International Women’s Day important to all ages

Sharon Burns  
The Local

“It’s important for all genders to understand women’s past disadvantages, to learn how to respect women and to see how our past struggles still impact us,” said Lucy Hopkins, high school student, in advance of March 8, International Women’s Day.

“There is still misogyny deeply rooted in our society. It’s important to not just live in bliss and think that things are good all the time.”

Several Niagara-on-the-Lake women indicate the need to continue this important work. College student Maggie Burns said that “there are quite a few countries where women are believed to be the property of their husbands who have beliefs-based in misogyny. If we didn’t have International Women’s Day, it could leave women in these situations feeling unseen, or worse, unsafe.”

Today, the purpose of Women’s Day is to celebrate and support women around the globe. Embrace Equity is this year’s theme: Equity isn’t just a nice-to-have, it’s a must-have, says the women’s day website. A focus on gender equity needs to be part of every society’s DNA, it continues, and it’s critical to understand the difference between equity and equality.

“People start from different places, so true inclusion and belonging require equitable action.”

The first Women’s Day marches occurred in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland in 1911, following years of unrest among women who demanded shorter working hours, better pay and voting rights, according to the International Women’s Day website.

Today, International Women’s Day, according to the Canadian website, is “also a time to raise awareness of the progress made towards achieving gender equality and the work remaining to be done.”

Emily Day, a finance analyst, says there is much work still to be done. “It’s obvious that women are not equal to men almost everywhere you look,” said Day, who works a corporate job. “I’ve experienced her work being doubted because she is a woman. “We have definitely made great strides where women are given more opportunity to show their capabilities, but there is still so much to do for women to be considered equals around the world.”

High school student Hannah Burns recognizes that “there are still lots of disadvantages women have. For example,” she said, “there is still a difference in salary between men and women in the trades.” Burns, a feminist, thinks that “the Continued on page 14
NOTL man charged in Indigenous art fraud

Eight people, including one from NOTL, were charged after OPP seized more than 1,000 alleged fraudulent artworks purported to be painted by Norval Morrisseau. (Photos supplied by OPP)
Camp Molly encourages young women to consider firefighting

Sharon Burns
The Local

Local firefighter Karley McKeigan always thought she might want to be a first responder, but when she was a teenager she did not know how to proceed.

That will all change for young women in the Niagara region with the introduction of Camp Molly.

The four-day, free camp experience provides the opportunity for females between the ages of 15 and 18 to meet and engage with strong female role models in their community, while learning about many branches of the fire service.

Camp Molly is named after Molly Williams, who was the first female firefighter on record in the U.S. in 1818. Molly “was a slave in New York,” said Tracy Fitzsimons, division chief public education officer for the Fort Erie Fire Department. “Then men fell sick with influenza and Molly hauled the pumper and answered the call of duty. She was a trailblazer.”

“All the regional fire departments are participating,” said Fitzsimons. “Candidates have to be female and must live in the Niagara region. Girls will work through seven evolutions, including fire suppression, communications, medical, public education and prevention.”

“Camp Molly is a great idea,” said McKeigan. “If I was exposed to the fire world at a younger age, it would have been put on my radar a lot sooner.”

McKeigan has been a Niagara-on-the-Lake volunteer firefighter at Station 1 in the Old Town for more than three years. Inspired by her friend Laura Roberston, who passed away in 2018, McKeigan says she “felt owed it to her to follow through to join the fire department.” Then I found out I really like it. It’s a good fit for me.”

“Is there is too much stigma attached to what are male roles and what are female roles,” said Fitzsimons. “We want to take away that stigma about which is a male and a female career and empower and change the way young women see themselves.”

For McKeigan, “it was intimidating starting because the stereotype is that firefighting is a man’s world, and I personally had to push through a lot of mental barriers. I learned that I am capable of a lot more than I thought I was. Each time I would accomplish something new I felt so great about myself and kept pushing for these small milestones and my confidence grew.”

With the spotlight this week on International Women’s Day, both McKeigan and Danielle Bley, also an Old Town station volunteer firefighter, say they have been well-supported as women in a non-conventional career. “The guys here treat us like one of their. They are amazing people who made me feel very welcome,” said McKeigan.

Bley, a graduate of kinesiology and paramedic, is also a paramedic for the region of Niagara.

“The former chief at Station 1, Court Day, would talk to me about the fire department and he told me they would love to have someone with my background in paramedicine. He was my accelerator to get here.”

“Women,” said Bley, “we have come into a few road bumps, particularly with various equipment sizes because a lot of it is proportionate for a man. But the town worked alongside us to get us the equipment that we needed in the appropriate sizes.”

McKeigan admits that “it is a challenging role to be in. Everything is big and heavy. It’s tougher for a woman to carry. Some girls who ‘wants to be challenging, or to find some dicection,” said Fitzsimons. “It’s not about physical fitness or being the strongest or most athletic. There are many roles in the fire department.”

“This is true for McKeigan, who also works in the fire department in a community risk reduction role. “I love suppression and thought that was a career goal for me, but then I got to see the other side of the fire department and I really like prevention and public relations.”

Bley agrees. “In this department, they promote that there is no one way to do anything. The way my co-worker completes a task isn’t going to be the same way I complete a task.” Individual strengths are recognized, she said. “Medical calls are my bread and butter. Some one else will be an expert on pump operations.”

“Even if you go to Camp Molly and realize that the fire service is not for you, but you were still able to push yourself and get through that camp and get through the scary evolutions that you didn’t think you could—it’s a huge accomplishment in itself,” said McKeigan.

Applications are due April 11 and the camp runs from May 11 to May 14 in Niagara Falls.

Application forms can be found at www.campmolly.ca. They are also looking for strong female community members interested in supporting the camp in a volunteer role.

Camp Molly’s motto is “Be prepared to be challenged. Be prepared to be empowered. Be prepared to change the way you see yourself.”

NOTICE OF PASSING OF EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY USE BY-LAWS

4316EG(1)-23 & 500XV(1)-23

Temporary Extension of Restaurant and Bar Patios

The Council for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake approved an extension to existing Temporary Use By-laws and passed Temporary Use By-laws 4316EG(1)-23 and 500XV(1)-23 on February 28, 2023, under Section 34 and Section 39 of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended.

