekend.

The U9 MD (minor development) and U9 local league team competed on Jan. 17 and 18.

U9 MD

On Friday at 8 a.m. at U9 local league's first game, the Wolves came out strong with three goals in the first period and added another three in the second.

Glancaster couldn't get anything on the board, remaining scoreless through all three periods.

The Wolves sealed the win with one more goal in the third, finishing with a 7-0 victory.

Saturday at 10:30 a.m. in their second game, Stouffville took control early with three goals in the first period and held off any response from the Wolves, who struggled to get on the scoreboard.

Both teams remained scoreless in the second and third periods and Stouffville





Left: Members of the U9 local league watch from the box as their teammates compete. Right: U9 minor development's Cedric Olsen (#89) races for the puck in a match against Stouffville Clippers. The game ended in a 3-0 loss for NOTL, but the kids played their best. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

secured a 3-0 win.

Their final game Saturday at 6 p.m. saw Norwood dominating early, leading 4-0 after the first period and adding three more in the second.

The Wolves fought back with three goals in the second period but couldn't capitalize in the third.

Norwood held its ground, finishing with a 7-3 victory.

"It was an exciting and tense game for U9 levels," said Jennifer Olsen, mom of Cedric Olsen, #89.

To keep Cedric's spirits up after the loss, Olsen told him: "You played your best in terms of playing your position. We're all learning. Especially in full ice," she said.

Mike Cwiertniewski, who has coached the Wolves "from when they were little tykes moving up," praised his team's resilience, despite falling behind early.

"Our team battles back and they play right to the end every single game, no matter what the score is,"

After the game, despite disappointment, the team quickly bounced back, said Cwiertniewski, who has been playing since he was a kid — and whose son Auston Cwiertniewski (#34) plays on the team.

Next up for the U9 MD Wolves is a tournament next weekend in Bradford.

U9 LL

At the U9 local league's first game at 8 a.m. on Friday, Pelham came out strong with two goals in the first period and added one more in the second.

The Wolves responded with a single goal in the first but couldn't manage to score again in the final two periods.

Pelham sealed the win with two more goals in the third, finishing with a 5-1 victory.

The Twin Centre Stars dominated from the start of Friday's 4 p.m. game,

scoring five goals in the first period and adding two more in the second.

The Wolves struggled to

find their rhythm, remaining scoreless throughout the

The Twin Centre Stars finished strong with three goals in the third, securing a decisive 10-0 win.

On Saturday at 11:30 a.m. in their final game, Woolwich #1 secured a 9-0 victory over the Niagara-onthe-Lake team.

They scored three goals in the first period, followed by two in the second and finished strongly with four goals in the third.

Meanwhile, the Wolves were held scoreless throughout the game.

In his first year as a coach, Jesse Willms was optimistic about the loss. "Everyone's putting in a lot of effort," he said. "It's awesome to see."

Woolwich #1 coach Tyler Bradley also recognized the resilience of the Wolves.

"The other team played well, too. There were a couple breakthroughs that were hard to deal with for them," he said. "But it's a learning curve."

"Overall, they've got a lot of promise," said referee Martin MacIntyre.

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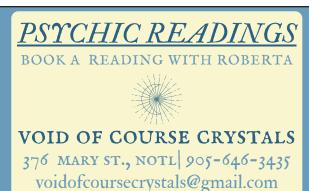
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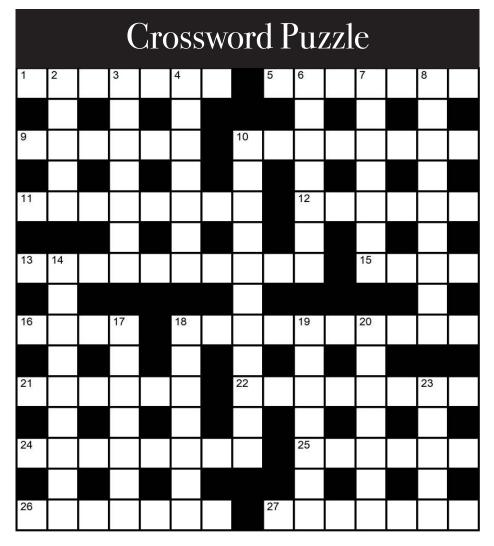
Across

