



Teacher reflects on students' return to school
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Photographer David Gilchrist braved the snow to take pictures for The Local — he only got stuck once, at the end of King Street, and thankfully a good samaritan pushed him out. See page 10 for more photos.



Locals remember ground collapsing at school site

Penny Coles
The Local

In recent days, as the development proposal for the Parliament Oak property has been much discussed, Niagara-on-the-Lake native Robin Howe recalled an event from his childhood that at first, he says, seemed more of a dream.

But as he reached out to friends on social media to discover what they remem-

ber, he realized it was a very real, although a strange occurrence — their recollections were similar to his, and even provided more detailed descriptions

It has led him to question what remains buried under the property that is proposed to be the site of a three-storey apartment building and nine homes.

Howe lived across the street from Parliament Oak, and born in 1953, he attend-

ed the school in the late '50s and early '60s.

There was always one patch of hard, brown dirt which was surrounded by grass, he says, which was perfect for playing marbles, until one day it collapsed, leaving a hole that over the next few days became larger and deeper — about 15 or 16 feet across, he estimates, and about seven or eight feet deep, before it took a turn toward King Street.

It was not far from the building and a strip of pavement where students lined up for school, toward what was called the secondary baseball diamond. There were two diamonds, he recalls — the other at the corner of Regent and Gage Streets. He and other kids would play on the diamonds on teams that competed outside of school hours, he recalls — he was

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New pool for St. Davids needs cash injection

Penny Coles
The Local

Summer may seem a long way off, but St. Davids residents want assurance that when it arrives, they will have a swimming pool for lessons and family swims, and that the town still remains committed to building a new pool, as promised.

It's been a long wait, with the pool no closer to reality than when candidates assured residents during the 2018 election campaign they would have a new pool.

In the summer of 2019, residents got their first look at a

preliminary design for a four-lane pool, estimated at \$2 to \$2.5 million. Two months later, a revised design with more elements, including a six-lane facility, brought the price up to \$3 to 3.5 million.

By February of 2020, the final design showed a pool expected to cost \$5 million. The town applied for a federal/provincial infrastructure grant of \$4.74 million, and the 2020 budget included \$100,000 for the pool. A fundraising committee was struck with a campaign goal that would depend on the success of the grant,

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Best husband, father, grandfather will be missed

Penny Coles
The Local

When Petra Browning says she had "the best dad ever," you know she means it.

Her father, Siegfried (Siegy) Wiens, died peacefully at the St. Catharines hospital at the age of 88, after a struggle with dementia.

Browning describes a dad who couldn't say no to his kids. He worked hard and had a strong work ethic, but when he was on holidays, travelling or at the cottage, it was all about family for him. In the winter, he would take the three kids snowmobiling, and in the sum-



Siegfried Wiens

mer, he would take them waterskiing, she says.

He was also before his time, she adds — he never treated his

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Town still hoping for grant to fund pool

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but was expected to be set at \$1 million.

In the summer of 2020, residents of the village found themselves with an empty hole in the ground and no place to swim. After a long hot spell and a taste of the reality of summer without a place for families to gather and kids to cool off, they protested the town's decision not to open their community pool, gathering on the York Road property with signs asking for the pool to be open. It remained closed, residents were told, based on extra costs due to COVID.

The pool was successfully opened last summer, the year residents had been promised they would be swimming in a brand new facility.

Resident Adriana Vizzari wants to be sure her kids, and her friends and neighbours' kids, will have somewhere to swim this summer.

She joined the pool fundraising committee when it was formed in 2020, but it has pretty much fallen by the wayside, with most members having difficulty mustering enthusiasm for the stalled project.

It's been hard enough to fundraise during COVID, says Vizzari, and once the town learned it was not going to receive the grant as anticipated, more momentum was lost.

At the last virtual fundraising committee meeting in November, Vizzari was the only resident to attend, along with Coun. Gary Burroughs and operations director Kevin Turcotte.

There has been money raised — about \$55,000 so far — but without a grant from other levels of government,

they can't proceed with a \$5 million pool.

"I'm super disappointed, and very frustrated," says Vizzari.

"I understand the concerns with COVID, but it seems like we don't have the support of the town any longer. We're not making any headway at all. We don't even know if we have a committee at this point."

Vizzari is hoping for assurances the pool can open this summer, even if it means putting money into fixing it. And if the town remains committed to a new pool, and makes some decisions about moving forward in the next few weeks, hopefully the fundraising committee can be re-energized.

"That would be great. It's been so long since the committee was formed, we might even get some new members. I think as long as the town is transparent about what they're planning, we can move ahead."

Both Burroughs and Lord Mayor Betty Disero are anxious to see that happen.

Burroughs has suggested a meeting in the next week or two to determine if the current design can be modified to a more affordable pool.

"We're going to have to revamp it. We went in with a Cadillac plan and no money. We will never be able to fund a project like that without the support of upper levels of government."

Burroughs says when the grant was submitted, everything was handled by staff, but to successfully apply for grants from the federal and provincial government, politicians have to get involved and plead their case. He called on Disero



The \$5 million swimming pool could require modifications to make it more affordable.

recently to contact MP Tony Baldinelli and MPP Wayne Gates, hoping they will help find grants that might fund the pool.

Burroughs says St. Davids will get a new pool, but it may not be a \$5 million facility, and definitely won't be without a successful grant application.

"We have to be realistic. The committee is struggling to meet, feeling like it's a lost cause. Residents have waited a long time. What we thought we could build for them was a fabulous setup, but we have no money. What we proposed was too big of a project. Hopefully we can meet and agree on something, so we don't lose another year."

If a grant can be obtained by the spring, residents could have their pool by 2023, but no sooner than that, he said. "We'll look at what we can afford. It may not have all the upgrades, but it will be a great pool."

Disero has already had her meeting with Baldinelli and Gates, as Burroughs requested, to ensure the town has their support. "They are both committed to looking for grant applications

that might be forthcoming," she says.

She agrees it may be time to go back to the drawing board and look at whether the current design is too elaborate, and what, if any, modifications can be made to reduce costs, "while considering the needs of the community first and foremost." She also suggested phasing in some of the components, and agrees, one way or another, St. Davids will get a pool.

However fundraising is key, she adds. "We need to have at least one-third of the cost to contribute."

To that end, last week she put a motion before the planning committee that was approved, although not unanimously, to sell two pieces of municipal property and put the revenue into a reserve fund to help pay for the pool.

One of the properties is at the end of Anne Street, bordering onto Butler Street — a portion of that sale would likely be spent on a turn-around, the rest directed to the pool.

The other is the piece of land on East and West Line behind the high school, which the municipality held on to when it sold the property to be used as a school for international students.

Disero has been approached by people interested in buying the property, which is considered green space, but it has to go through the proper channels, she says.

She hopes a report from staff will come to council soon, outlining the process to declare the properties surplus, sell them, and have some money to put toward the pool. "We've committed to doing it, so let's finish

it off."

Vizzari says the upcoming election may work in favour of the residents — candidates who promised a pool in 2018 will not want to still be campaigning on it for their next term of office.

And really, she adds, she just wants a pool, and she thinks other residents will feel the same way.

"All the bells and whistles they were offering were awesome, but I guess I was naive. I didn't know they might be a deterrent to getting a pool. People just want a functional pool for their kids to have lessons and swim. Even this pool we have now is great — it did its job. We can't go back through time, we just want something going forward. If it's going to be another election issue, four years later with no headway, that's not okay."

Grant to fund resources for ambassador program

Penny Coles
The Local

The town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has received a grant through the My Main Street Community Activator Program to fund resources for the ambassadors program.

The initiative was created in 2020 to encourage visitors to follow Public Health guidelines and provincial legislation during the pandem-

ic. It was expanded in 2021 to help support economic recovery, with more than 360 volunteer hours dedicated to Queen Street between July and mid-October.

The volunteers stroll Queen Street and surrounding parks to proactively engage visitors and residents, answer their questions, and encourage exploration of iconic and hidden gems in town, a media release said.

A total of \$47,000 was

received to fund operating expenses and resources for the ambassador program. Last summer town staff purchased resources such as iPads, T-shirts, printed maps and brochures, a moveable kiosk, and first aid kits.

In addition, says CAO Marnie Cluckie, funding was used to purchase website hosting, a volunteer scheduling tool, and related software and licences. "Also, part of the grant is reserved for a robust volunteer campaign that will lead to an inclusive group of people participating in the ambassadors program."

The grant will also fund a rainbow bench on Queen Street, and creative safety barriers for patio areas.

The safety barriers are wine barrels filled with aggregate, and topped with planting materials, said Cluckie.



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Respected businessman, involved in community service

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two girls, Petra and her sister Angela, any differently than their brother, Siegy Jr., whether they were working or playing, teaching them how to mow the lawn, clean the pool, snowmobile, ride the tractor and have fun on the Honda 50 motorcycle, says Petra.

“He treated us like we could do anything.”