By-law 4316EG(1)-23 and By-law 500XV(1)-23 permit the extension of restaurant and bar patios onto public and private lands, subject to the Town’s Temporary Patio Program requirements, without application of any provisions of Zoning By-law 4316-09, as amended (urban areas) and Zoning By-law 500A-74, as amended (rural/agricultural areas). The Temporary Use By-laws expire on February 28, 2023. A copy of the By-laws are available on the Town website, https://www.notl.com/business-development/public-planning-notices or at Town Hall.

The Temporary Use By-laws apply to all lands within the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. By-law 4316EG(1)-23 applies to all lands within the urban area boundaries (Old Town, Virgil, St. Davids, Queenston and Glendale) and By-law 500XV(1)-23 applies to all lands in the rural/agricultural areas of the Town.

Dated at the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, March 8, 2023

Victoria Steele – Acting Town Clerk (clerks@notl.com or 905-468-3266)

Town Hall, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, P.O. Box 100, Virgil, ON L0S 1T0
Council asks for more info on hospital building, hub

Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake town councilors want to know more about the idea of turning the former hospital building, along with more details in terms of financial investment from a group hoping to establish a community hub there, as well as the risks and benefits to the town.

Speaking to council last week, Robin Ridesic, representing a number of non-profit organizations, along with Tim Jennings, executive director of the Shaw Festival, and Tim Johnson, an advisor and activist on Indigenous education, asked for its support for the concept of retaining the facility to create the Niagara Creative, Cultural and Community Hub.

Ridesic talked of the Official Plan, and what it sets out for properties such as the hospital that have community facility zoning, with the land specifically providing for the culture, education, health and welfare of the existing and future residents of the town.

“They cannot even consider rezoning it to residential use if there are community facilities that can be established on that site — and we know there are several non-profit organizations that need that space,” said Ridesic.

She pointed out the site is at a crossroads, with the doctors gone and just three tenants in the building, “so council needs to take action now before we remove this burden from taxpayers and get the property productively serving the community.

“Their ask of the town was for a solution that removes the operational and capital burden from taxpayers today, while preserving the town as set for the future and ensuring needs of the community’s culture, education, health and welfare needs.

“They do not ask for funding — they are offering to pay the costs to keep the building running, and do not address any issues, in part thanks to a donor who is offering $2 million. And with this multi-million investment, they are committed to fundraising to ensure there would be no cost to taxpayers, while the town would continue to own the building, councillors were told.

“This is a beautiful opportunity for the town to turn something extraordinarily impactful to the benefit of residents, the economy and non-profit organizations, all without costing a penny of taxpayers’ money,” said Ridesic.

In addition to several non-profits interested in sharing the space, there was talk of improved education, arts programs, such a studio for virtual programming with digital capacity to share programs from all potential hub organizations including school homework clubs, among disadvantaged people, and those isolated in the community, including seniors.

Karyll Justo, a local early childhood educator, is hoping to open a nursery school in the building. There are 223 names on the Niagara Nursery School and Child Care waiting list, she said, speaking to councilors about the need for the hub.

“This idea of the cultural hub is fantastic,” he said. “Non-profit organizations and charities really need space to meet the need. There’s a lot of great potential there.

“With many opportunities for Indigenous learning, by such as the Indian Council House, Fort George and Fort Mississauga, John Johnson added, “from the Indigenous side, we’re very interested in that part of the location. My ancestors walked these grounds, Joseph Brant and John Brant. I think from that perspective we’re very interested in the land that dynamics that can come out of a space where you have a number of creative organizations and educational organizations using it to cross-fertilize and develop something that’s very, very compelling.

Karen Lade of Music Niagara, one of the supporters of the group’s proposal, was unable to attend the council meeting to tell the group that Music Niagara is passionate about the hub, and hoping it will give them a permanent performance space, as well as the opportunity to work with community partners.

“Music Niagara is a non-profit organization run by only two employees, a board of directors and more than 100 volunteer helpers,” said Lade. It has evolved into a world-class summer music festival featuring Canadian and international musicians performing a variety of music genres, and is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. It rents office space in the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, and rents performance space throughout NOTL to host its concerts.

“However, renting performance space becomes costly and limiting in many ways for scheduling concerts,” Lade added.

“The hub will give Music Niagara stability and a year-round performance space for concerts,” she added. “This will create opportunities for extended programming that can be offered year-round to youth, seniors, tourists and local residents.

“It would also increase the performance and employment opportunities for established and emerging musicians every year,” she said, allowing Music Niagara to showcase new-generation artists at the hub and provide educational and outreach concerts to students and seniors year-round.

Lade stresses other benefits of the partnership, increased efficiency from co-location, increased revenue; greater visibility and/or recognition for artists and students; greater opportunities to engage with the community; and greater capacity to perform.

“We believe that by working in collaboration with community partners in the hub, we can enrich the culture and legacy of the life of the community and its visitors. Together, through this community hub, we can build better communities for the arts.”

While councillors seemed generally supportive of the concept that was presented, there was discussion about how the town should move forward.

Coun. Ervin Wiersema spoke of making it part of the discussion of council’s strategic planning.

He asked if council would be “going down the road to sole-sourcing” the building to the hub.

“Should we first find out our strategy with that property before we get into working with groups to see what their needs are,” he asked, wondering if it would be prudent to put the hub ahead of other possibilities for the property.

Coun. Gary Burroughs spoke of the importance of knowing the group’s budget.

“In my opinion, we need this facility, but we need it to be successful,” he said.

Ridesic told council they know it’s a multi-million dollar project to do improvements to the building “that frankly have been needed and not done over the last five years” to make it purpose-built for community organizations, and also to green the building.

Asked about the typical process the town would follow when deciding a use for the building, CAO Marnie Clickie explained that would mean addressing it through strategic planning, and once council was given the information, it would go through the usual competitive process. But if council asked staff “to go in a different direction, well figure out a way to do so that would be in keeping with our procurement bylaw.”

Council agreed with a motion by Coun. Wendy Cherpinka to ask staff to report back with more information on the costs of the building to the town, and what the group is proposing, identifying risks and benefits.

Council also asked staff to work with the emerging tenants, who are currently renting on a month-to-month basis, on an extension or short-term lease.

Following the meeting, Ridesic told The Local that community hub representatives “are pleased to see that council is moving forward with identifying a use case study, opportunities and financials for the site.”

A tremendous amount of staff and council work has already been completed through the Official Plan and the requests for expressions of interest for the site, she said, “and we are now looking to our new council to take this last piece of input and act promptly and seriously in the best interests of taxpayers and the community.”

The hub group looks forward to working with other community groups who also need space in town, she said.