- 1. Low sculptures rising from a plane surface (7)
- 5. Pull through (7)
- 9. Peeping Tom (6)
- 10. Enduring (4-4)
- 11. Never use ill-gotten earnings (8)
- 12. Spokelike (6)
- 13. Home of Cox's Bazar beach (10)
- 15. Arrest (4)
- 16. Eye problem (4)
- 18. Some of them are Grimm (5,5)
- 21. Shaft key (6)
- 22. Chosen as a career (4,4)
- 24. Learnt of a mess in Derbyshire (8)
- 25. Tooth covering (6)
- 26. "Salome" composer (7)
- 27. Guided (7)

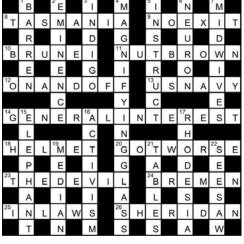
Down

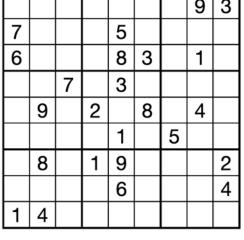
- 2. Wear away (5)
- 3. Polar wrecker (7)
- 4. Established form of words (7)
- 6. York, from London (2,5)
- 7. Picked democratically (5,2)
- 8. Adaptable (9)
- 10. Eavesdropping (9,2)
- 14. Thoughtless state (9)
- 17. African state on the Red Sea (7)
- 18. Elaborate Hispanic parties (7)
- 19. Yak seen running wild in North
- America (7)
- 20. Energize (7)23. Tear up sheet for this lot (5)

Have some fun



Last issue's answers









Let's leave our lights on during what will be dark days



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson Columnist

My mind has been rambling as I stay really positive while the polar vortex chills us here in our normally temperate part of the world.

Not to mention my despair as I watched Monday's inauguration ceremony from the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, D.C.

The worst thing in any schoolyard is a bully, but still, could the incoming president have been less gracious, less kind and less respectful during his big chance at the microphone?

Why did I punish myself for a couple of hours, listening to such mean-spirited remarks? He used the "bully pulpit" to verbalize such vitriol, such arrogance and such power-mongering. Such disrespect for one's peers and predecessors.

A peaceful transition of power, at least more palatable than four years ago.

If we could all be kinder, the world would be a much better place for all of us to live. With five former presidents seated nearby, how could any person verbally vomit such sentences? And this is now the leader of the free world. God help us all.

Now, an awkward segue to some light and positive words about lights. During the Christmas season, many homeowners and shopkeepers choose to brighten up their buildings.

Festively and effulgently illuminated bulbs shine from windows, eaves troughs, trees and hedges. And especially after snow has fallen, our dreams of a white Christmas are fulfilled.

We are so lucky and fortunate to live in a part of the world where one of our favourite Christmas songs comes to life each December. Even during the three winters I spent in New Zealand and Australia, I never once heard anyone sing, "I'm dreaming of a green Christmas."

Christmas cards. Remember them? So many



Ross Robinson says let's keep the lights on in what is sure to be a dark period in human history with Donald Trump at the helm of the U.S. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

pretty snow images.

Yes, it can be cold here in Canada during the winter, but the famous Mr. Hockey from northern Saskatchewan, Gordie Howe, regularly reminded those of us from more southern climates, "There is no such thing as cold weather. Just cold clothing."

My goodness, I am really rambling this week, aren't I? Is it my imagination, or are more NOTLers putting their Christmas lights up earlier, as winter arrives? And perhaps leaving them up longer?

So much of life is controlled by our reactions, especially when something beyond our control has affected us. Even the smallest thing can be remembered and can have a positive or negative influence on the rest of our lives.

I love rambling each week, but some weeks it is difficult and a challenge to develop a somewhat unique column.

It has been my determination this week not to stoop to the level of the incoming U.S. president, to give him more than a short mention from my weekly lectern.

Permit me to ramble back to a very hot summer day in about 1958 in the great prairie city of Winnipeg. Our happy family was enjoying a Sunday afternoon drive in our light green and large Monarch car. Not a stylin' car, but it served its main purpose of getting my dad to and from work.

That day, the four of us were enjoying some of the simpler pleasures of life. Not a theme park to be seen and enjoying frugal pleasures like a family hike along the Monkey Trails beside the Assiniboine River. My sister was 12 and I was 10.

We always loved being spoiled with a two-scoop ice cream cone, often Neapolitan if we didn't want to limit our cooling pleasure to just one flavour. Our family loved being out together, even if just for a Sunday drive.