He also had an infectious positive attitude, always putting things in the best light. “I can’t remember him ever being negative about anything,” says Petra. If their mom was worried about something, he’d say, “don’t worry, everything will be fine.” In his mind, “the sun was always shining and there was always enough snow to snowmobile,” even when there wasn’t. He himself “was a ray of sunshine,” an outgoing, social

person who enjoyed having his family and friends around him.

Petra says her dad was also “the most loving husband. He would never go out or come home without kissing my mother,” says Petra.

Siegy was born in Germany in 1933, and came to Canada in 1952, with his mother and four siblings, after his father died in a tragic accident.

He worked hard at several jobs, one of them as a truck driver for a furniture store, and also as a salesman for Lincoln Interiors, which he later purchased in 1978. After Lincoln Interiors had a massive fire in 1961 and he was out of a job, he travelled back to Germany to work, and met a young, beautiful Helga Tyart who would become his adoring wife of 58 years. He brought his new bride back to Canada, and started Peninsula Flooring with Helga and his brother-in-law, Hei-

ni Esau, creating a successful business. Siegy was personable and loved to talk, says Petra, so his knack for building relationships, and his salesmanship, made the business a natural fit for him.

He was also an active community supporter, and in the early days, used his first location for Lincoln Interiors to hold Lions Club meetings, and then moved them to the family home when the building burned down. He was a member of the St. Catharines Business Club, and one of the original members of the Virgil Business Association — Petra says for years she and Angela helped him run the French fry booth at Virgil Stampede. He was president of each of those organizations at one time or another, she says.

As hard as it was to say goodbye to their dad, Petra says the family felt like they had

already lost him to dementia. When his health deteriorated to the point that the family couldn’t look after him, he was moved to Pleasant Manor. He was always well-cared for, she says, and the staff were good to him, going out of their way to

joke and make him laugh.

In a story of his life, written by family to preserve their memories of him, they say Siegy “will be remembered as a big, lively character who filled the room and made friends wherever he went. He loved

his family and took great pride in them, and always enjoyed spending time together.”

He was the best dad, the best husband, and the best grandfather, adds Petra, and will be missed by all who knew him.



The family has loving memories, photos and video of Siegy and Helga Wiens celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. (Photo supplied)

Chautauqua wants remedial measures made permanent

Penny Coles
The Local

Remedial measures implemented in Chautauqua this summer to address issues of safety, traffic flow and crowding in the park were so successful, residents would be happy to see them become permanent.

Representing the Friends of Ryerson Park, John Scott told councillors at Monday’s planning committee meeting he was representing more than 75 per cent of Chautauqua residents in saying the pilot project’s suite of measures had the desired effect, providing a balance of residents and visitors using the park, a

smoother traffic flow on main arteries, and clear paths down narrow streets that had previously been clogged by parked cars.

He told The Local he spent a lot of time talking to residents in the community during the summer, and again in December, and heard that overall, “people are pretty pleased. We’re hoping these measures can be permanent — there may be some tweaks needed, but we don’t want to go back to council every year and ask again.”

He heard comments from residents such as “I’m no longer going to list my house,” and “spending time with neighbours and visitors – just

what a summer in Chautauqua is supposed to be.”

He said residents agree the parking restrictions are only required between May 15 and Nov. 15, and support a special enforcement area with a fine of \$150, which was very effective. “There were very few issues with visitors parking in problematic areas in 2021.”

A reduced speed limit on all Chautauqua streets was also helpful he said, and residents want that to continue. Reducing speed limits to 30 or 35, an issue of safety, is not unprecedented, he said.

Their group supports the parks bylaw that was passed last year, and residents will be giving their feedback through

a town survey. On the whole, Scott said, the prevailing sentiment of residents was “we’ve got our park back.”

Regarding the changes to the Mississauga and Queen Street intersection, including the three way stop, signage, and the bump-out, Scott said, “we fully support the innovative measures taken by the town to properly direct traffic flow, assist in intersection safety and provide visitors with the correct directions. The narrowing at the intersection to one-lane travelling west was a sensible, creative solution to a long-standing issue. Please make these measures permanent.”

Signage was also im-

portant, and “town staff were very diligent in the signage dealing with these measures.”

However, he told councillors, “we cannot over-emphasize the effectiveness of the enforcement of all measures by a very diligent seasonal team of bylaw officers.”

The new rules won’t work without continued enforcement, which means council must have the budget to provide the necessary personnel, he said. “We urge council in the strongest possible terms to include full provision for these seasonal enforcement bylaw officers in the operating budget for 2022.”

Scott emphasized it’s a combination of all the mea-

asures that has been so successful and need to be permanent, and asked, in addition to continued bylaw enforcement, the permanent reduction of speed limits on Chautauqua streets.

Operations manager Sheldon Randall said the town is developing a transportation master plan, and speed limits will be considered. “It’s not something we’d like to adjust right now — we’d like to have the consultant and staff look at it first.”

CAO Marnie Cluckie told councillors staff have agreed to come back with a report on the success of the remedial measures in Chautauqua before spring, likely in March.



These two photos show the corner of Wilberforce Ave. and Niagara Blvd. in 2020, before the \$150 fine for parking, and after it was imposed this summer. (Brian Crow)



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Vaccinations still a priority, especially for kids

Penny Coles
The Local

The Niagara Health system is being stressed with hospitalizations, with the omicron variant stretching resources to the point where there could be a shortage of intensive care beds, Dr. Mustafa Hirji warned Monday.

"I think it's definitely a big concern that we could start to run out of beds very soon, and that's a very limited resource that we have in our health-care sector," Hirji said.

The number of infections could be peaking, and he's hopeful that might be the case, but even so, there will be a period of time when hospitalizations will be at a higher rate than we have seen at any point previously in this

pandemic.

"It's important to remember we are in this for the long haul, and it's going to be quite a while where we will continue to see high levels of infection."

Seven patients with COVID-19 died over the weekend at Niagara Health hospitals, the acting medical officer of health reported Monday, with 157 patients in the hospital being treated for the infection, including 29 patients in intensive care.

As Canadians were learning about Paxlovid Monday, a medication taken in pill form that is expected to decrease hospitalizations for people with COVID, Hirji warned there may not be enough of the drug available to sufficiently reduce

stress on the health care system.

Hirji said he's excited to see children back in school, and believes the discussion should always be about what can be done to protect them.

With more cases in the community, and less ability for testing, there is more chance that students will be infected in school. But there are lots of things we can do to reduce the risk, including prioritizing testing for children by sending home rapid tests, he said.

Quality masks for children and teachers are important, and unnecessary mask exemptions should be reduced, Hirji added.

The province has done some good work on ventilation in schools but Niagara

Public Health is assessing how good ventilation is in individual classrooms, and taking steps to improve it when necessary.

Hirji said he's disappointed the province hasn't taken steps to add COVID to the diseases covered by the Ontario immunization legislation that requires parents to report their children's vaccination status, which exists to protect teachers and children from illness. If the province decides to change that legislation, he explained, it could happen within a matter of days. "It doesn't require children to be vaccinated," he stressed, it just requires parents to notify school boards about their decision and the reason for it.

That then becomes a tool to manage an outbreak by providing the ability to suspend students who are unvaccinated to keep them safe,

Hirji said.

Currently, Public Health is working with schools to do some level of testing to ensure schools stay safer, including making sure unvaccinated children are isolated during an outbreak to reduce infections.

The first line of protection remains vaccines, and though the "plurality of adult residents in Niagara" have received a booster, said Hirji, he continues to be disappointed in the number of children in the five to 11 age group who are vaccinated, and would like to see it higher, especially with the return to school. It is approaching 43 per cent in that age group, but "I would be much more comfortable if it was around 80 percent."

Unlike the provincial approach to infections in classrooms, Niagara Region is working with school boards

on a process to notify parents if their children have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID, with advice that if children are unvaccinated "they should be staying home." Without the immunizations in schools legislation that requires the cooperation of parents, he added.

Although earlier in the pandemic the vaccine supply was limiting the number of vaccinations, that isn't an issue any more, with about 6,000 doses being administered daily.

There is no shortage of appointments available, for boosters or first or second doses, and in Niagara there is an ability to get closer to 8,000 a day.

However there are currently lots of slots available, he said, encouraging people with appointments in the future to move them up and get vaccinated sooner.

A striking display



Ian Goring was shovelling his driveway about 4 a.m. Monday morning, and realized he was in the middle of a thunder and lightning storm, as the snow fell. He quickly set up his camera and got a very effective video. These are screen captures of the storm in the dark, and as the lightning lit up the area. For more snow pictures, see page 10.

Niagara Long Term Care still dealing with outbreak

Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara Long Term Care remains in a COVID outbreak, reports executive director Chris Poos.

Currently there are 13 staff members with active cases, and 16 resolved, as well as 13 residents infected, also with 16 resolved.

"Sadly," says Poos, "over the last week two residents have passed away. The cause was not directly related to COVID-19, but they did contract the virus while palliative."

He says the long-term care home staff are in regular contact with Public Health, and are continuing with vaccination clinics. "Today, all residents and staff will be PCR tested, and we are working with St. Joseph's to assist in expediting the PCR results."

