



Free family skate attracts all ages

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### Fireside Fridays wrap up

Fort George manager and supervisor Dan Laroche led the final Parks Canada Fireside Friday talk at Navy Hall dressed as Fort Major Donald Campbell, showing those who attended artifacts found and collected over many years. For story and more photos see page 10. (Mike Balsom)

## NOTL artist HAUI shares important stories of diversity

Mike Balsom  
The Local

When Toronto’s b current Performing Arts Company brings *Freedom: A Mixtape - Live and Unplugged* back home to Niagara’s Suitcase in Point Theatre Company’s space, Niagara-on-the-Lake multi-disciplinary artist Howard J. Davis’s words will be part of the production.

The blend of original songs, stories, poems, anecdotes and spoken word pieces from artists around the Niagara region had its premier in Ottawa on Feb. 1, and will perform in Niagara on Feb. 23. But its genesis goes back four years ago when b current’s Marcel Stewart was interning at Suitcase in Point.

“It started out to be something historical,”

Stewart told The Local recently. “We thought about recreating some historical moments that were central to St. Catharines, starting at Harriet Tubman’s (BME) church and ending at city hall for the Emancipation Day flag-raising.”

But just after Stewart received funding for the idea, the Black Lives Matter movement arose in response to the murders of several Black men in the U.S. The project pivoted to something bigger, and that’s where Davis got involved.

“I was invited by Marcel to participate in this project about emancipation,” Davis says. “I had written this piece of poetry, and the Stratford Festival had done a cabaret on freedom and they put my poetry to

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## Mike Balsom nominated for Reporter of the Year

Penny Coles  
The Local

Last week community newspapers across Ontario learned of their nominations for the annual awards given out by the association that supports them in many ways.

We at The Local were excited, although not at all surprised, to learn that Mike Balsom has been nominated in the Reporter of the Year category.

He was also responsible for the nomination of best

news story, best news photo, and was instrumental in The Local’s recognition for the best sports section.

The Local was also nominated in the General Excellence category. The two editions submitted to the judge included great stories, features and graphic design, representing the work of all of our team, to our delight.

While the Ontario Community Newspaper Association released the top three nominees in each category and circulation size last

week, watch for the April announcement of the winners, so those nominated will take their place of first, second or third at that time.

There wouldn’t have been a sports section nomination for The Local if it wasn’t for Balsom, never mind the many pages of sports that earned it. From the newspaper’s earliest days, he has told the great stories about our young people in all minor sports. The two editions that earned the nomination also included the seasonal wrap-

up of the Hot Tub League of hockey players at the other end of the spectrum battling for a meaningful trophy, and swimming, sailing and more hockey in the summer.

This community has also learned about the many individual athletes from Niagara-on-the-Lake achieving national and International success in their chosen sport, thanks to Balsom.

He was originally asked to join the team at The Local because of his sports expertise. One of the goals of the paper

was to match the former Niagara Advance in its coverage of local kids — there were few young people who grew up in town without having their names, photos and accomplishments mentioned in their community newspaper, including sports.

But his talents are not limited to sports coverage. To be nominated in the Reporter of the Year category, three stories out of a year’s worth of articles had to be selected, and there were many stories on a wide range of topics from

which to choose.

Which is also not surprising, considering his diverse educational background and a variety of career choices.

As a young man, Balsom’s post-secondary education included starting an honours bachelor of business administration from Wilfrid Laurier University, completing a three-year diploma in radio, television and film from Niagara College, and then a bachelor of arts from

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# Town still working on permanent patio program

## Seasonal patios can continue through 2025

**Kris Dube**  
**The Local**  
**Local Journalism**  
**Initiative Reporter**

Town staff continue to work on a permanent seasonal patio program for food and drink establishments in the Old Town, but also have extended the current temporary program operating since 2020 by adopting a bylaw last week that allows it to run until 2025.

This comes after direction council gave to staff earlier this year to create a new program that doesn't need to be renewed each year, which is the case with the temporary program that will continue this March to October.

But while taking care of the temporary bylaw to extend what has already been in place, Coun. Sandra O'Connor brought forward an idea at a recent committee-of-the-whole meeting to create a fee for businesses with patios that occupy municipal parking spaces.

Her suggestion was not

added to the report before councillors last Tuesday, after Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said it was out of order, and staff agreed.

Zalepa argued that O'Connor's amendment falls into the category of a reconsideration of a decision already made.

"That should have been a decision to make when we had the report before us," said Zalepa, referring to the recent direction council took when it chose to keep the temporary plan in place for another year, until a more-detailed, permanent one is brought for consideration.

Planning director Kirsten McCauley said during last Tuesday's meeting that what was before councillors was a zoning matter and that issues such as fees could be part of the process as a new program is worked on.

"All of that information will be coming through the more permanent seasonal patio program," she said.

O'Connor settled on her



Sunset Grill is one of the much-appreciated Queen Street patios that will be allowed to continue for seasonal use until 2025. (File photo)

idea being submitted as a notice of motion.

The extension of the existing temporary use within the urban area will allow for the continuation of the program without application of any zoning bylaw provisions for the 2024 season, and provide time for staff to prepare a seasonal patio program and report back to council, staff said in its

information report.

In January, a motion from O'Connor was discussed over a staff report on the next steps in keeping the patios open eight months a year.

She was seeking her colleagues' approval to sunset the temporary program, terminating it until a permanent one is enacted.

It was defeated by council-

lors, who later elected to allow local eateries to continue sitting patrons outside on patio extensions this year from March to October.

At that time, O'Connor argued that her motion should be considered because of the impact patios have on an already "inadequate" parking situation downtown, as well as on public benches.

The program started as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and is similar to efforts made in other municipalities in Niagara to support their respective local businesses.

In Old Town, there are almost 40 businesses eligible for the program, but only seven participated last year, McCauley told councillors during January's discussion.

# 380 new homes slated for Concession 7 area

## Subdivision to be located between York and Queenston Roads

**Kris Dube**  
**The Local**  
**Local Journalism**  
**Initiative Reporter**

Town council is moving ahead with a proposed subdivision that has plans for 380 homes in the Glendale area, on Concession 7 between York Road and Queenston Road.

At last Tuesday's committee-of-the-whole meeting, councillors approved applications for Official Plan and zoning bylaw amendments, as well as a draft plan of a subdivision for Modero Estates, a step forward in allowing 55 single-detached dwellings, 121 on-street townhouses, 204 block townhouses, and a commercial building with three apartment units above on 23 hectares (about 56 acres).

Before the applications were endorsed, Coun. Sandra

O'Connor directed some questions and concerns to staff.

One was related to earlier information that the project could not be given the green light until a secondary plan for the Glendale area was completed, which has yet to take place.

But planning director Kirsten McCauley said conversations have evolved since then.

"Both the regional staff and town staff felt it could come forward at this time," said McCauley.

A "main concern" for O'Connor is that the project has plans for several of the units to use grinder pumps to force wastewater into the sewer main, used when homes are at a lower elevation than a nearby sewer system.

Asked by O'Connor how many homes will require grinder pumps, McCauley said

67 homes are currently expected to need them. But the developer, through a servicing strategy, is working to potentially reduce that number, she added.

McCauley also said the Region is not in favour of installing a pumping station for the subdivision. "They were supportive of the strategy we've come up with," she said.

Interim director of operations Darren MacKenzie also weighed in, saying the Region's position is that a pumping station would not be feasible, and would be too expensive.

"It really came down to the maintenance and usage for the Region on that," said MacKenzie.

O'Connor also doesn't like that the homeowners are being handed a responsibility and cost she feels belongs to the municipality.

"I'd like to see some other

kind of system considered," said O'Connor.