“We invite any interested organizations to please reach out to us so that we can work together to develop the best solution for the site for the benefit of the whole community.”
There is no doubt among women, young and not so young, those still at school looking forward to joining a workforce one day where equality will be taken for grant- ed and those looking back on the evolution that is taking in that direction: International Women’s Day still has meaning. Its significance has and continues to change, but the most often repeated refrain when talking about gender equality is that we’ve come a long way, but we’re not there yet.

That’s how most of us feel, living in one of the most pro-gressive countries in the world, where gender equality is ac- knowledged as a human right, even if not perfectly executed in society.

There are many other coun- tries, of course, that still have a long, long way to go.

While we may feel com- fortable with the recognition of women’s rights and the prog- ress being made, it’s still essen- tial to make this day also about rallying for those women, our aid and support, and even our outrage, for women and children of the world who are prevented from receiving the same education as males, or from participating in business or politics or even basic family decisions — not just because they have to work harder or fight for their rights, but be- cause they have no rights.

We talk a lot about strong women who have helped to make this community what it is. We have only to look around to see who they are.

But every woman of ev- ery age, every single ordinary woman — if there is such a thing as an ordinary woman — whether they are acknowled- ged in public as commu- nity leaders, known for their accomplishments, or whether they are women who are quietly living their best lives, deserve to be celebrated, today and everyday.

As well, every one of us should be advocating for change, should be trying to play a role in the history not created for their bright and free- dom. If you are a mom reading this, are you thinking about the mothers in Iran who are keep- ing their daughters home from school because some group against educating women is poi- soning girls in school?

Are you thinking of the women in Ukraine, being kid- napped or their children taken away?

Those mothers could be any one of us, those children taken away. There are many more heinous actions being taken every day against women in countries where their value is not recognized.

What can we do to help them? We don’t have an easy answer to that. We can raise our voices, speak up, advocate for women’s rights and gend- er equality. Being aware of the issues is a first step, being outraged by the persecution of women should follow, and refusing to be compliant should become ingrained in our minds and souls.

We are strong, we live in a beautiful and safe community and country, not perfect, but at least aware of the value of women.

Let’s recognize and sup- port each other, and use this day and every day, as a rallying cry to do more for others who are not so fortunate.

Penny Coles
The Local

Consensus is we’ve come a long way, but there’s still a ways to go

Three suits, a busy day, and greenbelt presentation

Owen Bjornjan Special to The Local

A recent day commenced with me wearing layers of bulky outdoor clothing and rubber boots, also known as my forest suit. I was teaching almost 30 Grade 6 students about the joys of being a Leaf this past week.

Leaf enthusiasts of all ages gathered at a small plot of city storm shelter building in Niagara-on-the-Lake, formerly known as Short Hills.

This general region is part of Ontario’s Greenbelt, which is now to be longed be under- trenched in NOTL, wondering how familiar others may be with this general region that permits development of most biodiverse region.

Meanwhile, MPP Gates spoke passionately and succinctly about the financial and polit- ical implications of the current greenbelt discussion, and certainly recognizing that an affordable housing crisis exists, and that should help directly impact Greenbelt lands.

Speaking in person again about such immense matters usually makes me reflect on how vital face-to-face conversation really is. Demonstrably important and acute issues like Bill 23 spark complex conversations about environment, agriculture, housing, economy, mental (and other) health all in the same basket. It was refresh- ing to hear these conversations thoughtfully and with fluidity in a spirited discussion.

However, the tones between the two municipalities were na- rrowly different. Not by a lot, but appreciably.

From Niagara Falls, Council for Mike Strange acknowledged the checkmate scenario where stakeholders want to protect environmental and agricultural lands of value, while also rec- ognizing the realistic need for population and housing growth. Mike — to me a hero of our transparent concern, but also many other councillors and voting public who are trying to make sense of the maelstrom, trying to make sense of the bill.

Mike Strange’s actualized and clear statement of the current council and Niagara-on-the-Lake town council. Our message was much clearer than the degraded, turbulent waters of Niagara Peninsula, we are not anti development, we are not anti growth, we are only here to encourage elected municipal leaders to lead by example and do better. Please, leave the Greenbelt lands alone at all costs, if you can.

For the first time since pre- COVID, I was back at a place I call home. I dressed and stood up, and in front of various councils talking to my best ask to ask our local politi- cians to truly respect the value and irreplaceable nature of our natural heritage in Canada’s most biodiverse region.

There is no doubt among many other coun- tries, of course, that still have a long, long way to go.

... and greedy leap of legislation.

It’s not a total solution, but it could help alleviate the pain of the Greenbelt’s seemingly inevi- table suffering. And therefore, our own.

NOTL council was a dif- ferent vibe, if you will. In fact, I learned that evening that the town has taken a majority stance on opposing Bill 23 in official documentation.

I was surprised and be- yond glad to hear this, as was MPP Gates, but I will also hold the currently elected council accountable to make sure that words match actions.

Back to the Niagara Falls council chamber. A young girl stepped up to the microphone moments before MPP Gates and I discussed the ripple effect impacts of Bill 23, which passed without consulting municipal- ities or the public. She sang the national anthem like an angel. I actually was swept off my feet and nearly teared up. Her voice was so innocent and incred- ibly, balancing the delicate act of something inspiring and haunt- ing at the same time.

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Ted’s thoughts on overreacting to what we fear

Ted Mouradian
Special to The Local

It seems that every time I turn on the news I hear people screaming about stuff I thought might be simple or not that bad and wonder why everyone is so upset. We are bent out of shape over that new development, the drag queens, the trans people, TikTok, just to name a few.

Should we be cautious about what is happening in the world? Yes. Should we be about drag queens and transgender people. Drag queens are not about drag queens and trans people. Drag queens are not corrupting young people. Drag queens are not

People who think young people are being corrupted by drag queens should be sexualizing the children and making them feel bad about themselves. It’s not healthy for them to be treated in that way.

We should be aware of the information that is being spread around. The news is full of stories about how dangerous it is to listen to drag queens or transgender people. However, these stories are usually just a way to spread fear and misinformation.

There are elements in society today that like to blow things out of proportion so as to make themselves look important and powerful. We must resist the temptation to follow blindly these two per cent who want to divide, not heal, want to create fear, not love, and look at things as being either black or white.

I had one friend of mine tell me that I am living with blinders on and that I should be worried about the direction society is going. My answer to that person is that I already read that book or saw that movie.