All outbreak protocols throughout the home continue to be followed, which in-

clude residents isolated to their rooms, receiving in-room meal service.

Group activities and communal dining are on hold, and one-to-one programming is being offered and encouraged, says Poos.

Fully vaccinated, designated essential caregivers continue to be welcome, visiting one at a time, and must pass active screening, receive a negative rapid test, and wear full PPE, including a respirator mask.

General visitation and resident social absences have been paused.

Increased cleaning is happening in all high touch areas and on surfaces, and hand hygiene and PPE audits are ongoing.

Staff are cohorted to specific home areas, including during break time, says Poos, all PPE is available and well-stocked, and staff will continue to receive rapid tests each shift and a PCR test twice per week until further

notice.

Residents are receiving rapid and PCR tests — both are available at the home. This practice will continue throughout the outbreak, says Poos.

"We are in regular contact with staff, residents, and families through email updates, phone calls and virtual town halls."

Virtual visits are encouraged, and many of the residents have designated essential caregivers coming into the home to participate in the care of their loved one.

"Staff are working hard to provide great care to our residents," says Poos.

"The home is stable, staffing is good, and we are well stocked with supplies. Yesterday's (Monday's) snowstorm was certainly a challenge, and we are incredibly grateful to our staff for once again putting the home and our residents first, and making it work."



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Planning director retires, won't be back as consultant

Penny Coles
The Local

After five years of working with the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake as the head of its planning department and all it entails, Craig Larmour is retiring.

He's only 54, but he says he's ready for a break, although he doesn't rule out returning to work as a consultant at some point in the future.

Not immediately, however and not in NOTL.

Larmour says he's loved his time in the municipal sector over the last 32 years, especially the urban/rural areas where he has worked, including the towns of Lincoln, West Lincoln and Pelham, and the Region of Haldimand-Norfolk.

When he made the decision to take the job in NOTL, he says, he knew something about the planning issues, having worked in Niagara for years, and had a personal fondness for the town as a visitor.

He and his wife were married at the Queen's Landing Hotel, and for the last 20 years, have made a tradition of spending Christmas Eve in town, including a horse and carriage ride and a visit to the Pillar and Post.

When he accepted the position in NOTL, he wasn't thinking about retirement in five years, he says, or that this job would be his last — that wasn't on his radar at all.

However, he has come to see this as a good time to go,

especially with an election in the future.

"Elections are a difficult time," he says. "Introducing a new council to the planning world is a challenge in itself, and even more so when you have a whole new council." That was the case with a few exceptions in 2018, he says, with first-time councillors having to "find their way" in many different areas, not just planning.

This council, however, once they did find their way, has worked well together, despite what the public may have seen in live-streamed meetings.

"Much has been made of the animosity of council," from what was seen week-to-week at their virtual meetings, says Larmour.

It might have appeared there was a lot of animosity between council and staff, but that wasn't the case behind the scenes, he explained.

Council has a specific job to do, responsive to their constituents, and working with the opinions they hear when they bump into people on the street, and also having to keep their eye on re-election, whereas the planning staff have to work with policies set by upper levels of government.

That can create some conflict, which Larmour describes as "jousting and foisting," citing as examples the issues that arose over the Queenston Mile winery, which often saw councillors at odds with recommendations by staff, and current discussions over intensifica-

tion. "But it's not as significant as it appears to be," he says.

And although there can be some stress and tension during a council or committee meeting, he puts it behind him once it's over. "I don't take it personally. I respect council and the position they're in. Council has treated me fairly, and so have the residents."

Although he thought he had an idea of what to expect when he took the job in NOTL, the one thing that took him by surprise, and that he really appreciated, was the level of discussion over planning issues.

NOTL, he says, has a very engaged and educated public. In other municipalities there might be a group of people who are interested in and objecting to a particular project, but the level of engagement here is much higher than in other areas. He suggests that can be overwhelming for councillors, who may have had particular interests when they were voted in, but had a lot to learn about other issues "which were filled with the prospect of lots of conflict."

He points to ongoing planning issues regarding the Parliament Oak development, which carries with it "lots of public angst and emotion. It's going to be difficult for the community, for council and staff, and it looks like it's going to be around for awhile."

Larmour laughs when asked about choosing to leave now, in the midst of such a controversial planning project,

but says he made his decision to leave at the end of the year some time ago. He speaks of regretting leaving staff members at a difficult time, when they are pushed to the limit, and discussions are made more challenging with virtual meetings, rather than sitting around a table talking with people face-to-face.

He repeats he's ready for a break, for a rest, to spend more time on volunteer projects and with his family, and allowing some freedom to travel, when that starts to look a little easier.

And although he will return to work at some point, "If I come back representing a developer in NOTL, just hit me over the head with a two-by-four," he jokes. He's watched other planners return to town as consultants, "and it's a thankless task," he says.

On a more serious note, Larmour is open about having being fired from his job with the town of Pelham, over a disagreement about process — he suggested one direction, and council chose another. Although he doesn't go into details, he says the issue to him was a matter of principle, and that he felt he couldn't compromise his integrity. He refers to the media release sent out by the town, announcing his retirement, with gratitude — he especially appreciated the comment by Lord Mayor Betty Disero, who said, "since his start with Niagara-on-the-Lake in

2016, Craig has been a pillar of wisdom, leadership and integrity for the town."

This time, he says emphatically, the decision to leave was all his.

"It's absolutely my decision, totally."

His greatest memories of NOTL will be the relationships with the politicians and staff, he says. Some have become personal friends, and he feels badly leaving with the difficult development issues before them, and the sheer number of applications.

He is also leaving bylaw enforcement, another aspect of his job, but those officers have come together as a team "and they've been knocking it out of the park."

His former department

will also continue to deal with the COVID regulations and restrictions, as they have from the start of the pandemic, and again, he says, "it can't be overstated" how great the staff have been.

"I definitely will miss working with them."

Larmour's last day with the town was Friday, although he had some holidays to take leading up to that date.

"A robust recruitment process is underway to fill this important role, and the town is working to facilitate a smooth transition for Craig's successor. Rick Wilson, manager of planning, will take on the role of acting director of community and development services until the position is filled," the town announcement says.



Craig Larmour (Photo supplied)

NOTL hires new town clerk

Penny Coles
The Local

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has hired a new town clerk.

Ralph Walton will take on the position Feb 22.

He replaces Peter Todd, who left in June after eight years as town clerk.

Since then, Colleen Hutt and Tara Druzina have done the job, which includes running council and committee meetings.

Walton's job description includes preparing and disbursing documentation for council and committee meetings; reviewing and preparing bylaws; overseeing the issuance of short-term rental licences, special event permits and document commissioning; The town

clerk is also responsible for municipal freedom of information and protection of privacy act information requests.

Walton has many years of experience as a clerk and working in and with municipal governments across Ontario, and has worked for various levels of government, including the Region

of Durham, Region of Niagara, and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

He has a bachelor of arts from the University of Toronto, a public administration certificate and strategy program at Queens University, and membership within the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks, and Treasurers of Ontario.

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Sean Simpson of Simpson's Pharmacy was determined to get to work Monday, impressing his McFarland Gate neighbour Josh Wiwcharyk, who snapped this photo of him and sent it to The Local.



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EDITORIAL

The Local celebrates an anniversary, hoping for many more

As we celebrate the anniversary of The Local — our first edition was delivered Jan. 19, 2019 — it's natural to look back to how we felt that day, holding our first edition in our hands, and to reflect on all that has hap-

pened since.

Three years is not a long time in the life of a business, but of course two of those years were during a pandemic, and no amount of foresight could have anticipated or planned for the

effects some mysterious, then unknown disease would have on any of our businesses.

It's been, and continues to be a roller coaster ride, as our success depends on the health of our advertising partners, and for

them, it has been a heart-breaking, morale-destroying, and financially challenging time, much more of a struggle than we've faced. As an essential business, we haven't had to close our doors — it's keeping them open that's been the struggle.

However, through it all, readers and advertisers have embraced The Local, understanding our mandate, which was to produce a newspaper that focuses on all that is great and positive about this community. Every day, someone will say something to us that tells us our readers get it. They understand our goal is to do what we can to unite the community, and although we're living in a time when society is growing increasingly more divided, we believe the majority of people who consider this community home feel as we do.

That's not to say we have shied away from reporting the issues that cause controversy — and Niagara-on-the-Lake has its share — but we continue to be conscious of doing so with balance and integrity.

However, we can't do it, of course, without our advertisers. We continue to try to build a

successful, sustainable business, and we do so without asking for donations, and without backers or investors. Our advertising revenue is all that pays the bills and keeps us publishing from week to week.

We couldn't do it without a great but small team working with Karen and I to put out a paper each week: on the editorial side, Mike Balsom, whom most of you know, as a contributing reporter does a great job with everything he tackles, and David Gilchrist, a talented nature photographer who shares his photos and knowledge of local wildlife; in advertising, Julia Coles, with decades of experience; Rosie Gowsell, our talented graphic designer; and Helen Arsenault, our terrific proof reader who saves us from all kinds of errors. There are many other locals who contribute their voices — we love what Mariah Reese is doing for kids — and we thank each and every one of you.