McCauley said as the draft plan of subdivision process unfolds, potential buyers will be notified of the need for grinder pumps and how to maintain and operate them.

The report approved by the town says town staff, the applicant, and the Region discussed a preferred servicing strategy to address the challenges with the site, and to avoid the need for a pumping station.

"While some dwelling units proposed will require grinder pumps, ejector pumps and gravity connections to ensure that there is viable servicing for all units in the subdivision, the servicing strategy has been developed to limit the number of pumps needed for individual dwelling units," says the report.

The servicing strategy will require the applicant to obtain an easement across 736 York Road to connect into the municipal system, staff said.

Coun. Erwin Wiens said

the use of grinder pumps should be considered an "education issue," and that people will be aware of the need for them. Homeowners, he added, will "understand what they're actually purchasing."

The Official Plan amendment requests the property be redesignated for residential use with a refinement to environmental designation boundaries. The zoning bylaw amendment requests site-specific zoning based on the

subdivision layout.

Marz Homes is the developer behind the project, working with property owner Rainier Hummel.

The impact of the new homes and setbacks on neighbours were topics at a public meeting held in December, which drew four people who spoke in opposition to the project for reasons that included the density of homes impacting neighbours, traffic, trees and the creek system through the area.



The new subdivision will offer a mix of housing types. (Supplied)

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# Stories guide art form that best expresses them

Continued from page 1

music in that show. It also inspired a piece of artwork that will be exhibited in Toronto this spring. And now the poem is published, and it's being performed by a really talented group of individuals from the Niagara Region."

Born in the UK to his Cuban-Jamaican father Kelly and his European mother Claire, Davis refers to himself as of mixed heritage. That diverse background has informed much of his work through the years.

The family moved back and forth between British Columbia and the UK through the years, but he now lives with his husband, Shaw Festival actor and director Peter Hinton-Davis, in NOTL.

Davis' nom d' art is HAUI, both a play on his first name and an acronym standing for Hybrid Artist Unique Interpretation. Though he originally studied and worked as an actor, his work encompasses so many aspects of creativity that it's difficult to pin him down.

"Often the stories will tell me which form they



Howard J. Davis (aka HAUI) in still taken from a promo video. (Photos supplied)

want to be shared in," Davis says. "I know that sounds a little artsy, but it's true that I'll be guided by narrative and story and composition. The stories will then demand the form that they need."

That is very much in evidence through his recent and upcoming projects, each of which tells a story of Black or LGBTQ+ history.

Davis recently returned

from Los Angeles, where his short film *Private Flowers* was screened at the Pan African Film Festival.

"Within the footnotes of Canadian history, I stumbled upon the story of this soldier being killed in 1852 for being with another man," Davis says. "That was buried amidst the frame of 80 documented cases of criminal acts of sodomy within the military. Part of my initiative was to tell the

whole truth about certain parts of our past so we can change and move forward conscientiously."

In this case, Davis says the story of *Private Flowers* needed to be told via dance.

"When talking about private, intimate acts between people, those moments are very visceral and physical," he explains. "That became the entry point for this piece. We had support from the National Ballet of Canada for a residency. I worked for a week with two dancers there."

Jera Wolfe and Rodney Diverlus bring the soldier's tale to life through graceful, sensual movement.

"They had never worked together, which was shocking to me," says Davis, who knew both dancers before meeting them for the film. "They danced so wonder-

fully with each other. It was really nice to be the glue to bring them together."

*Private Flowers* follows his previous film, 2020's award-winning *Mixed Up*, the one Davis calls his "manifesto of what it means to be someone who occupies multiple spaces," being both BIPOC and LGBTQ+. The film features Canadian Indigenous actor Tantoo Cardinal and includes home movie footage of a young Davis and his parents interspersed with his voice reciting his original poetry.

The Toronto gallery exhibition coming up this spring is a reframed photograph of his great-grandmother Mary that he has dubbed *Black Athena*.

"I've scaled the piece in this very ornate, baroque frame," says Davis. "It's a

frame that you would see very classical European artworks in, but here it's framing this beautiful Jamaican woman. It's very poignant to see a photograph that would often be lost in a wallet looking so grand."

This summer Davis will be spending a great deal of his time at Toronto's Canadian Opera Company working on his libretto for a new work about the life of Black Canadian contralto Portia White.

"Ironically, in her life, she could not perform on opera stages," Davis explains. "It felt very right to share Portia's story in the art form that rejected her throughout her life. She is talked about in many circles but largely forgotten. We have a responsibility as Canadians to uplift and share the stories of these people."

Davis promises that his collaboration with composer Sean Mayes will "not be your grandmother's opera," as it will include elements of classical, rhythm 'n' blues and hip-hop music in its score.

And you will hear a lot of rhythm 'n' blues and hip-hop at *Suitcase in Point's Freedom: A Mixtape - Live and Unplugged* this Saturday, Feb. 23 at 9 p.m. at 36 James Street in St. Catharines.

"What a life that has had," Davis says of Friday's performance. "I'm really proud of Marcel and though I've never really spent a lot of time with him in person, I feel connected to him and I'm happy I had a chance to work on this project."



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Jera Wolfe and Rodney Diverlus bring a soldier's tale to life through dance in *Private Flowers*.



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## The Local also nominated for general excellence

Continued from page 1

Brock University.

Although he had no formal journalism training, he says he has “always written for radio and television, going back to ’86 when I was hired as a news and sports reporter at CHOW radio in Welland. Radio especially is a good exercise for writers to learn how to be concise,” he says, and adds jokingly, “though that doesn’t always show up in my work for The Local!”

Between his love of music at an early age and his radio experience, entertainment is “definitely right at the top of my list” of topics he likes to write about, along with sports.

“Actually, my very first published writing was a story about time travel and dinosaurs in the Power Glen Yearbook when I was in Grade 6,” he recalls. Once bitten by the publishing bug, he followed that with articles while at Wilfrid Laurier, “when I wrote a few record reviews for the student newspaper. I remember the first one was about Kate Bush’s album *The Dreaming*.”

He also submitted a few pieces to the former Pulse Niagara publication, he says, while attending Niagara College, and reviewed a few concerts for the Brock Press

when he was at university in St. Catharines, which took him up to 1991.

By then he had been drawn to teaching, and attended teachers' college at D'Youville College in Buffalo, as well as taking additional courses through Queen's University.

He has taught at Gananoque Secondary School, Kingston Collegiate and Vocational Institute, and Thousand Islands Secondary School in Brockville. After deciding to return to St. Catharines, he happened to be at the right place at the right time, he says, and landed at Laura Secord Secondary School, where he taught full-time until 2021. Since retiring, he has balanced his time between work as an occasional teacher with the DSBN, writing several stories a week for *The Local*, and covering Niagara news as a TV broadcaster for *The Source* at Cogeco, where he tackles topics ranging from politics, to arts and entertainment, and the great people stories he tells so well.

His articles and photos appear as well on the Village Media website, where he also takes part in a regular video program called Behind the Scenes, in which he talks about everything from housing to pickleball, cemeteries to speed cameras, based on

stories written for print and broadcast in segments across the province and beyond. Expect that to continue, and please check out [notllocal.com](http://notllocal.com) and search 'Behind the Scenes, Mike Balsom' to check out any you've missed.

Balsom's background and extensive knowledge help him produce informative pieces on a variety of topics, including music and entertainment.

"I started collecting records when I was 11 years old," he says. "I still have every record and CD I have ever bought, except for one that still irks me today." He still has his first album, though, "a copy of *Lighthouse Live* that I found in a cut-out bin at Hills Department store in Niagara Falls, New York, for 99 cents."