Think back to the early days, when there were the crusades. Then came the witchhunts. When we invaded the new world we made the indigenous peoples out of being savages, but who were the real villains of that story?

We banned alcohol because it was going to ruin the world as we know it. We tried to stop women from voting because it was going to ruin society as we know it. We want to stop same-sex marriage because it was going to ruin the family as we know it.

Now we are on the next target to vilify; TikTok, trans people and drag queens. Yet, society, the world and the family are just fine. We really need to see what is actually going on. We are creating the other problem by fear-mongering.

Remember F.E.A.R. is False Evidence Appearing Real. Find out what the true evidence is before you dive down that rabbit hole.

The journey is simple, we complicate it.

Ted Mouradian is an author and professional speaker. He is president of the 2% Factor Inc. and his videos can be seen on TikTok and Instagram. Ted can be reached at tdm2%factor.com

Local Letters

Ukraine is important, for many reasons

Friday, Feb. 24, 2022 marked the one year anniversary of the illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Russian actions are considered by many to have crossed the threshold of being war crimes, and include illegal actions such as the bombing of hospitals and national historic sites, levelling cities and villages; raiding museums of cultural importance; as well as killing and kidnapping innocent children and women.

Hundreds of Niagara residents and Ukrainians gathered on a recent evening during freezing temperatures at Table Rock in Niagara Falls to show their support and solidarity for Ukraine. Different ethnic communities have also rallied to support the efforts to help Ukraine. Niagara Falls MP Wayne Gates; St. Catharines MP Chris Bittle; Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati; Jim Bradley, Regional Chair, Irene Newton, president of the Niagara Ukrainian Canadian Congregation were at the event as well as members of the St. John Ukrainian Catholic Church and other organizations in Niagara Falls.

Around the world many other towns held their own gatherings and continue to show support in other ways. We have many Ukrainian residents living in NOTL as well as Ukrainian newcomers who are already applying for their Canadian citizenship and want to make NOTL their permanent home.

We can put this in the back of our minds nor say “It’s not in my backyard so why should I worry about it”. We all should worry about what Russia is doing.

For those who ask: “Why does Ukraine matter?”

This is why Ukraine matters. By David Giles, a journalist who has helped to share the plight of Ukrainians.

“It is the second largest country by area in Europe and has a population of over 40 million — more than Poland.

Ukraine ranks: First in Europe in proving recoverable reserves of uranium ores; Second place in Europe and 10th place in the world in terms of titanium ore reserves; Second place in the world in terms of explored reserves of manganese ores (2.3 billion tons, or 12 per cent of the world’s reserves); Second largest iron ore reserves in the world (30 million tons).

Third place in Europe in terms of mercury ore reserves; Third place in Europe in phosphate reserves; Fourth place in Europe in tin ore reserves; Fourth largest exporter of turbines for nuclear power plants in the world; Fourth worlds largest manufacturer of rocket launchers; Fourth place in the world in clay exports; Fourth place in the world in titanium exports; Eighth place in the world in exports of ores and concentrates; Ninth place in the world in the production of defence industry products; Tenth largest steel producer in the world (32.4 million tons). Ukraine matters. That is why its independence is important to the rest of the world.”

For those of you who are wondering

Why are there no street signs for Anne St? They seemed to have removed all of them last summer.

Gary Alban, NOTL
Reply from Marsha Minor, town communications coordinator: Town Staff is aware of the missing signs and is working with the Region to have them replaced. The new signs are expected to be received and installed early next week.

Feature your business in our LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

The full page is made up of a HALF PAGE AD and HALF PAGE ARTICLE

Local Letters

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

The Trustee View of Our Community

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

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**Chamber celebrates NOTL’s #2 ranking as best destination**

Mike Balsom

The Local

Coming in at number two in Canada in Tripadvisor’s Best of the Best Destinations for 2022 is a reason for Niagara-on-the-Lake to celebrate. And that’s just what the NOTL Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL did, gathering together a number of organizations who no doubt contributed to the ranking last Wednesday at the Prince of Wales Hotel.

“This is a fantastic award for us,” said Chamber president and CEO Minerva Ward. “It’s very prestigious. Tripadvisor is one of the world’s biggest review sites for travel and tourism. To come second in Canada overall is a fantastic testament to our performance, the experience and the level of service we provide. It speaks to our industry and the partners who make it possible.”

Only Vancouver finished ahead of NOTL in the ranking. The town beat out such tourism destinations as Banff, Quebec City and Whistler, B.C., as well as big cities Montreal and Toronto.

“We’re probably the smallest destination in the top 10,” said Ward. “It speaks to the quality of our experiences. We may be small in size, but we punch far above our weight.”

Along for the party were staff members from six local wineries and representatives from the Festival Shaw and Fort George National Historic Site of Canada. They were all amongst Tripadvisor’s list of the top 50 destinations in Ontario for last year as well.

“We invited the staff who made it all happen,” Ward emphasized. “We wanted them to be a part of our celebration, and to have them understand the significance of this. It’s about the contributions they make as part of the biggest picture of tourism overall.”

Andrew Niven of Konzelmann Estate Winery, named the eighth best attraction in the province, was excited with the ranking.

“It’s definitely our team,” Niven told The Local. “In the wine industry the focus is definitely on experience. We’ve really developed and embraced getting back to that experience-based model, making some memorable times for our visitors who come here.”

Representatives from each of the top 50 attractions provided a short video and were toasted by the convivial crowd. There was a definite sense of camaraderie between the group throughout the proceedings.

Niven acknowledged the shared efforts of those in the room, as well as many other businesses who didn’t make the top 50 in Ontario, in making NOTL number two in Canada.

“We’re all friends, we all socialize together,” he said. “We help each other with initiatives. It’s a testament to what we do in Niagara-on-the-Lake.”

And, as if on cue, when Andrew Wade of Peller Estates Winery (Number 21) toasted his staff for their success, he pointed out that he was doing so with a glass of Reif Estates Winery’s (Number 12) Riesling.

With the town working on its official tourism strategy, the Tripadvisor rankings couldn’t come at a better time.

“It’s a marketing tool,” added Ward. “It’s a presitious thing we will use for branding, on our businesses, on our local websites. It lets people know we are the best of the best.

The second-place ranking is a marked improvement from fifth the previous year. And, as if to show somewhat the old Hertz Rental Car advertising campaign, Ward promised the chamber that NOTL has its sights set on an even higher ranking this year.