We are proud of what we've accomplished through this pandemic, and like everyone else, we can't wait for it to be over, because financially, if we want to survive, we need to do better. We thank our advertisers for

their support, and understand how difficult it continues to be for them. The solution for all of us is for all of you to shop local, as both the town and the NOTL Chamber of Commerce are encouraging us to do. We're all interconnected, and the pandemic has highlighted just how much we need each other, and need to look after each other, to get through this.

Throughout our years of working in this community, both before we started The Local and since, we have felt the love from the community. We know so many of you as friends and business associates, and as the years go by, we are thrilled to meet more of you who are new to town. We love what we do, and feel extremely fortunate to be part of this community. Although the pandemic can make the job more challenging, it can't diminish that.

As we celebrate our anniversary, we look forward to telling more of your stories and promoting your businesses, and thank you for allowing us the privilege of doing so.

Penny Coles
The Local

Tension at council meetings not necessarily negative

After covering Niagara-on-the-Lake council meetings for almost three decades, with an assorted array of councillors and lord mayors, it was somewhat surprising to hear retiring planning director Craig Larmour refer to the tension and sometimes conflict during council discussions.

A surprise, because although the composition of council changes every four years, this group is by no means any more combative than some of past years.

In fact, strong, differing opinions could be considered of councillors taking their responsibilities to heart.

Thinking about histrionics of past councils brought back memories of discussions of a couple of the most controver-

sial issues that saw conflict — the location of the new library, yes, that building on Anderson Lane, was one, and McDonald's, which some thought was going to destroy what was repeatedly referred to as the entrance to the Old Town was maybe second on the list.

Councillors can be passionate in their beliefs, which is admirable, and they can't always have their own way, which is also good, because we live in a democracy and have legislation and policies that have to guide their decisions, or lead to legal fees and planning appeals.

It's so much easier when all they have to do is say yes to something simple, like the new swimming pool promised to St. Davids residents — and then

figure out how to pay for it.

We're in an election year now, and even though it isn't until October, politicians who like their job are already considering how to keep it, and never, ever could that be a more thankless task when an expensive pandemic has been thrown into the mix.

So back to the reference to tension at council meetings. It could be viewed as elected representatives simply doing their jobs, often in difficult situations, having a variety of opinions and feeling free to voice them. As the planning director said, it's not personal, or at least shouldn't be. It's how our democracy works.

Penny Coles
The Local

Youth council wants town to be healthy, happy

Tannin Dridger-Bradshaw
Special to The Local

As a member of the Lord Mayor Youth Advisory Council (LMYAC), I can say that we are especially excited this year to once again play a part in helping our community.

This is our youth council's fifth year, and my fourth year being involved, and it has been amazing watching the great contributions we have been able to achieve in our town, as well as the growth in the number of youth who want to be involved in our council. During

these still difficult times, we have made plans to help our town to be happy and healthy during the year 2022. In doing so, we have split ourselves into three main groups: advocacy, outreach and wellness.

One aspect that our advocacy group has planned to ad-

dress is the upkeep of our town parks, which should always stay clean and beautiful. It has been brought to our attention that there are several parks, including the St. Davids Lions Park and Queen's Royal Park, which require refurbishing. We hope that through the next year we will be able to organize NOTL garbage clean-up day that will help tidy these public areas.

Furthermore, the advocacy committee is also planning to create a campaign focusing on Black and Indigenous History in NOTL for our upcoming Black History Month. As a part of this venture, our youth council intends to design informational videos about local historic sites for the benefit of others both within our local community as well as visiting our town. We hope that this will help people around our town learn about and acknowledge those who have helped our town to become what it is today.

For the upcoming year,

our outreach team hopes to keep our town members up to date with the innovative ideas and plans we have for the near future. This will involve an increase in our social media postings as well as articles in the local papers. We hope these actions will allow our fellow townsfolk to monitor and keep current on our progress. The outreach group also plans on organizing a sit-down with the lord mayor to be streamed on Facebook live, where the members of this outreach subcommittee will discuss, debate and acknowledge what we hope our youth advisory council will achieve for our town this upcoming year.

The wellness committee looks to focus on helping teens around our area regarding their mental wellbeing and physical health, especially throughout these extremely difficult, stressful and sometimes lonely times during this pandemic. This will include making short videos



Tannin Dridger-Bradshaw
(Photo supplied)

for the community to view on our LMYAC Instagram page, as well as organizing and holding our version of a mental health and wellness conference. Finally, the wellness group will be arranging another 'You Got This' bag to uplift the spirits of our local teens, which we found was a great success for those who were interested in receiving the bag last year.

We on the Lord Mayor Youth Advisory Council have big plans and are aiming to help kids and teens around the town to have a safe, great, healthy and prosperous year in 2022.

Tannin Dridger-Bradshaw is a Grade 10 student at Holy Cross Secondary School.

View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

In *The Extraordinary Life of Louis Wain* (Prime 2021), Benedict Cumberbatch plays Louis Wain, an extraordinary and eccentric Victorian artist

who, through his paintings and drawings, changed the public's perception of the cat. He and his wife, depicted by Claire Foy, together unlock the "electrical" mysteries of the world. Another brilliant film.

Donald Combe is a re-

tired English teacher who loves to go to movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through "short and sweet" exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake
Local
The Trusted Voice of Our Community

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COMMENT

In-class learning important, but so is COVID protection



Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The ongoing flip-flop between on-line and in-person learning continued this week for Ontario's elementary and high school students. Mother Nature threw a wrench into the Ontario government's plans to send students back to class Monday, hitting the region with a blanket of between 50 and 60 cm of snow that day, giving Niagara's students a two-day reprieve.

But it was expected to be back to class Wednesday for the majority of local kids, who had shifted to online learning from Jan. 10 to 14.

Originally, when schools were shuttered Dec. 23 for the holiday break, the spread of the omicron variant led the Ford government to set Jan. 24 as the most likely return date. But that was pushed forward after much criticism of the move from parents and business owners across Ontario.

There's no doubt in my mind that kids, and teachers as well, need to be back in school.

Having retired just last June following 29 years as a high school teacher, I can attest to the difficulties my students and I faced in pivoting to online learning. Even my background in radio and television broadcasting, which had always served me well in the classroom, and the fact that I taught computer software applications for much of my career, did not prepare me for the challenges I faced delivering business and cooperative education curriculum online.

Some of my students thrived in our Microsoft Teams meetings. But those students tended to be the same ones who also thrive in the classroom, who are engaged, who ask and answer questions and show a genuine interest in their learning.

Alternatively, online learning was not the right environment for those students who tend to be quiet or reserved, or whose attendance can be hit-or-miss, or who don't usually show a high degree

of engagement. Without periodic face-to-face contact with teachers, guidance counsellors and support workers, these students were lost in the mix.

And the inequities between students with regard to their access to technology would shock most people. I wish we could have had a film crew following the teachers, administrators and other staff who volunteered their time to deliver chromebooks, laptops and even Wi-Fi routers to students whose technical capabilities at home were lacking.

This semester's formal, in-person sit-down exams have been canceled in favour of culminating activities. That means a student currently in Grade 11 has not written an actual exam since January, 2020. One wonders how well-prepared these students will feel to face their first exams in their post-secondary studies.

Besides delivering curriculum, though, think about all the other aspects of high school today's students have missed. In fact, it might do you well to reflect on your own high school experience as you remember it.

Chances are when you do it won't be a trigonometry lesson or a science experiment that stands out. Instead, it will be the school musical or talent show, the Christmas assembly, winning a sports championship, taking a field trip, cleaning up the school grounds with the rest of the Eco Club, or that Christmas assembly emceed by the business teacher, who told a lot of embarrassingly bad 'Dad jokes' (guilty!).

For Christine Lett, it's been tough to watch the impact of her daughter Shaelynn, in Grade 11 at Eden High School, missing out on the social aspects of school.

"She hasn't struggled with the online learning," Lett says, "In fact she's thrived, and she's even in an online accounting class with the Renfrew school board. But I see very different things socially than I did with my boys, who are older. She was just starting to feel settled in Grade 9 when COVID hit."

Last year, when in-person students were divided into two different cohorts, she was separated from most of her friends at school, which made Grade 10 challenging socially.

"In terms of the learning,

she's okay with flipping back and forth," Lett adds, "but it's been disruptive to the social and mental aspect, with the back and forth in and out of school. And remember, Eden was sent home even earlier than other schools before Christmas. It's taken a mental toll on her and her friends."

Lett believes the best thing for most kids is to be back in school. But with her experience as a childcare supervisor at a St. Catharines daycare, she feels another week or two at home might have been more effective in containing the spread of the coronavirus. She fears there will be more future interruptions to in-person learning by heading back to school too soon.

And that takes me to where I am going with this. Kids need to be back in school, there is no doubt about it.

But the Ontario government has not done enough to ensure that the schools to which they are returning are safe in terms of COVID-19.

Yes, Education Minister Stephen Lecce talked a good game about 'empowering' students by providing each with two rapid antigen tests upon their return. But at the same time the government announced that they would no longer require school boards to report details of COVID cases in their buildings. Is that empowering?