Through the years, he adds, "I subscribed to countless music magazines and I still devour biographies of musicians regularly. I think I absorbed a lot of that style of writing naturally."

He says the same of sports: he played baseball as a youngster, high school football which included a city championship with West Park Secondary School, earned a silver medal at the Schoolboy rowing competition, played slo-pitch and soccer as an adult, and has coached track and field, soccer, rowing and bas-

ketball while teaching. He began coaching for the NOTL Soccer Club when his son started playing in 2004, and he has continued to coach for the club “off and on” and still sits on the club’s board of directors today.

The fact that he subscribed to *Sports Illustrated* for 30 years, he says, likely means he “probably also absorbed some of that style of writing.”

As evidence of his range of skills, the nomination for Reporter of the Year was based on three very different stories. One was of the rally held at the NOTL Pride crosswalk across Anderson Lane, with this headline: Residents stand strong against hatred.

The rally had been organized to show outrage for the repeated vandalism to the crosswalk, but when a large crowd of locals showed up to support it, they discovered the crosswalk had been vandalized again just that morning.

Also included in the nomination was a feature story about the dry stone waller who built the wall at the end of Mississagua Street, and a contentious town meeting about the Rand Estate held last April, which was moved to the community centre to accommodate a large and passionate crowd of residents.

Although Balsom doesn't cover a lot of politics for The



The photo taken on Anne Street by Mike Balsom is nominated for best news photo. *(Mike Balsom)*

Local, that meeting was also the subject of his nomination for best news story.

The nomination for best news story was also for the Pride crosswalk story, and best news photo came from a situation of police being called to an incident on Anne Street. No criminal charges were laid, but his photo of a Niagara Regional Police officer carrying an automatic weapon as he strolled along the street on a Sunday afternoon made the grade.

While politics and police stories were not on the list of Balsom's favourite stories, entertainment and sports "are definitely right at the top," he says.

However, “number one for me is getting a chance to write about people. I’ve been volunteering with Cogeco

since 1986, and with my role hosting *The Source* I do between 300 and 325 interviews a year. By far, asking people to talk about what they love and what they have accomplished is my absolute favourite thing to do, whether it be on television or in *The Local*. The happiness that I see on people's faces while they talk to me is the biggest reward. In fact, I'm much more comfortable listening to people tell me about themselves than I am talking about myself, like right now!"

We congratulate Mike on the recognition of his multi-faceted talents, thank him for coming along on the journey with us as we focus on online journalism with Village Media, and look forward to sharing further good news when winners are announced.

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# EDITORIAL

## Family Day is a different kind of holiday

There's something about Family Day that sets it apart from other holidays.

No religious affiliation. No nationalism involved. No pressure to give gifts or to cook a turkey with all the trimmings. No wild celebration. Just a day to spend with those closest to your heart, if you're fortunate enough to have them.

The idea of a holiday on the third Monday in February first came about in Alberta in February 1989. With a provincial election soon to come, then-Premier Don Getty delivered a throne speech that stressed family values and promised a battle against drugs via the start of the Alberta Family Life and Drug Abuse Foundation.

Jumping on a proposal by the opposition New Democrats, Getty went on to announce a statutory holiday called Alberta's Family Day that would "provide an opportunity to celebrate the strength and vitality of families" starting in 1990.

It took a while, but other provinces followed. Saskatchewan celebrated its first Family Day in 2007. The following year two other provinces put a unique spin on a new holiday to be recognized the same day. Manitoba named its new February holiday Louis Riel Day, while Prince Edward Island celebrated its heritage and geography by calling the third Monday in February Islander Day.

Shortly after his re-election in October 2007, Ontario's then-Premier Dalton McGuinty announced that the new statutory holiday would also be celebrated for the first time the following year.

That was great news. After all, who wouldn't want another statutory holiday?

But I remember thinking that first year that the name Family Day was kind of strange, maybe even a bit weak as far as the name for a holiday. The Americans called their February holiday Presidents' Day.

Why couldn't Ontario come up with something along those lines?

Looking back now, I realize that the name was perfect, because it prompted our tiny family of four to plan something together.

That first year our kids were seven and four years old. We planned an overnight trip to Toronto with the highlight being a day spent at the Ontario Science Centre. We checked into a hotel Sunday afternoon, picked up my sister Jo-Anne from her apartment in Toronto, and brought her back to the hotel for a swim and dinner.

The following day we explored the Science Centre, a place I hadn't visited since a school trip some time in the 1970s. It was, of course, packed with other families, but I vividly recall the wide-eyed wonder of both of our children as they learned about dinosaurs and laughed as their hair went wild while touching the Van de Graaff machine, a.k.a. the static

electricity ball.

My memories of subsequent years aren't quite as vivid. Other Family Days were spent tobogganing at Fort George and going out for a special dinner as a family. One February holiday I remember us exploring the ice cave phenomena at Crystal Beach.

This year marked our first Family Day without all of us living under the same roof. Our son Sebastian is currently attending Sir Sandford Fleming College in Lindsay, Ontario. Until he informed us on Friday that he was coming back to NOTL to spend Monday with us, we assumed we would not all be together for the very first time.

It was a great surprise.

We played it by ear, though, and didn't make huge plans. We considered a trip to the Niagara Parks Power Station, maybe seeing a movie in those amazingly comfortable chairs at Landmark Cinemas at the Pen Centre, and maybe a dinner out.

In the end, the four of us

decided to enjoy a sunny afternoon walking with our combined three dogs through the trails at Woodend Conservation Area. We weren't the only ones experiencing nature Monday, either, as we encountered many other families walking together. The weather was perfect and the dogs were in their element.

We capped it off later with some takeout from the Sandtrap

before Sebastian made the journey back to Lindsay.

It was perfect, and just as memorable as that February 2008 Monday at the Ontario Science Centre. To me, that's what Family Day is, and should be, all about.

And I hope your holiday Monday was as enjoyable as ours.

**Mike Balsom**  
**The Local**



Victoria, Mike, Mishka and Sebastian Balsom, with four-legged family members Juniper, Bailey and Dolly, enjoyed a walk on a sunny Family Day at Woodend Conservation Area.

## Welland River deserves another look



**Owen Bjorgan**  
**Special to The Local**

What comes to mind for you when you think about Niagara Region's largest watershed, the Welland River?

Before I give our 135-kilometre river some love, I'm going to recite what I've heard from Niagara locals over the years. From its headwaters near Mount Hope outside of Ham-

ilton, it collects a lot of comments as it meanders its way towards the Niagara River.

They say it's dirty. It's gross, and you better not swim there. It's boring. It's just something to drive over.

A smaller and more optimistic group says it is an unsung wonder, with surprisingly good fishing, boating, and other recreational opportunities.

To the Indigenous Peoples, it has been an ancient transect trail across the Niagara Peninsula for thousands of years.

Let's play in the muck and address the first of those comments. It is no secret that the

Welland River has notorious water quality problems. This issue is no stranger to Niagara, as most of our waterways are faced with the same umbrella issues impacting the water and the associated wildlife.

The first thing you will notice about the Welland River anywhere upstream of the QEW is that it is brown. The amount of sediment in a waterway and its associated darkness is called turbidity, and this river is chocolate milk level turbid. For much of the river's coverage, you wouldn't be able to see your hand a couple of inches beneath the water.

A local environmentalist and respected friend of mine tells me he loves the Welland River, and one day even aspires to make a documentary specifically about it. He logs plenty of time along it with his boat, fishing and occasionally even taking a dip.

He admitted that one time, he jumped off the boat with a challenging curiosity to feel what the water and even the bottom of the river felt like. Not to his surprise, and to the expected disgust of most, the bottom was a slimy sediment soup. It's nightmare fuel for those who don't like the feeling of not seeing the bottom or having unknown substances touch their feet.