“Watch out Vancouver, we’re coming for you,” she warned with a chuckle. “We’re looking at that first spot this year.”

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**Play premiere, imported tent new for Shaw this season**

Penny Coles

The Local

The Shaw Festival has opened its season with the exciting world premiere of the contemporary adaptation of *Mahabharata*, the four-thousand-year-old Sanskrit epic being offered in two parts.

It opened March 2 and runs until March 26, with both parts presented along with Khana, a community meal with storytelling. *Mahabharata is a Why Not Theatre production.*

It’s a play adaptation that was commissioned as an artistic director Tim Carroll arrived at the Shaw for the 2019 season, explains Tim Jennings, executive director. But it wasn’t ready in time, and was moved to the summer of 2020. But with the restrictions of the pandemic it had to be put off again — it involves its own space, in fact the reason the Shaw may decide — including to Canada.

There were about 100 people; Jennings said, they decided *Mahabharata* was the reason the Shaw decided to have the Shaw opened its season with the premiere of the contemporary adaptation of *Mahabharata*, the four-thousand-year-old Sanskrit epic being offered in two parts.

The festival is also presenting performances in a new space — the Shaw, although actually really old. It’s called a Spiegeltent, a space that is enclosed, with tables to sit down and enjoy a drink while watching a play, or a concert, or whatever the Shaw may decide to offer for the season.

Already planned for the space, in fact reason the Shaw decided to have the Shaw was the premiere of the Shaw Festival from Europe, is *The Game of Love and Chance*, a romantic comedy with a cast that will be different every performance, and lines that are improvised each time it is offered. As the festival promises, “literally anything could happen.”

The Spiegeltent from Belgium will provide a new venue for performances. (Supplied)

*Mahabharata* is not the only “something new” at the Shaw that Carroll is referring to. The festival is also presenting performances in a new space — the Shaw, although actually really old. It’s called a Spiegeltent, a space that is enclosed, with tables to sit down and enjoy a drink while watching a play, or a concert, or whatever the Shaw may decide to offer for the season.

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It opens in the tent June 28.

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Town looking at 8.56 per cent tax hike

Zahra Hmoos
Special to The Local

As Niagara-on-the-Lake reviews a draft of this year’s operating budget, the town may expect a tax hike of 8.56 per cent, based on this year’s average assessed value of a single detached home in Niagara-on-the-Lake at $541,000, compared to last year’s assessment of $536,960.

Those in urban areas will pay 11.6 per cent more tax as compared to those in rural areas with $104 more for property taxes, and in the towns and the urban areas, an additional $50 for stormwater management.

With three weeks left until the final annual budget is approved Thursday, March 23, council reviewed a draft of this year’s operating budget, which shows the town is currently considering a 2023 operating budget of approximately $557 million, pared to last year’s approved budget of $510 million.

Last year, the tax hike was $97.25 for residents in urban areas, which combined a 2.77 per cent bump to property taxes and an approximately 3.5 per cent bump to this storm levy.

The cost of contracts for operating services, and materials have gone up by 6.3 per cent, according to director of finance Kyle Freeborn, who expressed the difficulty driving the town’s budget up this year.

“Council appreciates that everything in the lives of residents is costing more and we are sympathetic to how this budget may be seen as yet another increase to be absorbed by households across the region,” Regional Chair Jim Bradley said in a news release.

“I can assure the public that regional council was exceedingly thorough in its examination and critical review of the budget and we strived to be as responsible as possible,” the 2023 budget exercício.

The regional council had previously considered separate special operating levy budgets for waste management and Niagara Transit Commission and the rate budgets for water and wastewater.

Council approved the 2023 budget with an expenditure increase of $38 million, for a property tax increase of 7.58 per cent on the regional portion of the tax bill.

For the average property assessed at $278,704, the regional portion of the tax bill will increase by $123 totaling $7,143 in 2023.

The work the region performs touches the lives of residents in many ways, from providing clean water, road maintenance and waste collection to public safety, housing, child care and much more.

As the largest source of revenue for the municipality, property taxes fund more than 70 per cent of programs and services that Niagara residents rely on.

The regional financial plan for 2023 reflects residents’ desire to see investments in economic growth initiatives, expand the local transit system, access to affordable housing, and to ensure Niagara continues to care for its most vulnerable citizens.

The 2023 budget includes funding for several critical programs and services including:

• $1.5 million for housing provider operating subsidies
• $10.6 million to support infrastructure for regional departments and agencies, boards and commissions
• $6.9 million for incenives programs including agricultural and brownfield development charges and tax increment grants
• $2.3 million for operating and capital costs of new ambulances
• $9.6 million for Niagara Region Police Services.

For 2023, the region is also recovering 33 per cent of a $56 million tax deferral approved in 2022 to fund the general levy.

The operating budget for 2023 contains a tax levy of $444 million, which funds the daily business of the region, its boards and agencies.

To help drive down these critical priorities for the current term, the operating budget also supports a $237 million approved capital program. The region has allocatet toward funding a number of key initiatives such as:

• $1.8 million Niagara Street reconstruction
• $1.1 million Oswego Street reconstruction
• $8.4 million York Road watermain replacement
• $8.8 million Niagara Street watermain replace ment
• $14.2 million for the regional transportation program
• $16.1 million Decow Booster Station upgrade

Regional council also endorsed operating and capi tal budget bids tabled by the Niagara Region Public Board last November, an important first milestone for integrated regional bus trans it service in Niagara.

The commission’s first budget for 2023 advances commitment to better connect Niagara communities while continuing to deliver exceptional service to transit riders.

The financial plan reflects an amalgamation of municipal and regional budgets, with adjustments made to account for long-term infrastructure needs, inflation, and recent declines in revenue realized by the former transit providers, the region’s news release said.

Regional council approved a special capital levy of $55.1 million to be billed to ratepayers in 2023, resulting in an annual household cost ranging from $64 per year to $295 per year, depending on the municipality.

Much like waste management, transit is funded separately from the general levy and will appear as a special levy unique for each municipal item as an item on the local municipal tax bill, starting with bills issued in the sec ond half of 2023.

Local Staff

The chair of Niagara Regional Council says he understands residents are facing rising costs but says the region continues to make critical investments while managing the impacts of inflation and other unknown pressures, “Todd Harrison, the region’s finance manager said.

“I can assure the public that regional council was exceedingly thorough in its examination and critical review of the budget and we strived to be as responsible as possible,” said Harrison.