After an hour or so on this hot drive, before car air conditioning had been invented, we were driving along a residential street. Neatly cut lawns and tasteful flowers in front of many houses. We were passing one house that still had their Christmas lights attached to the eaves troughs. Their lawn hadn't been mowed recently.

I was no doubt going to comment, "Gee, those people are lazy. They should take their lights down." But my always positive dad said, "Wow, those people are organized. They have their Christmas lights up early, eh?"

A simple comment and a simple attitude. A simple way of looking at things.

A lesson from my dad. And part of our family DNA.

And this passing and remembered ramblings story from many, many years ago has enabled me to stretch my imagination a bit, sharing a fun story from my wonderful childhood in Winnipeg.

Too, it has allowed me to file a column without mentioning the gong show train wreck that is ready to assault us from Washington, D.C.

EXPLORING HISTORY WITH NOTL MUSEUM



Royal Visit, 1901

Photograph of the Prince and Princess of Wales (future King George V and Queen Mary) embarking on the S.S. Corona in Niagara-on-the-Lake, bound for Queenston and Niagara Falls on Oct. 13, 1901.

The royal visit to Canada in 1901 began Sept. 16 when they arrived in Quebec City. By train, they visited Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Regina, Vancouver, Victoria then Toronto. On the evening of Oct. 12, they arrived in Niagara-on-the-Lake, spending the evening at the Queen's Royal Hotel (formerly located on Front Street along the shore). On Oct. 13 they took the steamer S.S. Corona to Niagara Falls via Queenston, then returned to the Queen's Royal Hotel that evening. On the morning of Oct. 14, they left Niagara by train and visited Kingston, Brockville, Sherbrooke, Saint John and Halifax, where they concluded the tour and returned home to England on Oct. 21.



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Obituaries & In Memoriam

Clara Phillips



Clara Elena Phillips (nee Walsh)

It is with great sadness we announce the passing of our beloved mother and grandmother Clara. She passed peacefully at the age of 95 on Jan. 20, 2025 at St. Catharines Hospital surrounded by the love of her family.

Clara was born in 1929 in Port Weller, Ontario to parents Frank and Elena Walsh and grew up on the family farm the third child and eldest daughter of thirteen children. She helped care for and raise her younger siblings and continued her nurturing nature as a grade one teacher for eleven years at Maplewood and then Port Weller schools. Her caring ways continued throughout her entire life always putting the needs of others before her own.

In 1958 she was set up on a blind date and met the love of her life Jimmy Phillips. Together they raised a family of five children in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Her days were filled with running a busy household and caring for her family. In her later years she enjoyed travelling to Florida with Jimmy, reading, watching her game shows and the Young & the Restless with the cat Noel by her side. Her daily Wordle challenge was a highlight.

She has been reunited in heaven with her soulmate of 65 years Jimmy. She will be sadly missed and never forgotten by her beloved children Carol Hunter (Sam), Tim Phillips, Dr. Janice Phillips (Joe Delaney), Joanne Van Nest (Matthew), Kevin Phillips (Ola) and her grandchildren Danielle (James), Kelly, Rachel (Jake), Kate (Eric), Lucas (Kristin), Amy, Alex and James. Clara will also be missed by her siblings Dr. Fred Walsh, Anne Primeau, Leo Walsh and Sheila Voisin and sister-in-laws Sharon Walsh and Kathy Walsh as well as her many nieces and nephews. She is predeceased by her brothers Jim, Bill and John and sisters Mary, Helen, Teresa, Margaret and Flora as well as many in-laws.

Our family would like to thank the home support workers as well as the nursing staff at the hospital for their care of Mom. A special thank you to Alana Harrod for her care and kindness to Clara over the last three years and to her niece Shelley Walsh for all her love and support.

Clara was a strong woman with a quiet, gentle nature. She had a kind heart, unwavering faith, love, wisdom, advice, humour and so many stories to tell. She was a good listener, a hard worker and was relied upon by many throughout the years. Despite her health challenges, she never complained. Most importantly, she was the center of our family and family was everything to her. She will be forever in our

Family and friends are invited to join Clara's family at George Darte Funeral Home, 585 Carlton St., St. Catharines on Tuesday, Jan. 28, from 2 – 4 p.m. and 7- 9 p.m. A mass will be held at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 73 Picton St., Niagara-on-the-Lake on Jan. 29, 2025 at 11 a.m, followed by a reception at 12 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Church Hall, NOTL to celebrate her beautiful life.