This is a situation created by the way in which much of the Welland River's shoreline has been treated since colonial settlement times. When southern Ontario fell victim to one of the largest mass logging operations in human history, there was no thought on the value of leaving trees and wetlands along the shorelines intact.

As witnessed today, many farms go right to the bank of the river. Call it what you want; there is no filter, comb, barrier, sponge, or catchment net of vegetation to slow the amount of soil, often riddled with nuisance chemicals, from entering the river. Therefore, we get a brown river filled with nitrogen and phosphorus, allowing algae to bloom in damaging amounts.

The river is then left with less oxygen content and decreased water clarity. Suddenly, this limits the amount of wildlife that could normally thrive here. Yet, there is resilience from the local animals along the broadest and lengthiest river we've got.

The same friend who tested the texture of the river bottom says that people are still pulling walleye (erroneously known as "pickereel" for most Canadian readers) out of the river. Nearly any fish found in the Niagara River, which contains a national high of 70-plus species, could potentially venture up the Welland River for someone's lucky catch.

Another friend who owns property along the river near the QEW consistently posts and sends me videos of coyotes, foxes, nesting turtles, and other wildlife in great abundance on his property.

Anyone who owns a canoe, kayak, or small boat can easily enjoy the river's wildlife experience, especially the bird life. There are no rapids or major obstacles to stop someone with an exploratory attitude. The only major obstacle is the engineering marvel where the Welland River actually flows under the Welland Canal.

Once away from the highway, the Welland River can offer a peacefully quiet refuge for humans and animals alike. The countryside is a classic Niagara recipe, showcasing old barns, rolling farm fields, and precious patches of woods and wetlands that still give life to our backyard river. I wouldn't encourage too long of a swim, but I would encourage you to give the Welland River a fresh look of appreciation.

## View from the couch

**Donald Combe**  
**Special to The Local**

*The Englishman Who Went Up A Hill But Came Down A Mountain* (Prime, 1995) is a believable fantasy of the struggle between pragma-

tism and dreams. If our hill is not the mountain we want, we make our dream a reality and transform the hill into a mountain. The film is both refreshing and endearing; I loved it.

Donald Combe is a retired

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

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P.O. Box 430, 1596 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, L0S 1T0

Editor:  
Penny Coles  
penny@notllocal.com  
905-246-5878

Publisher:  
The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local

Village Media Regional Publisher (online sales)  
John Hammill  
John@villagemedia.ca  
905-988-5599 ext 1157

Advertising Sales:  
Joy Sanguedolce - NOTL  
joy@notllocal.com  
416-817-0920

Julia Coles - outside NOTL  
julia@notllocal.com  
905-934-1040

Graphic Designer: Rosie Gowsell  
composing@notllocal.com  
News Tips: news@notllocal.com

notllocal.com facebook.com/notllocal instagram.com/thenotllocal @thenotllocal



### Where's Ben?

Edén student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notllocal.com.

Last week, Ben was on the Kurtz Orchards bridge near the corner of East and West Line and the Niagara River Parkway.



# COMMENT

## Wayne Gates shares his priorities for 2024

**Wayne Gates, MPP  
Niagara Falls Riding**

This week, the Ontario legislature will be returning to Queen's Park.

We have been out of the provincial legislature for over two months now, since Dec. 6 of last year, when Premier Doug Ford chose to recess the legislature early, after a damaging report from the auditor general on the Greenbelt scandal.

To me, as your Member of Provincial Parliament, this is unacceptable, particularly while we are dealing with several serious challenges in the Province of Ontario.

However, now that we are returning, I want to touch base with you on what my priorities are for this session at Queen's Park — for every resident of Niagara-on-the-Lake, from St. Davids, to Queenston, Virgil and the Old Town.

A top priority of mine is healthcare. It is no secret that the province is facing great challenges on the healthcare file. We have long wait times, the lowest level of hospital beds in the country, a historic staffing crisis and an alarming number of emergency room and urgent care closures — more than 1,000 last year alone.

Firstly, we need to properly fund our public healthcare system. The independent Financial Accountability Office has reported the provincial government under Ford will be allocating \$21 billion less — that's right, less — over the next five years. Our healthcare system is suffering, while we sit on a large budget surplus and a healthy fiscal situation in the province. We need to reverse this trend and properly fund our healthcare system.

We got some good news



MPP Wayne Gates has worked toward reducing taxes for the Niagara wine industry, and hopes to do the same for craft breweries. (Supplied)

recently, with the Ford government back-tracking on their decision on Bill 124, the wage-suppression legislation that affects nurses and front-line staff. This is something we have been fighting for now for almost five years.

Going forward, we should pay healthcare heroes what they deserve — and we should establish nurse-to-patient ratios to ensure the highest quality of care for patients and fair working conditions for frontline staff.

Locally, we've made some good progress on healthcare access, including getting shovels in the ground at the new South Niagara Hospital, an issue we have been championing since I was first elected in 2014, which includes securing a \$1.5 million planning grant.

But more needs to be done, including working to get nurse practitioner services back in the community here in NOTL. My office has been working closely with Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and town council to get the ministry of health to action this as soon as possible.

The minister of health promised the town a nurse practitioner more than a year ago, and it's time they fulfill their promise. So as I return to Queen's Park, I will be working to get this accomplished as soon as possible.

We also need to continue to work with the provincial government to get additional grants and resources to help smaller municipalities such as Niagara-on-the-Lake recruit and retain more primary care physicians. We know we have an older population here, with almost a third of residents in Niagara-on-the-Lake being over 65, and we know that senior residents present with more complex healthcare needs.

Local organizations such as the Niagara North Family Health Team have been doing a great job to close the gap in care, and we have been working with local and provincial stakeholders to get more physicians and services to people who need them.

We need to also ensure that we support key local industries in Niagara-on-the-Lake. By coming to-

gether, we did excellent work getting important reforms for the wine industry late last year, including eliminating the basic 6.1 per cent tax on Ontario retail winery sales, an important reform for small and medium-sized wineries.

Going forward, we are going to work together on other important investments, such as supporting the Shaw Festival and the restoration of the Royal George Theatre. I will be working closely with both Tim Jennings and the senior leadership team at the Shaw, as well as the minister of tourism, to get the provincial investment needed to preserve the Royal George that plays such a crucial role in the local economy.

We're also going to work on supporting another key local industry — our Niagara craft brewers. We will work together with craft brewers and the provincial government to reduce excessive red tape on brewers, treat brewers fairly on taxes and rates and incentivizing growth in the industry.

We need to keep up the good work we have been doing to protect our cultural heritage here in NOTL. We need the province to allow for more time to get heritage status for all properties on its register. With one of the highest, or potentially the highest, number of heritage sites in any municipality in the province, special consideration needs to be given to NOTL to ensure we protect existing heritage status for significant properties.

Working together, we can continue to invest in top-quality public services for all residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake, while supporting important local industries and retaining what makes this town so special.

## Local LETTERS

### 'Garbage pickers': Keep up your good work

It was wonderful to read your recent article about Debbie Redekop and her mission to keep her stretch of Concession 2 litter-free.

I am a fellow 'garbage picker' who was inspired by the author David Sedaris, who routinely puts 20,000 to 30,000 steps on his Fit Bit in a single day picking up litter in his own rural neighbourhood.

While definitely not as committed as him, I do my small bit and find it satisfying, baffling and depressing in equal measures. Long gone are the days we would find computer monitors and recliner chairs in our ditches, thanks I'm sure to the region's free large item pick-up program, and we haven't had any neatly stacked piles of old tires lately either.

Nowadays it is beer cans... lots and lots of beer cans (the depressing part), cigarette butts and packs, Timmy's cups of course and a surprising number of Happy Meal boxes (very depressing).