The 2023 budget represents the first time the region can continue to provide residents with the service they expect and deserve, while maintaining over $9.8 billion in Regional infrastructure.

Regional council approved a budget that continues to make critical investments while managing the impacts of inflation and other unknown pressures, the region said.

The regional budget process concluded on Feb. 23 with the approval of the general levy operating budget.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Regional Councillor Andrea Kaiser told The Local she was disappointed in the increase.

“It was not the end result everybody was hoping for but there wasn’t a lot of choice,” she said.

During the pandemic years, capital reserves were used to cover additional costs, “and we need to be cognizant of that impact was. We aim not to repeat that,” she said. “It is a good example of what happens when you keep pushing things down the road.”

The budget covers regional departments and Niagara Regional Police, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Niagara Regional Housing and Court Services as well as the consolidated capital budget.

“Niagara Region continues to be confronted with unique challenges and staff have done an excellent job in managing the region’s fi nances as we navigate these pressures,” Todd Harrison, commissioner of corporate services and treasurer said.

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Regional outlines approved budget for 2023

35 Millpond Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake
3 Bedrooms | 2+1 Baths $1,490,000

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Local author anticipating release of her new book

Penny Coles
The Local

Winning her second writing marathon in 2020 was great news for local author Sharon Frayne, but the result of that win has been even better. The prize was to have her young adult novel, *The Sound of a Rainbow*, sent to publisher Latitude 46 for consideration, and it was quickly snapped up for publication.

It’s almost ready for release, expected to be in all major bookstores April 22, after an unusual journey that began when the first words were written, to the book’s completion in a rough draft just 72 hours later. That was followed by a six-week frenzy of rewrites, and eventual acceptance for publication.

Frayne wrote *The Sound of a Rainbow* during her second year participating in the annual Muskoka Novel Marathon in Huntsville, in what was held as a virtual writers’ competition. The contest, which gives participants 72 hours to produce a novel, is intended to raise awareness for adult literacy in the area and funds Muskoka YMCA literary programs. It also helps writers, whether they win or not, through the comments they receive from judges, and if they win in their category, they have a publishing company look at their work.

But getting your book looked at doesn’t mean it will be published — 99.9 per cent of the time, says Frayne, “you get a response saying ‘nice job, thank you. Congratulations and good luck.’”

It was six months after she submitted the book that she got her response, by which time she’d pretty much given up. “I nearly fell off my chair when I heard,” she said.

Continued on page 11
The Sound of a Rainbow is written for an audience Frayne, as a retired teacher, principal, knows well, and is a genre she’s familiar with — her book written at the 2019 marathon was also a young adult novel, and it too won, but was not published, although she still has hope it might be. Frayne also won the 2020 award for the longest novel — hers was submitted at 44,000 words. But it was a rough 44,000 words, and after her win, she was given six weeks to polish it before submitting to Latitude 46 for consideration, although what she needed most after the 72-hour marathon was rest. Due to the pandemic and the need for a virtual contest, she was able to sleep in her own bed at the family cottage in Muskoka, with her husband Bill French there to prepare meals for her, allowing her to concentrate on her writing. She was able to get by on four hours of sleep each night, but the last day, as she wrote feverishly trying to finish, French had to leave the cottage, and although he left prepared food for her, she didn’t stop to eat. Once she hit ‘send’ for the last time, she was not only exhausted but disoriented and dehydrated, with aching, swollen wrists, and slept for two days to recuperate from the toll the marathon took on her body, she said. The rules for the virtual contest were stringent, with ways to ensure participants were writing on the spot. They were expected to log on to submit every 100 pages, and every word had to be written during that 72-hour period, with just a page of notes allowed for reference. Frayne had the characters and story line in her head when she began, and stuck to that at the beginning, although some of it changed as she went along. However by the time she was racing to the ending, she got back to her original intent, and the tension of trying to finish, she said, helped increase the tension in the story as it too neared its ending.

Without giving too much away, Frayne explains she wanted her story to include a diverse group of young people with special needs, and set the novel in an inclusive northern Ontario camp intended for the kids she wanted to write about. A 16-year-old girl with a great singing voice is the protagonist, but she has had a disastrous final performance on a talent show that is filmed and goes viral on social media. While she is dealing with her humiliation, her parents are in the midst of a divorce, and send her to a summer camp. She is distraught at being sent away, and is initially withdrawn and depressed, trying to distance herself from staff and campers, a diverse group of young people with varying special needs. One boy on the autism spectrum becomes an important part of her story, and once her empathy kicks in, it takes her to unexpected places, including an animal sanctuary on the same island as the camp. As a mystery unfolds, she finds herself supporting her new friends, on an “uplifting, transformative journey” that leads her to finding herself and her strength, said Frayne. “It’s a story that can make you cry, and also make you cheer for her — it’s like an emotional rollercoaster in a wild theme park, and you’re going on this ride with her.”

A member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Writing Circle and many other organizations for authors, Frayne knew she wanted to be a writer when she was a little girl, but the path she took to get there has taken decades. She first studied journalism at university, but became a teacher, looking for something a little more secure, and it wasn’t until she retired that she plunged into writing full-time. That means writing about three hours a day, and spending much of the rest of the day thinking about what she’s writing. And she has lots to think about — this success has only spurred her on. She also still has hope for publishing another book written at another Muskoka marathon — this one during COVID, although it was her favourite, and again, a young adult novel. “I taught school for 40 years,” she explains, “and I like kids. Young adult literature doesn’t mean it’s something less — look at the successful series like Harry Potter and Hunger Games — they reach all ages. Young adults are themselves experiencing an intensity of powerful emotions, actions and decisions that affect them for the rest of their lives. It’s a time of life that’s never boring.”

Readers in the 13 to 16 age group like to read about young people slightly older than themselves, who are leading exciting lives, she added. And Frayne is doing her best to give them what they are looking for, beginning with the launch of The Sound of the Rainbow, hopefully to be followed by more, to be developed during those afternoons of thinking about what’s to come next.
March 8, 2023

Bravo! Niagara’s season begins with Alex Cuba

Mike Balsom

The Local

Bravo! Niagara Festival has announced its spring 2023 season of five concerts, featuring Juno and Grammy winners, internationally acclaimed classical musicians and an online world premiere of a tribute to the music of Astor Piazzolla.

It all begins at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre’s Roberton Hall with a solo performance by Cuban singer-songwriter Alex Cuba on March 25.