They have also promised continued cohorting. But that is a confusing concept. Once they gave approval for high schools to go back to a four-period day, students were thrown into four different groupings per day. With class sizes as high as 30-plus, that means up to 120 contacts daily.

The only sign of cohorting now is through staggered lunch periods. Even that doesn't make sense - if it's not safe for restaurants to serve food inside right now, how is it safe for students to eat their lunches inside?

Staff and students want to get back to some form of business as usual. The former colleagues of mine I have been in touch with are unanimous in their desire to teach students in their classrooms. But the road this province is leading our children on is bound to be filled with further detours in the next few months. And that will not serve well their mental health.

Local LETTERS

An open letter to the lord mayor, councillors and CAO of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Town council has indicated that it intends to implement a municipal accommodation tax (MAT) in Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2022. The Tourism Advisory Working Group (TAWG), comprised of representatives from all corners of the NOTL tourism industry, wishes to express its concern about the timing and process of council's plans for implementing a MAT. Specifically, we request that industry consultation and collaboration be a part of the MAT implementation process.

Since the Ontario government created the legislation that allows municipalities to implement a tax on tourist accommodation in 2017, over 40 municipalities in Ontario have done so. The legislative intent was to create a source of additional funding to support local tourism growth, with at least 50 per cent of the revenues raised going to a designated marketing organization (DMO) for destination marketing and product development, and the remainder going to the municipality to support tourism infrastructure and tourism growth. The funding for the DMO is intended to be in addition to existing municipal spending on tourism. However, experience in Ontario and other jurisdictions has shown that without proper governance, there is a strong tendency for municipalities to allocate MAT revenues inappropriately or ineffectively.

First, let us say that we believe that introducing a MAT at this time is a bad idea. NOTL's tourism industry has gone through two historically bad years and the prospects for 2022 are, to say the least, uncertain. The MAT puts accommodation providers in the impossible position of choosing between raising prices at a time when we are trying to attract visitors and staff back to NOTL, and absorbing some or all of the cost increase at a time when workplace stability for our employees has been dismal and profitability non-existent for two years in a row. In addition, the MAT places an extra, costly administrative burden on accommodation providers, comparable to adding a second HST.

However, if a MAT is to be introduced in NOTL, we believe that it is crucial to the success of the initiative that there be a fresh focus on consultation and collaboration with the tourism industry. Such consultation increases the likelihood that the governance of the MAT will be transparent and effective, that the negative impacts on accommodation providers will be minimized and that the benefits to tourism in NOTL will be maximized.

Governance should be in place to define how the MAT is to be collected, what MAT revenues may be spent on and determine how specific expenditures are to be decided. For example, best practices dictate that MAT

revenues should be held in a separate reserve fund (not in general revenues) and spending should be guided by clear criteria and a formal decision-making body. Good governance should also ensure transparency, fairness in the process and monitoring of outcomes to allow continuous improvements in the effectiveness and fairness of the program.

A key element in the operation of an effective MAT program is alignment with the NOTL tourism strategy. This is required to ensure that the investments and expenditures made are in support of NOTL's recognized plans and priorities. Since the NOTL tourism strategy is not expected to be complete until 2023, the town must be all the more selective in the actions that are taken in 2022.

We would like to request that the town convene a meeting with representatives of the tourism industry to discuss the MAT implementation process and the creation of an advisory group to work with the town on the design of the governance and processes of the MAT program.

We look forward to your response and to working collaboratively to ensure that NOTL's implementation of a MAT does not fall into the traps that have affected other implementations.

Janet Jones,
Chair, on behalf of the
Tourism Advisory Working Group
(Accommodation Sector)

Astounding that rainbow crosswalk is not universally received

The LGBTQ community has coalesced from what has probably been the most maligned groups of people ever, maligned only due to their sexual preferences. You could throw in racial and ethnic minorities. You could throw in the mentally and physically challenged. You could throw in women if you want to include everyone who has ever been discriminated against. The difference is that I do not hear those groups asking for a crosswalk.

Yes this community accepts members of the LGBTQ community. Do they support them? That's a good question. When you have been so badly treated

since the beginning of time there is bound to be a little doubt about whether you are truly accepted, and there is, understandably, a need for reassurance. So when the LGBTQ community asks for a rainbow crosswalk to celebrate their acceptance in this town (that will cost a mere, I think it was up to \$7000, to implement) it is astounding to hear that the support that was originally taken for granted in a community where so many LGBTQ people have made such huge contributions has not been universally received.

The argument that there are other groups who have been disadvantaged does not change

the fact that it is this group that is asking for a concrete sign of support from the community. I do believe that we already have a park, the Voices of Freedom park that honours black history. The question "Where will recognition end?" Should be answered with "It should never end!" until every disadvantaged group that has been so discriminated against by the majority over the years feels completely included and supported by their community. That is an ongoing process that will never end.

Jackie Bonic
NOTL

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Central Community Church plans on March opening

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

From the moment one enters the new Central Community Church building on York Road, it's clear this is much more than a church.

In fact, as project manager Grant McArthur explains, the facility is being purpose-built to become the region's next conference centre, with all future bookings helping to pay for the construction and the ongoing costs of keeping the church open.

"That was my theory from the start," McArthur explains, "let's get tenants and rent. We can have conferences here, such as TEDx, Disney, management courses, and concerts too. As much as it's a church, it's a community centre."

Its main hall features an expansive stage and the capacity to seat about 2,000. Factor in as well a smaller, more intimate auditorium, a number of break-out rooms on the second floor, and a main foyer large enough to accommodate as many as 10 cars for an indoor car show, and it's easy to see why McArthur views it as filling the 'sweet spot' between the Niagara Falls Convention Centre and St. Catharines' Meridian Centre.

Its proximity to the Queen Elizabeth Way and two nearby hotels (Hilton Garden Inn and Holiday Inn Express and

Suites) is a selling point that he says is already drawing interest.

Though the congregation has yet to hire a permanent manager to take charge of the bookings, McArthur has spread the word via social media about the intention to rent the space out during the week for large events. Many who have responded to ask for more information have focused on its location in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

As well, the main church hall will have no permanent, fixed seating, other than in the second floor gallery, which will hold more than 300. The congregation will instead sit in 1,500 to 1,600 removable chairs on the main floor, which can be tucked into storage spaces under the stage. That allows the church to be converted to a gymnasium to rent to local athletic groups.

"I've been in touch with the Niagara Rapids Volleyball Club," McArthur says, "and the River Lions were interested in renting it as their practice facility, but the cost of us putting in a floor was prohibitive." He also mentions indoor soccer and pickleball as activities that the building can accommodate.

Services for Central Community Church, referred to as experiences on their website, are currently being run out of their building on Scott Street in St. Catharines. That facility has

been sold to a group that plans to erect a high-rise condominium project. The sale helped fund the current project, which is expected to come in at just under \$20 million in total, including land costs, even after construction was hindered due to the pandemic.

Central recognized the need for a bigger space as much as 14 years ago, as the congregation began to outgrow the 900-capacity Scott Street church. The pastors there were delivering three services a day to meet the demand before COVID.

The concept and design process began in full force in 2015, with original plans to break ground in 2018. Permits and other processes delayed that for another year, and during the early stages of the pandemic construction work was ordered to stop altogether. What was hoped to be a 2021 opening has now been pushed to spring, 2022.

"It's been a long journey, with a lot of twists and turns," says lead pastor Bill Markham. "But we're all excited that the dream that we had is going to finally be realized."

Markham says beyond the revenue that conferences and concerts may soon bring, the primary purpose for the new building is to allow Central Community Church to become a greater presence and support in the community.



The Central Community Church will have an outdoor playground for the daycare centre, something missing at its Scott Street location. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

"We wanted to build a safe space for multiple generations to gather, whether it be through sports, or music, or whatever," Markham explains. "It's rooted in our philosophy that we should leave a community better than when we entered it. That's our driving passion, how can we support our community?"

The Central community is approximately 3,000 strong, with 261 members from Niagara-on-the-Lake who take part in services and the various smaller group gatherings offered by the church. Its current location in north St. Catharines means a larger percentage of that 3,000 is from that city, but members come from across the region.

The acreage was an obvious selling point for Markham. But more important was that the York Road location makes it a short trip from St. Catharines while acting as a central hub near the QEW for those members from Niagara Falls and Welland.

"We did a demographic study of the people who come to our church, and we discovered this was a central location," explains Markham. "We also knew that (Glendale) was considered one of the fastest growing areas in all of Niagara."

Markham says in early talks with the town about their plans, the fact that any young families will move into new developments in close proximity to the new church was often discussed. He envisions weddings taking place on site and children of all ages using the facility, whether members or not.

To that end, one of the services to be offered at the York Road location is a daycare centre with space for 65 children. Central currently offers

39 spaces out of their Scott Street location and according to childcare Central supervisor and NOTL resident Christine Lett, there is a waiting list of 135 families.