Some of the items that fall into the baffling category would be the discarded crate of rotten pineapples (I kid you not), the pile of fuse boxes and other assorted electrical components (hello... scrap metal!) and just recent-

ly a rain-swollen copy of *The Bravest Boy* which I picture some disgruntled third-grader chucking out the school bus window.

During the COVID lockdown in the summer of 2020, a beer keg appeared, floating in the deep ditch on the south side of our road. As the water level rose and fell with the weather, the keg very slowly over the next year or so made its way along the ditch until it reached a culvert, where it ducked under the road only to pop out again on the north side some several months later. Now it remains lodged there against a discarded railroad tie. If the town ever decides to clean the drainage ditch they will hopefully deal with it as it's definitely too big for me to handle.

The satisfaction I spoke of comes from logging those Fit Bit steps and knowing the local Air Cadets are benefiting from all those empty beer cans I donate to their periodic bottle drives.

So kudos to Debbie Redekop and all those many others I am sure are out there keeping their little corners of NOTL litter-free. Keep up the good work.

**Lou-Anne Cairns  
NOTL**

## Ricky Rap

Ricky Rap is a list of 10 thoughts and offerings from Niagara's own Rick Mills. Retired from more than 30 years of management in the steel

industry, he continues pastoral ministry here in town. Ricky Rap, he says, is intended to help us to believe in and laugh at ourselves.

1. Such division.
2. Saddens me.
3. Indoctrinated upbringings.
4. Concreted ideological thinking.
5. Fear...
6. Of being wrong.
7. Want...
8. Of being right.
9. Try not letting perfect be enemy of the good.
10. Only thing perfect is the love of God



Rick Mills (Supplied)



### STAY IN THE LOOP

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# Reluctant tenor's life story leads to NOTL

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Peter Blanchet never set out to become an opera singer. But his tenor ended up taking him across the world where he shared stages with the likes of Placido Domingo, Dame Joan Sutherland, Renee Fleming, Liza Minnelli and Madeline Kahn.

Now retired and living in NOTL with his husband, Brad Eyres, Blanchet has just released *The Reluctant Tenor*, a self-published book about his journey from his Toronto childhood to some of the most famous opera houses over almost three decades.

Blanchet, who first realized he could sing in Grade 1 at St. Elizabeth Primary School when his teacher asked him to perform in front of the student body, is certain that he inherited his voice from his father, Gerry.

"Dad had a beautiful voice, much better than mine was," Blanchet says. "But he was in school during the war, so he had to choose something that was a little more secure. So he became a doctor at 19 years old through an accelerated program at the University of Toronto."

Blanchet went on to high school at Silverthorn Collegiate Institute where he fell in love with musical theatre. He was set to perform in the school's production of *Sweet Charity* when a teachers' strike cancelled all after-school activities. But by then he had chosen to study music at Queen's University in Kingston upon graduation.

It was while at Queen's in 1980 that he received an invitation to Courtenay Youth Music School in British Columbia to sing in Mozart's *Magic Flute*. The fact that it was a paid engagement convinced Blanchet to reluctantly give opera a try. There he met pianist and conductor Jacqueline Richard, who invited him to study opera with her in Dusseldorf, Germany.

But he left Germany after 12 months, putting opera aside for a two-year stint back in Canada with the vocal group the Tapestry Singers.

"That was a really forma-



Retired opera singer Peter Blanchet works with young Shaw actors to hone their singing voices for the stage. (Photos supplied)

tive time for me," Blanchet says. "We toured all around the country doing musical theatre pieces, classical, jazz. All vocal. We were like a vocal Canadian Brass. It was a great experience performing under every circumstance."

Then it was back to opera when he was accepted for the Canadian Opera Company's (COC) Ensemble Studio, a program for young artists that was in its infancy under director Lotfi Mansouri.

"That's when opera really took off for me," Blanchet recalls. "He was a mentor for me. They brought in people from all over and we worked with important conductors and performed minor roles in the COC's big operas."

The diminutive Blanchet realized those minor roles were what fit his voice best.

"I would have loved to have had the starring roles," he says, "but I discovered what I was really good at. I realized I would get hired for the smaller roles rather than having to wait for the big starring roles that would never come. It allowed me to work very steadily throughout my career."

The Ensemble Studio was his training ground for four years. Soon he was off to Hawaii to sing in three operas. A stint with the Chicago Lyric Opera followed, then he performed with Dame Joan Sutherland at the Dallas Opera, singing Njegus in *The Merry Widow*.

His longest engagement was the nearly 10 years he

spent at the New York City Opera, where he debuted singing Remendado in *Carmen*.

Operatic adventures followed all across the U.S. and Canada as well as in Hong Kong, Japan and the Netherlands, where he sang Goro in *Madama Butterfly*.

"That was really my favourite role, my signature role if you will," Blanchet says of Goro, which he also performed in Los Angeles and elsewhere.

When an offer came in for him to work as a master chocolatier and spokesperson for a large Canadian chocolate company, Blanchet decided to leave the stage. His final performance was in *The Marriage of Figaro* playing the roles of Basilio and Don Curzio for Opera Lyra Ottawa in 2008.

"I had been talking about quitting and I was looking for an out," he says. "I tried to do both for about eight months, but it didn't work. The new job gave me a steady paycheck and I loved it."

The company eliminated his position during COVID, and that prompted him and Brad, a former Toronto city manager whose visual art is now on display at the Mann Gallery at 13th Street Winery, to take a look at their finances. They decided to sell their Cabbagetown townhouse and move to The Village in NOTL.

The pandemic also gave Blanchet time to sit down

and write the 85-page book that lays bare his struggles with stage fright, anxiety, claustrophobia and loneliness throughout a very successful career. It also includes a number of humorous anecdotes about his experiences along the way. *The Reluctant Tenor* is available in print or as an ebook via Amazon.ca.

Blanchet's biggest regret when it comes to opera is not having had the chance to perform at New York's Metropolitan Opera, though he did experience a gruelling audition there. But opera gave him a great life, he says, although it really was a tough business.

Coming full circle, the 66-year-old is now heading back to the stage. His volunteer work as a docent with the Shaw Festival has led to an invitation from associate artistic director Kimberley Rampersad to help 11 young actors develop their singing voices. His first session with them was this Tuesday.

"My job is to listen to them sing and give them tips and tricks," Blanchet explains. "Then I want to give them a warm-up for their voices. The important thing is to not leave your voice in the dressing room. You want to save it for the stage."

It's an exciting new adventure for the ebullient, enthusiastic Blanchet, who says he

and Brad, who got married at a friend's house on the Niagara Parkway, are living a charmed life here in NOTL.

"We just love being here," says Blanchet. "We have so many friends we can be out pretty much every night."



Peter Blanchet in his signature role as Goro in *Madama Butterfly*.



Peter Blanchet in costume as Frantz from *The Tales of Hoffmann* by Offenbach, one of the comic roles that he became known for.



## 2024 MUNICIPAL TAX REMINDER NOTICE Interim First Installment due February 29, 2024 Tax Rates as per Interim By-Law No. 2024-004

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If you didn't receive a tax notice, please call the Town at 905-468-3266 ext. 0 to ensure your correct mailing address and PO Box number are on file. To avoid penalties and interest charges, the Town must receive payment by February 29, 2024. On the first day of default and every month after, a 1.25% penalty will be added. Penalties will not be waived.

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# A chance to hold history in their hands

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

The penultimate Parks Canada Fireside Friday brought almost 40 curious visitors up close and personal to 27 interesting artifacts at Navy Hall last week.