Cuba brings with him his wife, Sarah Goodacre, and their three children in Smith’s Falls, B.C., about 13 hours northwest of Vancouver. The Juno and Grammy Award winner likes to joke that he ended up so far north to be close to her family.

“My mother’s side of the family hails from the town of 5,351 people north of Vancouver. The Juno and Grammy winners, internationally acclaimed pianist Louise Bessette, and internationally-acclaimed pianist Russell Ferrante are proud to partner with the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre to present the Bravo! Niagara festival in 2023.”

On Saturday, May 13, the Pianos Trios: one of the most sought-after pianists of his generation, and the winner of the silver medal in 2021 at the prestigious 16th International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw.

Bravo! Niagara spring 2023 season wraps up on Friday, June 9 with Hallett-Peiper and Pianoist of the Year in 2022, an online world premiere of a tribute to the music of Astor Piazzolla.

The Voice of Cuba Orchestra.

Cuban 2021 album Mereno was his eighth solo release. Like many of his albums, Mereno sees Cuba singing in both Spanish and English while collaborating with other world music artists, including Antonio Carmona (Spain), Lila Downs (Mexico), Gilberto Santa Rosa (Puerto Rico) and Gian Marco (Peru). The 10 songs on the Velázquez Trio, led by internationally-acclaimed pianist Kyohei Sorita. The May 24 concert at Toronto’s Kobayashi Auditorium celebrates Astor Piazzolla’s Argentinean music is Cuban Canadian. Canada’s music is Cuban Canadian. Canada’s music is Cuban Canadian.

Since the release of that album, Cuba has been building to a couple of folk festivals in 2019. Two Juno Awards and four Latin Grammys, Mereno earned the guitarist and singer his first Grammy Award for Latin Pop Album of the Year in 2022.

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After winning two Juno Awards and four Latin Grammys, Mereno earned the guitarist and singer his first Grammy Award for Latin Pop Album of the Year in 2022.

The singles will be packaged via streaming services, but appearances he made at a couple of folk festivals in 2019 convinced him he could bring that solo magic to larger audiences. It’s both beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary. “I’ve been looking forward to this a while. It’s beautiful and scary.

“An American Grammy as we call it, is a big deal,” he admits. “To compete with the music in the United States of America, it says you are competing with the big guys. It was my fourth nomination, but I wasn’t expecting to win. I didn’t even get to see the Grammy, so when I was playing two songs in Vancouver, I thought I was going to win. It was while driving back to Brantford from one of those shows that I found out that he won the award.

“Jorge Mendo” he says, “is a marvellous. "It really boosted my confidence. I did four shows in Ontario, just me and my guitar. I had so many unbelievable fan testimonies about these shows. It was way more emotional, and way more powerful. The connection becomes very, very strong between me and the audience.”

Local fans who were lucky enough to see Cubá perform as part of the Jackson-Triggs turn-mer concert series in August 2022 might want to do so. "I always wanted to play there,” he recalls. "When I got the offer to play there solo I was so excited. I got a bit nervous thinking (the audience) was expecting a full band. But it was such a great moment. I sent them to the moon there. That crowd loved every second of that show. I got three encore.”

It’s a solo Alex Cuba who will take to the Robertson Hall stage on March 25, but he’ll have a few new originals to throw into the set and a renewed confidence that winning a Grammy can bring. "An American Grammy as we call it, is a big deal," he admits. "To compete with the music in the United States of America, it says you are competing with the big guys. It was my fourth nomination, but I wasn’t expecting to win. I didn’t even get to see the Grammy, so when I was playing two songs in Vancouver, I thought I was going to win. It was while driving back to Brantford from one of those shows that I found out that he won the award.

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Youth collective ready to wrap up a successful start

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Youth Collective is getting ready to wrap up its inaugural drop-in winter 2023 session this Wednesday. Plans are underway for the end-of-session pizza party, says organizer Caroline Polgrabia. As with the majority of the collective programming, the event will be made available in partnership with a community partner, this time with Hummel Properties. Rainer Hummel, a lifelong resident of NOTL, has supported countless community initiatives over the years.

“We can see what the NYC group is trying to do for our community, and believe it is needed,” said Hummel. “We have many wonderful youth programs in town, and NYC creates a place to focus attention on our youth and try to fill the gaps.”

From the beginning, the collective has aimed to align and leverage town resources, not duplicate existing programming or services, said Polgrabia.

“Our hope for the inaugural eight-week winter 2023 session was to get our initial volunteers trained, sort out important policies and operating systems, test out a few new programs and create some momentum,” she explained. “From the moment we opened the doors on Monday, Jan. 16, it took on a life of its own. I think we exceeded our own expectations.”

The numbers indicate the collective has programming that resonates, said Polgrabia. In eight weeks, 110 youth have registered, 35 days of programs delivered, 90 certificates earned in first aid, babysitting and home alone programs, 385 health snacks and 100 more snacks with meals served, and 88 Valentine’s Day cards delivered to seniors.

The group also tested many new program ideas, including Tutor on Site, Let’s Talk, What’s Inside, Cooking with Bobbi, Chess Night, Book Club, Youth Curators, and Youth Advisory Council. They ran five St John’s Ambulance certification programs and held three pizza parties and a movie night.

Brian Ferguson watched as the registration numbers climbed over the first eight weeks. “We worked really hard to test out a large variety of programs. Some did very well, some did just okay.” And some nights saw very high attendance — as many as 46 on the busiest night — and others, only a few kids relaxed in the space. “We have learned a lot,” Ferguson said.

The NYC team completed 118 volunteer shifts resulting in more than 354-plus supervision hours, as well as hours spent managing volunteers, planning programming, setting up the space, building community partnerships, managing youth registration, media relations and managing digital and social media accounts. “It’s almost impossible to calculate the number of hours volunteers have spent behind the scenes. The list seems endless,” said Brenda Ferguson, volunteer coordinator.

“We are grateful for all our volunteers and community partners. We could not have done this without them. We will be putting out a call for volunteers for anyone who is interested in getting involved and helping us grow the program and our community connections,” Ferguson said.

As the program and the volunteers take a short break to rejuvenate and evaluate the winter session, planning continues for an anticipated April spring program.
Women’s Day a reminder that ‘progress doesn’t happen by accident’

Penny Coles
The Local

Adriana Vizzari is a first-time Niagara-on-the-Lake town councillor with four children, three of them girls. Internationally Women’s Day definitely matters, she says, “because at its core, it’s a rally cry. It is an essential reminder that progress doesn’t happen by accident. All the accomplishments and successes the world celebrated didn’t come easily, but they prove what is possible. As a call to action, IWD tells us to look at where we’ve been, see how far we’ve come, and keep fighting for more.”