Lett is quick to point out the childcare centre has always been open to all families, not just those who attend Central Community Church. When they move into York Road, in addition to the current 15 toddler and 24 preschool spaces, it will also be licensed for 10 infants and 16 morning-only preschoolers.

The new layout will bring all the children into one central space, with separate rooms for each group arranged in a circle, allowing Lett to oversee each room from her office. That's something she can't do on Scott Street, where their two rooms are at opposite ends of the building. As well, there will be an outdoor playground enclosed by a fence, another amenity not offered at the current daycare.

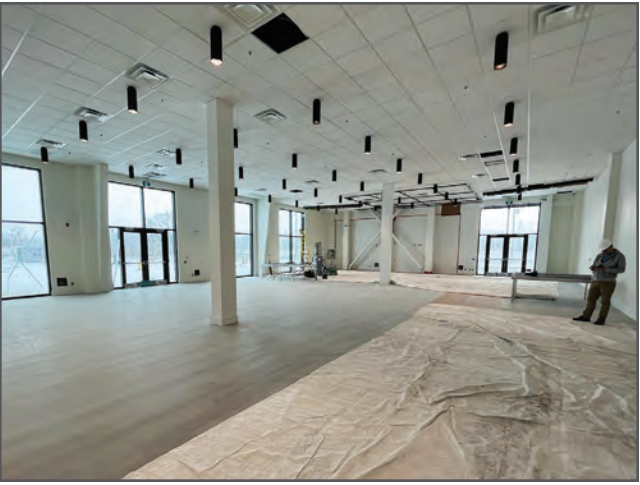
"We are very excited," Lett tells The Local about the new facility. "For the last 10 years we've

been in a classroom, and sometimes in the spring we would go for a walk around the building, but we are definitely looking forward to our outdoor space and the opportunities that will open up for learning."

With the project approaching completion over the next few months, McArthur expects some final inspections, including one for its occupancy permit, to take place in February. And with the increased cost of construction during COVID, he's always looking for ways to ensure the project doesn't go over that original limit of \$20 million.

"One of the biggest costs is our sound system," McArthur says. "We cut back about \$700,000 there by pulling out all of our equipment from Scott Street and bringing it over. The costs for everything have been a moving target, changing from one month to the next."

Provided there are no further delays in construction and pending the completion of those final expectations, McArthur says the plan is to start using the building for its many purposes in late March.



In addition to the large main hall, there is a smaller auditorium for more intimate gatherings.



The main church hall can be used as a conference centre or for sports, and be transformed for a church 'experience' on Sunday mornings, with the stage at the front.

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Varying stories about collapse — more than once

Continued from page 1

on the St. Mark's Church team. He vividly remembers hitting the ball and running the bases, and his brother running ahead of him, both of them captured on a film recording the event.

A fence was put up quickly to keep kids away from the hole and it expanded, but Howe says although it was

dark, they could peer down into it, and some of the boys decided to slide down a bit of a straight descent. Then the hole took a lateral turn, away from the school and toward the corner of the street.

"I can't imagine where the teacher or principal were. I imagine they were keeping us away from it, but I don't remember that." He does recall being nervous about getting the strap — it wouldn't

have been the first time, and he didn't want it repeated.

He and others who reached out to him recently remembered seeing an arch and a piece of a wall, which backs up other stories about a very large house that once sat on the corner of King and Gage Streets. When Howe learned about the house, he realized what the kids saw was the back of it, where the kitchen stood.

"I wonder if an archaeological dig was ever done," he says. At the time, the focus was on getting the hole filled in quickly for the sake of the students — he doesn't remember anyone other than the kids being interested in what was down there.

Standing on the spot where the hole developed, he gestures to the size of the opening in the ground, and asks, "can you imagine? You're at school, playing with your friends, and all of a sudden this hole opens up beneath you? It seemed so strange."

And even stranger, he adds, that none of the adults, at least that he can remember, seemed at all curious about what they were looking at.

Although the story of the property being used for an outdoor meeting of parliament on a hot summer's day is well-known, the history of the building that came later is not as well known.

A couple of articles published in the former Niagara Advance explain what was on that corner, and what would have been seen below ground.

One article, written by Anne Buyers in 1988, describes what became to be known as the Plumb House in the late 1800s as the largest in NOTL, with many mature trees on the property, and a "three-storey red brick mansion." Her family was the last to live in the home, says local

historian Jim Smith.

The four-acre block bordered by King, Centre, Gage and Regent Streets had passed through many hands from the time four lots were deeded to the Macdonell family in 1796, before Senator Josiah Plumb, who appeared to have rented it from 1864, purchased the house in 1871.

Plumb, a successful businessman, was a Conservative who was first elected to the House of Commons in 1874, and was appointed to the Senate in 1883. He died suddenly in 1888, and he and his wife Elizabeth are buried in St. Mark's Cemetery.

It went through two more owners, including Buyer's parents, before it became the possession of the municipality for unpaid taxes, and the house was dismantled with various features and materials sold to residents. The municipality sold the land to the board of education in 1943, and the school was opened in 1948.

Smith's report in the Advance said when work began on construction of the school, a truck on site "suddenly sank into the ground." After the truck was pulled from the hole, local Noel Haines, who was operating the construction equipment, "climbed into the tunnel and walked all the way to Regent Street." In 1956, this same tunnel opened again, Smith said, "showing itself to us school kids. We all had a

look into it before once again it was closed."

Smith says the kids saw a brick-lined tunnel with an arched ceiling.

If the two remembrances are accurate, the ground must have caved in again about 10 years later, before finally being filled in for the last time.

Sarah Kaufman, managing director and curator of the NOTL Museum, says the archway found underground is the fireplace from the kitchens that were located down there, as mentioned by Buyers in her article. "Some people have assumed previously that it is some underground tunnel for smuggling people or booze, but that is very incorrect," says Kaufman.

Howe says his memory of what he saw fits with Buyers' description of the fireplace and the archway. There would have to have been large kitchens and a very large fireplace for the size of the home, he says, and they would have been at the back of the house, where the hole developed. However, although he knew Haines and his truck — everyone knew Haines, he adds — he questions whether the tunnel went as far as Regent Street. It would be nice to actually find blueprints of the house, and he wishes someone had taken photos of the hole, however, even without that documentation, "it's a very interesting story."



Robin Howe indicates the area of the hole in the ground when he and his friends saw it. (Penny Coles)



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Town asks for patience with road clearing

Penny Coles
The Local

With more than 50 centimetres of snow dumped on Niagara Sunday night and during the day Monday, town staff were still out plowing streets Tuesday, and cleanup was expected to continue throughout the week.

Town CAO Marnie Cluckie and operations staff Sheldon Randall provided an update Monday evening, with the key message for residents being to

have patience.

“Wow, what a kickoff to 2022,” said Cluckie, explaining town crews were quick to respond as the snow fall began, first clearing emergency vehicle routes before moving to main and secondary roads.

Randall said Monday’s goal was for snowplows to have made at least one pass on every road, with most main roads completed and secondary roads done by early Tuesday morning.

Plowing efforts paused at 9 p.m. Monday night, and crews

resumed their efforts Tuesday morning at 5 a.m. The town has six plows, one grader, two sanding units, three backhoes, and three sidewalk plows, with 10 operators for these units. All roads had been cleared once by Tuesday, but for some, only one lane.

With lots of talk on social media about piles of snow at the end of driveways, Randall suggested if residents can’t manage clearing snow themselves, to reach out to contractors for help.

The town at one time did

have a list of volunteers to help seniors and others who couldn’t manage themselves, but it’s been difficult to get volunteers, Randall said, suggesting anyone who is interested in helping should call the town.

If it’s a medical emergency, he said, phone 911.

“The response efforts can take several days,” Cluckie said of the cleanup. “We anticipate it will be a multi-day effort.”

The town is asking residents not to park on the street, to allow for snow removal.

The town is also asking residents not to skate on the Virgil ponds. It’s become a popular spot, as evidenced by the many photos on social media, and while it looks like fun, and “it’s been going on forever,” Randall reminded residents it’s not safe.

The water level changes, he says, making it dangerous. “It’s not a good idea to skate on ponds at all where there is water coming in and moving through.”

Regional garbage pick-up was cancelled Monday, and will

be a day late, with Friday’s pick-up expected to occur Saturday.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero took the opportunity during the committee meeting to thank all the front-line workers, including the fire department, doctors, nurses and paramedics. “We’ve been thanking them for two years now,” she said, and it’s important to remember to keep thanking them. “Put a sign in your window thanking them,” or say thank you if you have a chance. “Words of encouragement really help.”



Old Town after a snow storm

Photographer David Gilchrist says he was being followed by a large truck (above) and couldn’t help thinking it appropriate when he saw the name on the side. He was out looking for snow photos and found three iconic scenes — the gazebo, the statue of Simcoe in Simcoe Park, and the clock tower on Queen Street. The town had all its operators out yesterday, who took a bit of a break and were back at it early this morning.



Village of Queenston cloaked in white

Gail Kendall took these three photos, of the Niagara River at sunrise, looking toward Lake Ontario, Saint Saviour’s Anglican Church (above right) in Queenston, and the Stone Cottage on Walnut St. in Queenston Village (right).