Fort George manager and supervisor Dan Laroche, dressed in period British officer costume as Fort Major Dan Campbell (right down to the glasses and the watch and fob he was wearing), enthusiastically presided over an hour-long session dubbed Wacky,

Weird and Wonderful: When Artifacts Go Wild.

"It's one of my favourite days of the year when I get to do this," Laroche told The Local Friday. "During a usual visit to the fort, unless somebody spends hours talking to one of us, they don't usually get a chance to learn so much about these items. And here they get to touch them."

A snuff horn, a gunpowder box, a sausage stuffer, a cribbage board from the early 19th century, a bed warmer, a marrow spoon and an early Wedgewood cup and saucer

were among the pieces that Laroche laid out on tables within reach of the participants. His explanations shed much light on the everyday life of the soldiers and militia members who once populated the fort.

Officers, explained Laroche, though not all aristocrats, came from reasonable backgrounds because they were expected to be educated, able to read and write. At the time, education in England was not free, so only those who could afford it would go to school.

"That was the big difference between the upper and mid-

dle classes," he explained. "In contrast, Scotland had more access to free education than anywhere else in the Empire. Statistically speaking, there were more Scottish officers in the British army than English officers, and that is exactly the reason why."

Holding up a gunpowder box that he opened to reveal three tin canisters, Laroche explained that it would have been part of the personal property of a soldier, used to hold three different types of gunpowder for an officer to use for hunting purposes.

"After the attempted mutiny in 1803, Brock wanted to keep the soldiers out of the town because it was known as the nest of all wickedness," said Laroche with a sly smile. "That occupied their spare time. The two things that are the bane of existence in the military are booze and boredom. So Brock allowed them to go hunting using their military-issued musket."

Though Laroche guided the walk through history that the artifacts inspired, it was a participatory session. As he held up each item, he encouraged the attendees to take a guess as to what it was. Once he explained their relevance, he fielded many probing questions from an engaged audience.

The two-piece sausage stuffer, which Laroche later identified as the only item on hand Friday that was actually a reproduction, received some of the most out-there of those attempts.

"It's a roller for flour," said one attendee. "It's a smoker," offered another. "It's for tenderizing meat," was one person's guess. Another thought it might be for decorating cakes, to which Laroche countered "sure, for Paul Bunyan's cake."

A deep-seated papier-mache coaster and a bidet built into a wooden cabinet were two other items that puzzled Laroche's audience.

Some questions popped up about exactly how Parks Canada may have gone about collecting the pieces on the tables.

"We acquire artifacts and antiques the same way you folks would if you are interested in getting them," explained Laroche. "Almost all of these came from auctions or antique stores. Back in the 1980s Parks Canada had people whose jobs it was to go forth and find things appropriate to the period. If things need restoration, we have fairly decent conservation laboratories at our headquarters in Ottawa."

Today, he added, most of the acquisitions are done through online auction houses, including eBay, which is how they were able to take possession of a portrait of an officer who actually was stationed at Fort George, one of the most valuable pieces on display Friday, trumped only by a framed map of the fort from 1804.



Dave Sloan gets a closer look at a half-kettle from Fort George.



Friends of Fort George member Tom Pekar inspects a double-barrelled pistol.

The oldest item on hand Friday? That would have been the pewter serving plate, known back then as a charger. It has the crest of King George on it, though it lacked any identification as to exactly which King George it represented. Laroche pegged the plate from the officer's mess to be from the 1740s, edging out an intricately decorated silver samovar, or urn, that was made in 1786.

The fact that the plate was made out of pewter prompted one interested guest to ask about its potential to include any damaging content.

"The lead content in items like this would have been quite high," Laroche said. "Some of the soldiers' spoons were terrible with high lead content. Just about everything you're looking at that is soldered would have been lead soldered, too. There absolutely had to be lead poisoning back then."

At the end of the informative session, NOTL town crier Tom Pekar, a member of The Friends of Fort George, picked up a small double-barrelled pistol that a maintenance supervisor found at Queenston Heights a few years ago.

Dave Sloan of St. Catharines spent a little extra time at the end of the session getting a closer look at a flat-backed copper half-kettle that Laroche said was most likely used to

make hot chocolate.

"They are really all so interesting," Sloan said. "From a heritage perspective, the belt buckle from the Lincoln regiment soldier is very interesting. That's part of our local history. Someone from this area had that and may or may not have survived the battle. That's a direct link to our past."

Laroche told The Local that there are hundreds of such items that rarely get the attention they deserve through the year. In fact, he added, the list is so long he could continue to do this annual talk for decades before ever having to repeat an item.

And in the tourism off-season, it's an important way to keep Fort George and Parks Canada in the minds of those who live in its backyard.

"We really want to keep the relationship going with our locals," Laroche said. "It's a great way to keep the stories going, and it keeps us relevant. And this is all relevant to local history."

The final Fireside Friday features Parks Canada visitor experience, product development officer Peter Martin and engagement officer Elizabeth LeBlanc shedding light on the British Army soldiers who wore green during the War of 1812. It takes place at Navy Hall at 11 a.m. on Feb. 23.



Fort George manager and supervisor Dan Laroche, leading the talk dressed as Fort Major Donald Campbell, shows off a silver samovar made in 1786. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

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# COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT #1 - FEBRUARY 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2024

**ANNOUNCEMENT SERIES:** We are presenting a series of community announcements to inform the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake, about who we are, the history of this unique site, our rehabilitation and naturalization plans and our vision for this very special landscape. As well, we seek to receive community input and feedback as we proceed through the design and approvals processes.

**WHO ARE WE:** Purchased from Lafarge Canada in 2008, the owners of Q Gardens (also known as Queenston Quarry Reclamation Company Ltd.) are Joe Lamanna (founder, The G&L Group), NOTL resident Angelo Butera (Panoramic Properties) and a small founders group lead by NOTL resident, Frank Racioppo.

**THE SITE:** The Queenston Quarry property is located in Niagara-on-the-Lake, above St. Davids on the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, bounded by the brow of the Escarpment and Bruce Trail to the north, Bevan Heights residences to the west, Niagara Townline Road / Portage Road to the south and Queenston Heights Park to the east. Historically, the Queenston Quarry extended down to York Road; however, the Queenston Quarry donated 98-acres consisting of all the natural and heritage features of the quarry such as the brow and bench of the escarpment to Ontario Heritage Trust which was later transferred to the Niagara Parks Commission. Today, all lands to the north and east of the Queenston Quarry including the Bruce Trail are public lands under the stewardship of the Niagara Parks Commission.

Below is a hand sketch by Julian Smith (up is to the south) showing the Queenston Quarry, escarpment brow and surrounding area. The four-way intersection at the bottom right corner is the Village of St Davids (Four Mile Creek Road and York Road).



**SITE ACTIVITY SINCE 2006:** We took possession of the Queenston Quarry in 2006 from Lafarge Canada and legal ownership in 2008. Lafarge elected to sell to us (from six other buyer proponents) as we presented the most attractive masterplan vision and environmental rehabilitation plan. Since our possession in 2006 we have undertaken earth moving and rehabilitation with the objective to and successfully have achieved the highest / cleanest soil standard (i.e. the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Table 1 Standard). As well, since 1950's the Queenston Quarry obtained a Ministry of Environment permit to receive and stock pile foundry sand from various industrial foundry operations throughout Niagara. Lafarge had recycled a portion of the foundry sand into asphalt and deep road base throughout Niagara. Since our ownership 2008 with 200,000 tons remaining on site, we screened and repurposed this foundry sand by screening and shipping it to cement plants across Ontario. The foundry sand is baked in kilns which converts it to clinker, being the raw ingredient to make cement that is used to make concrete. We have repurposed and shipped all the foundry sand with only 15,000 remaining to ship out.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS TO FOLLOW:**

History, Quarrying Activities, Approvals Processes, Community Input, Naturalization / Biodiversity Plan, Masterplan and Amenities, Architecture



# Predators need to win at home Friday

Mike Balsom  
The Local

If the Niagara Predators have any hope of extending their Russell Cup playoff run, they are going to have to rediscover their scoring touch this Friday night in Virgil.