Donations in Clara's honour can be made to the MS Canada or Hospice Niagara.

Viva Norton



Norton, Viva Marie (Nee Quinn) –

Passed away peacefully in her sleep, with family by her side at the St. Catharines General Hospital on Jan. 19, 2025, at the age of 87. Reunited with her loving husband Richard Norton (2019). Mother of David (Debbie), the late

Brenda (2024) (Bob), Veronica (Doug) and the late Donald (2005). Grandmother of Melissa, Ashley (Thomas), Jennifer (Tyson), Joshua (Candace), Whitney (Trevor), Tessa (Tom), Billy (Katie), fifteen great-grandchildren. Sister of the late Tom (Joanne) Quinn, Jim (late Irene) Quinn, Mary (Burley) Freel, Betty (Tom) Gaspich, Gordon (Evelyn) Quinn, the late Margaret (Les) Milroy, and the late Mark (Bertie) Quinn. Predeceased by her parents John and Elizabeth Quinn. Viva will be missed by many nieces, nephews and friends. Viva was a proud member of Royal Canadian Legion and Ladies Auxiliary.

The family will receive friends at Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. A funeral mass will be held at St. Vincent De Paul Church 73 Picton Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake on Monday, Jan. 27, 2025 at 11:30 a.m. Cremation to follow.

As an expression of sympathy, those who wish may make a memorial donation to the Niagara SPCA and Humane Society. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



Lucille Reynolds



Reynolds, Lucille Anne (nee Formica) — Passed away peacefully in Toronto on Jan. 15, 2025, at the age of 82 years. She is survived by her devoted husband Jim Reynolds, son Craig (Paige) Reynolds and daughter Lesley (Jim) Henry. She will be forever missed by cherished grandchildren

Charlie, Christian, and Sydney. Dear sister of Rolly, Peter, Danny, and Jo-Anne, and the late Joseph and Tony. She will be sadly missed by extended family and friends. A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, Feb. 1, 2025, at 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Ogden Funeral Home, 4164 Sheppard Ave. E., Toronto. In lieu of flowers, donations to The Alzheimer's Society of Toronto would be appreciated.

Mackenzie King

May 16, 1995- Jan. 22, 2021
"Now I greet you from the other side of sorrow and despair, with a love so vast and so shattered, it will reach you everywhere."

- L. Cohen
To the world he was just one,
To us he was all the world.

- Tom and Blakely



For obituary and memorial inquiries, please contact editor@niagaranow.com.

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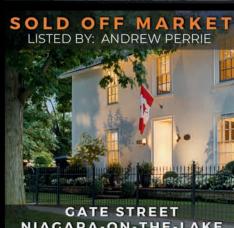


















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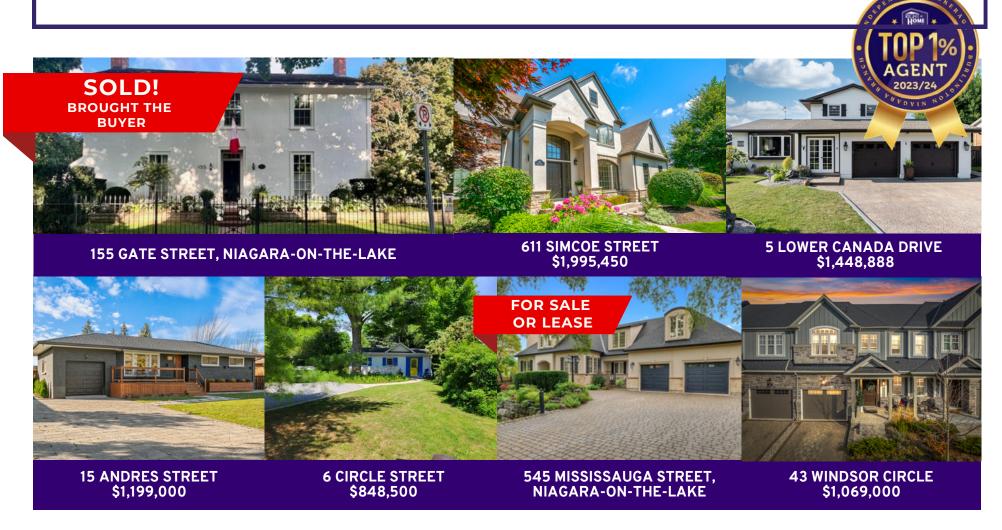
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