Kids

Actual Kid-Friendly News

GAZETTE



SILLY PET PHOTO

Rufus is showing his little sister **Kiki** around NOTL

JANUARY 2022

Volume 2 • Issue 2

FIND THE SMILEY FACE HIDDEN ON THIS PAGE!

Local News

Friends of Fort George and Parks Canada are holding a fort building challenge throughout the month of January. The challenge - if you got to design your own fortification, what would it look like? Using any materials you can find at your

house, they would love to see what kind of fortification you would design. Email your fort creations to admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca by Jan. 29 to be entered for a chance to win a gift basket. The winner will be announced Jan. 31.

Book Review

Jenna D., 8
Kids Gazette

I am going to review the book *Sisters*, by Raina Telgemeier. I really like this book because I read it on a road trip and the characters were also on a road trip and I went to some of the same places as them. My favorite

part is when the sisters are trapped in the car for five hours. Some parts go back in time which keeps the story interesting. This is a true story and would appeal to seven to 12 year olds. Another good book by the same author is *Smile*. It has some scary parts and is a little more mature.

Winter Fun Fact

- In 2008 the world's tallest snow(wo)man was built in Maine. Her name was Olympia and she was 122 feet tall.

Q. What do you want to be when you grow up?

A. I would like to be an author and illustrator as I have been drawing and creating stories for years. Growing up I loved to read and came up with many story ideas which I am now in the process of turning into books.

Q. How would you change the world if you could?

A. I would stop all the wars and create world peace.

Q. What is your ideal day in NOTL?

A. I would start the day by playing at the park with my friends, then we'd go for a hike down by the shoreline and visit the cemetery for a picnic. I'd end the day with a carriage ride through town.

Q. What is your favourite book?

A. I have lots of favourites, I like fiction. I like the Find-

ing Serendipity series and the Edge of Extinction series, and I've just started the Keeper of the Lost Cities series. I like those because they are fantasy adventures, but I like the Bible the best. My favourite story in the Bible is the one of Jesus's birth.

Q. What do you do to help others?

A. I try to be sensitive to other people's feelings, and help them when they have a problem. My dad and I also give to charities. My dad and I are involved with March of Dimes, Hotel Dieu Shaver, cancer charities, and many others, but we try to help anyone who needs help.

Q. What is a fun family tradition you have at home?

A. I enjoy decorating the house for holiday celebrations like Christmas, Easter, Canada Day, and birthdays, along with

playing musical instruments with my dad and having tea parties (you're never too old to have tea parties). We got a dulcimer for Christmas and we also have a keyboard, ukulele, pan flute, flute, gazoo.

Q. What's that certain something that makes you special?

A. I'm a follower in Christianity, and I believe it's important to do good things and give the glory to God. Also be a good friend, respect nature, and be aware of your carbon footprint.

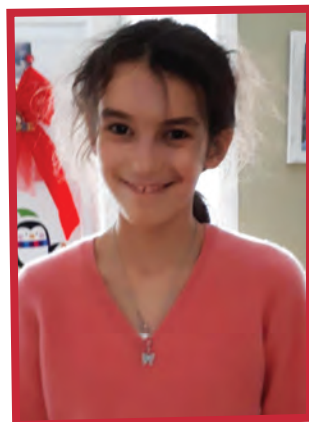
Q. What is your favourite thing about Niagara-on-the-Lake?

A. I love spotting different kinds of wildlife (the deer are my favourite), walking the shoreline of Niagara Shores Park, walks around town every night with my dad, spending quiet moments in Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery, and play-

ing at the playgrounds with friends.

Q. How do you keep yourself busy during the COVID lockdowns?

A. I have Zoom calls with my friends, reading, writing, music, drawing, hiking, taking photos and videos, outdoor fun (which included tobogganing and skating), reading to and playing with my gerbils. I'm also excited about following this year's Winter Olympics.



Taleah Bucci, II

Winter Activity

During winter, fill balloons with water and food colouring and place them outside to freeze. Once frozen, peel the balloons away from the ice balls and what remains will look like giant marbles!



FINISH THE STORY

With a friend, finish the story by filling in the blanks with words from the appropriate part of speech.

SNOW DAY!

So much _____ fell from the _____

(NOUN)

(PLACE)

last night that we got to stay home from

_____! There are _____

(PLACE)

(NUMBER)

centimeters of _____ on the ground, so

(NOUN)

we went outside to make _____ men

(NOUN)

and go _____ down a big hill. First, our

(VERB ENDING IN -ING)

mom made us put on a warm _____ and

(CLOTHING)

_____. After we were done, we went

(CLOTHING)

home to have hot _____ and _____

(BEVERAGE)

(FOOD)

to warm up.



JOKE By : Alice McGeachin, 7

Q. What is blue but not heavy?

A. Light blue

NIAGARA TRIVIA

Fort George was built more than 200 years ago by the British army.



CHARITY

We are looking for charities in which kids can participate. If you would like your organization to be highlighted here, please send your information to joyousnotlkids@gmail.com.

SUBMISSION INFO

The hope for this page is to get kids involved and interacting with the community in a positive way. We welcome submissions for all categories from kids of any age. Please keep the reviews positive and all submitted content appropriate for kids of all ages. Please send all submissions to joyousnotlkids@gmail.com and in the subject line please put the category for which you are submitting. Thank you.

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Yay, it's open!



With the skating rink at the Virgil Sports Park now open, Lord Mayor Betty Disero thanked Paolo Miele and other volunteers "for their dedication and hard work to advance this exciting initiative," and parks and recreation staff for their assistance. MPP Wayne Gates was on hand Saturday to celebrate the opening, when a little girl and her father were the first to try out the new rink. It will be open Monday to Friday 4 - 9 p.m., Saturday, 12 - 9 p.m., and Sunday 12 - 8 p.m. Volunteers will ensure all health and safety requirements are followed and that the ice is used for recreational purposes only (hockey is not allowed). (Photos supplied)



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- *Local* SPORTS -

Predators looking for local host homes

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The Niagara Predators are hoping to line up a couple of new billet families before the team returns to action on the scheduled date of Jan. 26.

For Patty Aulsebrook of Beamsville, billeting out-of-town hockey players in the Greater Metro Hockey League has been a fulfilling experience, even though she began her role as a self-professed 'den mother' somewhat reluctantly at the urging of her husband, Robin Bird.

"I was volun-told by my husband that I needed another hobby," she laughs. "He referees hockey, and over Christmas one year he brought home two Russian players who were here for a tournament. That was only a week, but it's grown over the years."

With their own kids having grown up and flown the coop,

she jokes that it has been a way for her to fill the empty nest.

Since that first week-long hosting experience a few years ago, their doors have been open to players from Spain, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, the U.S., and even a former female Olympic hockey player from Helsinki, Finland who came over to play in a Burlington tournament.

Many of the 14 players they have hosted during that time have left an impression, and long after they moved on she and Robin continue to follow their careers. But one former billet sticks out in Patty's mind, for obvious reasons.

"My daughter Taylor married one of our billets last year," Patty says. "Alex Whitehair from Rochester was billeting with us when he was 18. She was at college and living in an apartment, he was staying at our house. But that's how they met."

Whitehair's team, the Lincoln Mavericks, folded that year, and he moved to Almaguin of the league's Northern Division mid-season. The Spartans won the GMHL championship that year. Following his GMHL career, Whitehair played two seasons in Sweden and Taylor travelled with him there. They have been together for five years.

Asked how challenging it is to feed young hockey players, Aulsebrook says it's never been a problem until her current group.

"This generation, they don't like anything," she marvels. "They are simple eaters, so I make simple stuff. I always make sure on game days that they have pasta. I was buying a jug of Gatorade but they were drinking it like tap water, so I had to put restrictions on that. And I had to hide the protein

Continued on page 16



Host Patty Aulsebrook's daughter Taylor married former billet Alex Whitehair. (Photos supplied)