After losing game one of their best-of-three Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League quarter-final series against the Durham Roadrunners 4-1 Monday, the Preds face elimination in front of a home crowd.

Goals have been hard to come by over their last five games, though, as Niagara has only scored four times in regulation and been shut out twice in that 1-4 stretch.

Head coach Kevin Taylor admits the lack of goal-scoring from his squad lately is perplexing.

“We’re not scoring goals right now, and that’s really hurting us,” says Taylor. “I can’t figure out what’s happening. We’re shooting high, shooting to score, and not shooting instead to make plays.”

The Roadrunners scored 90 seconds into the first period Monday night when Preds goalie Zane Clausen stopped a shot from the outside from Matthew Balke only to watch as the rebound was tucked into the Niagara net by Durham’s Joshua Risk.

The Predators outshot the Roadrunners for the rest of that period, but Durham goaltender Gian-Marco Peyer continuously came up with big saves.

The Preds went down 2-0 in the second when a couple of penalty calls by the referees seemed to take the wind out of their sails.

Niagara’s Tyler Gearing was handed a five-minute major for boarding when he took Durham’s Henrik Wiklund into the boards behind the Roadrunners’ net. Though the Preds successfully killed that penalty, the Roadrunners scored just 12 seconds after it expired when Bryant Trowsse capitalized on a rebound off linemate Risk’s shot on Clausen.

“I don’t understand how he got that five-minute boarding call,” Taylor says. “Gearing was just finishing his check when (Wiklund) turned to go back. I can see them calling a two-minute penalty for charging, but there’s no way that’s a five-minute penalty. That changed the game in my opinion.”

Just 37 seconds later Preds forward Georgy Kholmovsky had a breakaway opportunity on Peyer when he was tripped



Renegades goalie Artemii Gaidukov uses his stick to thwart Niagara’s Shane Kaplan’s attempt.

by Durham’s Tayvon Spencer. Even Durham’s play-by-play announcer couldn’t understand why Kholmovsky wasn’t awarded a penalty shot on the infraction. The Preds failed to score during their ensuing two-minute power play.

Zach Burns put the Roadrunners up 3-0 in the third before the Preds finally got on the scoreboard with less than four minutes remaining, when Kholmovsky centred the puck to Shane Kaplan, who was able to bury it past Peyer to make it 3-1.

Durham added an empty-netter with just over two minutes remaining to wrap up the win for the Roadrunners.

“It was a disappointing loss,” head coach Kevin Taylor

says of the playoff loss. “We outplayed, outshot, outhit and outchecked them. I was happy with the way they played, and I thought we deserved better.”

The Preds closed out their regular season three days before that, losing 3-0 to the first-place North York Renegades, their second shutout loss in two home games. Niagara was outshot in that game 72-16, making it a marvel that it was as close as it was. The team finished in sixth place in the South Division with a 17-21-4 record.

Playing the odds, Taylor feels the team is due for a big-scoring game and it has to come this Friday at home.

“We’re positive about how we played Monday,” he says,

“as much as you can be positive about a loss. We’re going to bounce back and force a game three. There’s no way we can stay in this scoring slump like this. We have to break out, and that’s what it comes down to right now.”

“Everyone is playing well right now,” Taylor added. “We hit a crossbar, we hit the butt of a stick, those shots should be going in and they’re just not right now. We have to control the rebounds in front of our net and not give them the opportunities, and we have to control our shots to get those dirty goals we need.”

Game time Friday night is 7:30 p.m. at the Meridian Credit Union Arena.



Last Friday’s home game against North York was the Preds’ final regular season game. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

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# Kaplan brothers square off in Preds' playoff series

Mike Balsom  
The Local

The current first-round quarter-final series between the Niagara Predators and the Durham Roadrunners is the worst possible scenario for Randy and Abby Kaplan.

The parents of Niagara's Shane Kaplan and his older brother, Durham's Jackson Kaplan, were desperately hoping their sons would not face off against each other in the playoffs.

Of course, that's exactly what is happening this week, as the third-place Roadrunners are taking on the sixth-place Preds in the Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League's South Division quarter-finals.

"It's terrible," Abby told The Local during a Predators' home game. "This way, one of them has to lose. We were hoping they wouldn't

play against each other so that both of them could move on to the next round."

Jackson's team held the edge during the regular season, with Durham winning four of the six games they played against his brother's Predators. And the Roadrunners drew first blood in their best-of-three playoff series with a 4-1 win Monday night. However Shane was the only Kaplan to get his name on the scoresheet, scoring Niagara's lone goal in the loss.

Jackson, 22, is in his first and only year with the Roadrunners after having played for two seasons with the Georgina Ice of the Provincial Junior Hockey League. The 18-year-old Shane is in his first season with the Preds as well.

Statistically, the brothers finished the season with nearly identical re-

ords. Both forwards, Jackson collected seven goals and 17 assists for 24 points for Durham, while Shane amassed eight goals and 17 assists for one point more. They each played 41 games for their respective teams, while Jackson served 31 more penalty minutes than his younger sibling.

In seven games head to head, including Monday's playoff game, Shane holds the advantage with four goals and two assists to Jackson's single assist.

"They are extremely close, but also extremely competitive with everything from ping pong and video games to golf and hockey," laughs Abby about their two active boys, their only children. "Of course, sometimes they fight with each other like all brothers do."

Shane played rep football and baseball as well as

hockey, while Jackson also played baseball and basketball. Both get out to the golf course as much as possible in the off-season.

The elder Kaplan is in his fourth year studying business at Toronto Metropolitan University, while Shane's decision to play for the Predators hinged on his plan to enrol at Brock University for his first year in their sports management program.

"We were very supportive of Shane's decision to try out for Niagara," Abby says. "It seemed like a great opportunity to be able to play junior hockey near Brock, and it was helpful that we knew what junior hockey was all about from Jackson's two previous years playing."

Abby and Randy, who live in Thornhill, Ontario, have made an effort to be at as many of both Shane's and Jackson's games all sea-

son long. That has been possible as Durham's usual home games are in Oshawa on Monday nights while the Preds play their home games in Virgil on Fridays.

"When both play at different locations at the same time we usually go together and try to attend an equal number of games for both teams," Abby explains. "It's worked out pretty well. We've only had to miss a few for each of them but have been able to get to most games."

She admits it has been nerve-wracking to watch them play against each other.

"It is a new experience for us to not be able to cheer for one team to win. Instead, we're cheering for a good clean game for both teams and good plays by the boys and their teammates. We usually hope for a tie and

overtime."

Both Abby and Randy marvel at how well the boys are balancing the demands of their university programs with those of their GMHL teams, with so many road trips through the season.

"School has always been a high priority for all of us and this has continued into university," says Abby. "They have had to adjust their schedules and manage their time, but are making it work. We are extremely proud and impressed with both boys."

Nevertheless, only one Kaplan can be on the team that wins this current playoff series between the Roadrunners and the Predators.

One thing is certain, though — the entire Kaplan family will be at Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena this Friday night to see if the Predators can force a game three in the series.



Randy, Jackson, Shane and Abby Kaplan at the Meridian Credit Union Arena at a game in December. (All photos taken by Mike Balsom at a Preds home game)



Predator Shane Kaplan and his brother Jackson following a faceoff against each other in the Durham end at the Meridian Credit Union Arena.



Shane Kaplan gets ready to check his older brother Jackson.



Shane Kaplan chases after his brother Jackson.



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- Across:**

1 Statue of Liberty material

7 Got together

10 Buddy

13 Dry gulch

14 Cab

15 Lawyers' grp.

16 Flower of Rhode Island

17 Rends

18 Affirmative signal

19 Call the whole thing off

20 Very strong winds

21 First lady

22 Stand-up guy

24 "Thanatopsis" poet

William --- Bryant

26 Large handbag

29 Noah's boat

30 Dumped in Boston harbor

31 Homeless child

32 Thick slice

34 First light

38 Bart Simpson's driver

39 Cheryl --- of "Suburgatory"

41 Wine valley

42 Terse

44 Aflutter

45 Operation Overlord

46 Half a Latin dance
- 48 Wetland

49 Snitches

50 "Mamma Mia" mamma

53 Fidgety

55 Pursue ardently

56 Ascends

58 Worn out

62 Limb

63 Repast

64 Medical prioritization

65 National boys' gp.

66 Corrosive

67 Confer

68 Male offspring

69 Directed

70 Fall flowers
- 12 Burdened

14 Heptathlete's specialty

20 Little lady

23 Pulverize

25 Lots of things to do

26 Pairs

27 Cuss

28 Former Yugoslav dictator

33 Sires

35 Zilch

36 --- the crack of dawn

37 Is profitable

40 Coordinate

43 Rising current of warm air

47 Each

50 Gun-barrel cleaners

51 Trunk

52 One of the old empire builders

54 Fast rabbit relatives

57 Stated

59 Deceased

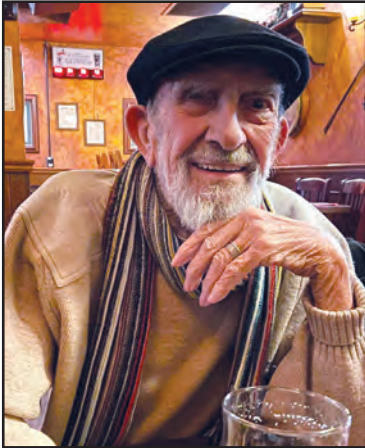
60 "Prince ---", Borodin opera

61 Tidings

64 Uninformative schedule info.

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OBITUARY



**HUGHES, Kenneth Roy** – Our dear KENNETH ROY HUGHES, age 94, has sailed on to a peaceful rest. His beloved wife of 63 years, EILEEN, and daughters BRONWEN and VANESSA were at his side to see him off on his journey, second only to the epic voyage Ken and Eileen took in their sailboat Ithaca, which Ken built in the backyard and sailed to Florida. He is also loved by his sons-in-law, Egidio and Murray, his nephews and niece by his sister Brenda, Patti, Craig and wife Suzy, and Lee, Marina, and our extended families in Canada and England. Ken is also survived by a brood of their children, who will miss his trouble-making, including Fun with Dentures, and teddy bear rides on the ceiling fan. You are loved, loved, loved by all, Kenny. As the English family say, *yer a Legend*.

A family funeral will take place this week, with a Celebration of Life to be announced soon. Donations to the Walker Family Cancer Centre would be most welcome.



**PAUL, Ada Rose Mary (Phelan)** – With heavy hearts, the family of Ada Paul wishes to announce her passing on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at the Greater Niagara General Hospital, at the age of 94, after a long and happy life. Beloved wife of the late Clifford Paul (1999). Loving mother of Joseph (Judy), Patrick (Alice), Michael (Julie), Christopher (Kathy), Stephen (Kathy), Rose Marie Longley (Andrew) and Anna Maria Remple (Erik). Cherished grandmother and great-grandmother of Simon, Graham (Vanessa); Lindsay (Spencer), Corey (Jena) and children Carter and Lily; Michelle (Ryan), Andrew (Sara) and children Berkley, Oakley and Lochlan; Jason (LeeAnne) and son Garrett, Kevin (Reagan) and children Ava and Emmitt, Jeffery (Kyra); Kyla (Kurtis), Melanie; Kathleen, Aidan; Ciara (Kolten), Ryan and Paul. Dear sister of

Teresa Romeo, Anne Burtnik (Mel) and sister-in-law of Lillian Phelan, Pat McCauley (Jim), John Paul (Jean), Margaret Paul and Evelyn Paul. Fondly remembered by many nieces, nephews, extended family, and friends. Predeceased by her parents Vincent and Ada Phelan, grandson Christopher Paul (1990), brothers Vincent, Allan, Jack, Edward, Paul and Gerald, sisters Marie Day, Agnes Pepin, Margaret Kirkpatrick, Helen Clutterbuck and Patricia Bevan, and many wonderful in-laws.

Born in St. Catharines on June 10, 1929, Ada was the tenth child in the Phelan clan, and she was blessed her entire life with the love and friendship of siblings. A lover of words and languages, Ada attended St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, where she studied English, French and Latin. After graduating in 1950, she married the love of her life, Cliff Paul, and moved to their home in Niagara-on-the-Lake where she resided for the rest of her days. Ada spent several years as a French and English teacher with both the Catholic and Public School Boards, and she especially enjoyed her years at Grantham High School in the 1960s. Ada and Cliff took joy in raising their children in the country where there were always animals to feed, gardens to plant, work to do and fun to be had. As a grandmother, Ada was a regular party and sleepover host, storyteller, pool supervisor, excursion planner, ice cream scooper and overseer of corn husking and other jobs. She was never happier than during gatherings at "the farm" with her immediate and extended family, neighbours and friends. She spent hours using her extraordinary computer skills for many tasks including extensive research into the Phelan genealogy records. Ada made lifelong friends in the Irish dance community, and for many years she was chairperson of the St. Catharines Feis, promoting Irish dance and culture in the area. Ada found happiness in the simple things: a butterfly, a starry night, a full moon, a unique cloud formation, a poem, a Gordon Lightfoot song or a Blue Jays victory. A longtime member of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, her faith guided her through her life. We will always treasure the many lessons that she taught us and the love that she had for us. "And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest".

Ada's family would like to thank the many doctors, nurses and others who looked after her through the years, especially Dr. Walser-Jebb, Foot Nurse Michele and the wonderful nurses and personal support workers in the Rainbow Unit of the GNGH. These women and men went "above and beyond" for her, and we are grateful for their kindness and dedication. Special thanks to Nursing Student Julia, who always brightened Ada's day.

The family received friends at MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Friday, February 16 from 2-4 & 6-8 p.m. Prayers were said at the funeral home on Friday at 7:30 p.m. Funeral Mass was celebrated at St. Vincent de Paul Church, 73 Picton Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Saturday, February 17, 2024, at 11 a.m. The Rite of Committal followed at the Church Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, those who wish may make a memorial donation to the St. Vincent de Paul Parish or to the Niagara Health Foundation. Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)



PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from February 14, 2024

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

**Across:** 1 Copper, 7 Met, 10 Pal, 13 Arroyo, 14 Taxi, 15 A B A, 16 Violet, 17 Rips, 18 Late, 60 Igor, 61 News, 64 T B A. **Down:** 1 Cave, 2 Or in, 3 Prod, 4 Police force, 5 Eye to, 6 Rot, 7 Mail, 8 Expect, 9 Tissues, 10 Panel, 11 Above, 12 Lader, 14 Track and field, 20 Giffie, 23 Mash, 25 Laundry list, 26 Twos, 27 Oath, 28 Tito, 33 Begrets, 35 Nada, 36 Up at, 37 Pays, 40 Sync, 43 Thermal, 47 Apiece, 50 Swabs, 51 Torso, 52 Roman, 54 Hares, 57 Said, 59