Local WORSHIP

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10:00 a.m.
Worship Gathering
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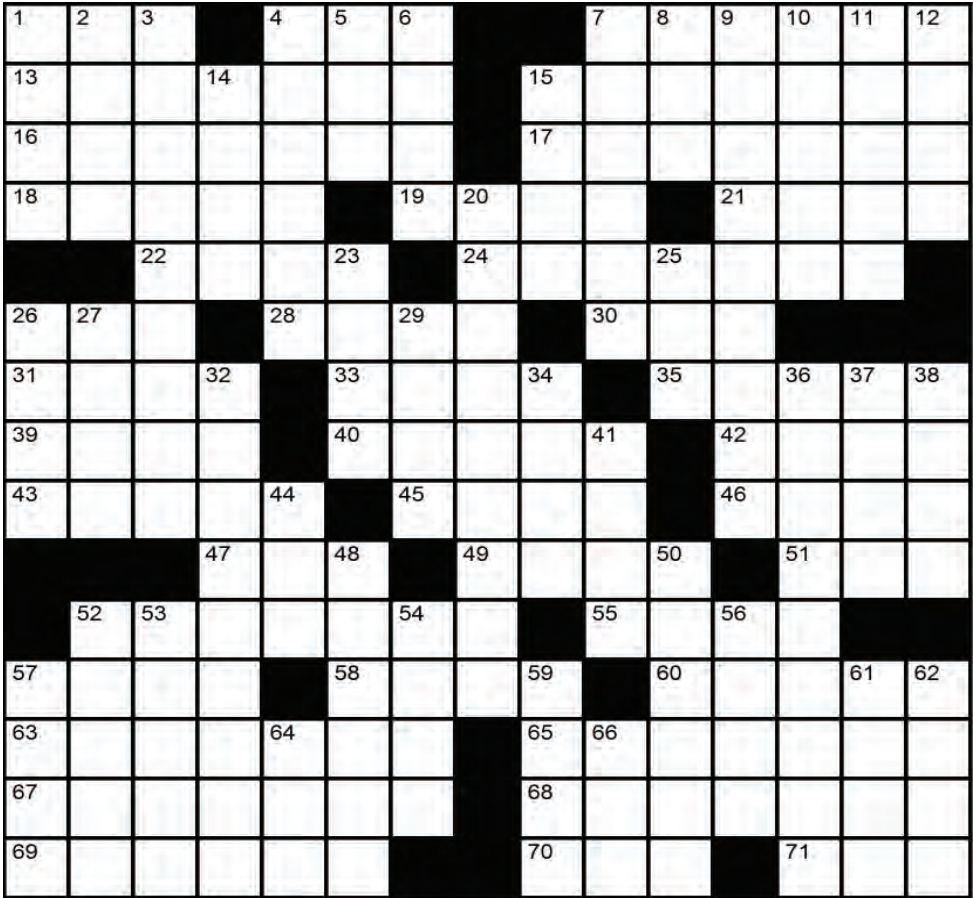
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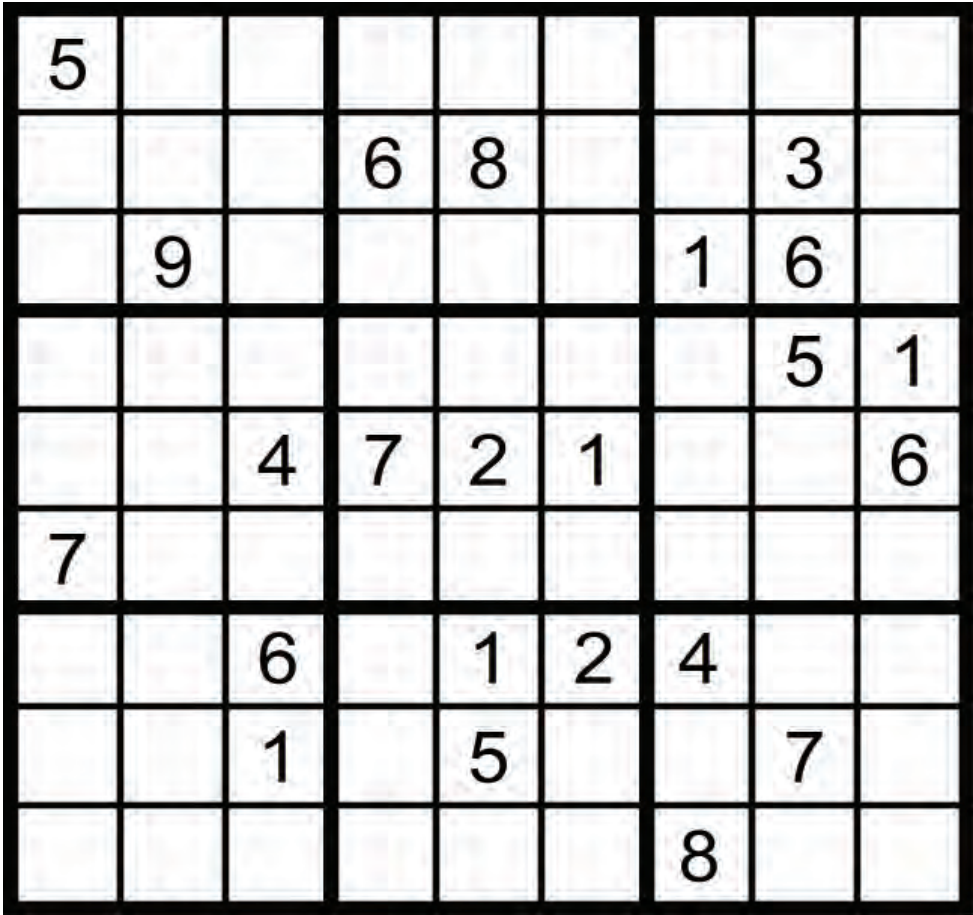
CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU



- Across:**

 - 1 Truckers' radio sets
 - 4 Some coins (Abbr.)
 - 7 Chew out
 - 13 Difficult position
 - 15 Singer Patti ---
 - 16 Place in order
 - 17 Enclosed territory
 - 18 Approaches
 - 19 Stop!
 - 21 French part of U S?
 - 22 Christian ---, couturier
 - 24 Stock market measures
 - 26 Advanced in years
 - 28 Turn over
 - 30 Deed
 - 31 Medium for Old Masters
 - 33 Lofty
 - 35 Tales
 - 39 Chirrup
 - 40 Implant
 - 42 High time
 - 43 A lazy one just goes round and round
 - 45 Verdi's Ethiopian princess
 - 46 Dorothy's dog
 - 47 Fleece
 - 49 Statutes
 - 51 Adage
- Down:**

 - 1 Martial arts actor Jackie ---
 - 2 Drill
 - 3 Spans
 - 4 Expurgator
 - 5 Label
 - 6 Mulligan, for example
 - 7 Northern neighbor
 - 8 Disney TV network
 - 9 Unwilling
 - 10 Shave
 - 11 Tupelo "King"
 - 12 Course launch pads?
 - 14 Hindu dress
- 15 "Trinity" author --- Uris
 - 20 Bumpkin
 - 23 Repetitive practice
 - 25 Very cold
 - 26 Oh dear!
 - 27 Place
 - 29 Tibetan priest
 - 32 Middle-age spread
 - 34 Seduced by a swan
 - 36 He started the Teddy Bear story
 - 37 --- bene: pay attention
 - 38 Coke
 - 41 "Delta ---", Tanya Tucker hit
 - 44 And not
 - 48 Bidding
 - 50 Comfort
 - 52 Prongs
 - 53 Facilitates
 - 54 Top-of-the-line
 - 56 Extinct Mauritian native
 - 57 N Y C fashionista --- Wang
 - 59 Checks
 - 61 The "New World" symphony was written in this (Abbr.)
 - 62 Religious faction
 - 64 French wine
 - 66 Signal



OBITUARY

At nearly 95 years old, **CORA DOREEN FRANCIS** left us on January 9th to join the angels and her beloved husband Frank after a long slow cognitive decline. Mourned by daughters Yvonne Rahn (Ross), NOTL and, in the UK, Denise Joyce and family. Special thanks to the staff at Upper Canada Lodge and dear friend Barbara O'Connor for many years of wonderful care. In honour of her memory, donations can be made to the Alzheimer Society.

SUDOKU SOLUTION

Sudoku solution from
January 12, 2022

6	4	1	8	7	2	5	9	3
5	8	9	1	6	3	7	4	2
2	3	7	5	9	4	8	6	1
1	9	6	7	2	5	3	8	4
7	5	8	3	4	6	1	2	9
4	2	3	9	1	8	6	7	5
3	6	5	2	8	9	4	1	7
9	7	4	6	3	1	2	5	8
8	1	2	4	5	7	9	3	6

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS

Across: 1 C Bs, 4 Cts, 7 Carpet, 13 Hot seat, 15 LaBelle, 16 Arrange, 17 Enclave, 18 Nears, 19 Whoa, 21 Units, 22 Dior, 24 Indices, 26 Old, 28 Roll, 30 Act, 31 Oils, 33 Tall, 35 Yarns, 39 Peep, 40 Embed, 42 Noon, 43 Susan, 45 Aida, 46 Toto, 47 Rob, 49 Laws, 51 Saw, 52 The real, 55 Node, 57 Viet, 58 Hoyt, 60 Loves, 63 Enliven, 65 Academe, 67 Reprise, 68 Buccolic, 69 Assent, 70 See, 71 TNT.

Down: 1 Chan, 2 Bore, 3 Straddles, 4 Censor, 5 Tag, 6 Stew, 7 Canada, 8 A B C, 9 Reluctant, 10 Plane, 11 Elvis, 12 Tees, 14 Sari, 15 Leon, 20 Hillbilly, 23 Rote, 25 Icy, 26 Oops, 27 Lieu, 29 Lama, 32 Spare tire, 34 Leda, 36 Roosevelt, 37 Nota, 38 Snow, 41 Dawn, 44 Nor, 48 Behest, 50 Solace, 52 Tines, 53 Helps, 54 A-one, 56 Dodo, 57 Vera, 59 Tabs, 61 E min, 62 Sect, 64 Vin, 66 Cue.