Asked if she has experienced gender inequity, she answers, “I don’t know a woman who hasn’t.”

About preparing her daughters for the day it might happen to them, she says, “I choose to focus on teaching them how to respond should they encounter inequity. They are currently seeing front-hand and learning a bunch of times. Boys at school should just know better. We have all the time about sexism. They are learning as they grow older.”

Maria Arantxa, too, answers the question about experiencing inequity in the affirmative. “Unfortunately I have. Fortunately I was raised by a strong female who accomplished so many great things in her short time on this earth, and an even more empowering male (my father).”

Hope says the strong woman she looks up to is “my mom. She is my role model.” And Maria, who lost her mother to cancer far too young, says, “I surround myself with some amazing females that I learn from. But my biggest role model was my mother.”

Mavridis chats with daughter about importance of Women’s Day

Penny Coles
The Local

Leading up to International Women’s Day, Maria Mavridis, award-winning businesswoman and fundraiser, raised event organizer and town councillor, sat down to have a conversation about the day with her daughter Hope.

Asking if Women’s Day is important, Hope said it is, to recognize “women’s accomplishments and how far we’ve come. So many women have done amazing things, and men get a lot more recognition.”

“Find that self-confidence sooner rather than later,” is everyone should be recognized for accomplishments,” said Maria, but “unfortunately we are still living in a society where in equity exists.”

Hope says she has experienced gender inequity “a bunch of times. Boys at school should just know better. We have all the time about sexism. They are learning as they grow older.”

Maria, too, answers the question about experiencing inequity in the affirmative. “Unfortunately I have. Fortunately I was raised by a strong female who accomplished so many great things in her short time on this earth, and an even more empowering male (my father).”

Hope says the strong woman she looks up to is “my mom. She is my role model.” And Maria, who lost her mother to cancer far too young, says, “I surround myself with some amazing females that I learn from. But my biggest role model was my mother.”
University student hopeful for future

Penny Coles
The Local

Victoria Balcom, in her second year of university, says she thinks International Women’s Day is important “because it shines a light on all of what women have been through in the past and present. By acknowledging Women’s Day, we can see how to do better and appreciate the women that have improved the world.”

She says she hasn’t faced any real inequity, but has “sometimes felt like people were treating me different because I’m a woman.” She does have some fear about being treated equally with men as she moves into the workforce, but says, “I have hope in the people who will be in control.”

And yes, she does have strong female role models to mentor her and help her navigate: “Mainly my mom,” she says.

Penny Coles
The Local

Since Women’s Day is international, with the help of translator Shirley Madsen, The Local asked two recent arrivals from Ukraine about the need for a day to recognize women.

Iryna, a 20-year-old woman, says she faced inequality at home and at school. “I had many wonderful teachers, but there was also one who would single out their favourites among the students and give them better grades, simply because the teacher liked them more than other children. But if you take all my life, then I no longer encountered inequality. I meet good people who do good deeds and help me, and I try to be grateful.”

While Women’s Day is important, she says, “at work, I am not afraid to face inequality. I will go forward towards my goal. But I know many cases where people do face inequality.”

She has seen that happen when relatives of “the boss” were hired, but she is not afraid, says Iryna, because “I know for sure that I will be judged by my efforts and work.”

The most important woman who inspired her is her mother. “She is the main motivator for me. This woman lived a very long and interesting life, where she faced many difficulties. But despite this, my mother remained the same kind and bright person whom I love. I know that she will read this. I just want to say thank you for raising me the way I am. She taught me to respect people, taught me to go towards my goal and never give up. Mom, you know me so much and so you love me so much. I am grateful for everything you do for me.”

She continues, “I want to tell you that in my life I meet good people. We recently met a very beautiful woman. Her name is Shirley. Shirley speaks Ukrainian very well and helps a lot of people. I want to express my deep gratitude to her for her work and help to Ukrainians. Shirley has a very kind heart. She is an example for the future.”

Victoria, another recent arrival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, with her parents and younger sister, is turning 15 this month. She has started high school, and has recently been taking tennis lessons in St. Davids, at the invitation of Karen Wright—a strong and compassionate woman who uses tennis to help others—and is enjoying them.

Victoria says, “personal- ly, I have never experienced inequality in my life, but I have heard a lot of stories about it.”

And yes, sometimes she worries about it and how it could affect her future, but she hopes it will no longer be a problem in society.

And she too says the woman who inspires her more than anyone else is her mother.

“She always supports me and helps me not to stop because of difficulties.”

“On March 8, Women’s Day,” Iryna adds, “I want every woman who reads these lines to understand that she is beautiful. I congratulate all women on the holiday of spring and wish everyone happiness.”

Two young Ukrainians on International Women’s Day

Iryna, from Ukraine, says all women are beautiful. (Supplied)

Victoria says her mother inspires her to keep going even when something is difficult. (Supplied)

Jenna and her mom, Sarah Dalisay (Supplied)

Sarah Dalisay, mother of Jenna, 9, says she doesn’t worry about her daughter as she gets older, “as she is very smart, confident and determined. I’m also hopeful that gender equality will improve over time, and will not be as much an issue in 10 to 15 years when she enters the workforce. Sarah says her mother always told her “I can be anything I want! I have definitely benefited from her encouragement.”

And for Jenna, she says, “I would make sure my daughter knows her time and energy are as valuable as a man’s, and she’s as deserving of promotions and other benefits.”

Penny Coles
The Local

Mariah Reese, mother of three boys, says her perspec- tive on gender equity might be a little different than some, “I have been beyond bless- ed to have never experienced inequality. I was a waiter at a few different places when I first started working. As such, I had the upper hand to males. Females tend to make better tips than men.”

Following a few years in the service industry, she says, “I worked in an office. I was totally unqualified for most office jobs. On top of that, I had just had a baby. Despite having no experience or qualifications and having a baby, I was hired by a company that not only gave me a job but they gave me a huge office (400 square feet) so I could bring my baby into work with me.”

Reese says she “very clearly took that office from someone (including a few men) much more deserving of it than I was. I brought my baby to work with me every day for four years until he started school. By the time he was ready for school, I had met and married Robert who made enough for me to quit and be a stay-at-home mom.

And there she still is, and has been for the past 12 years or so.

“I never plan on working for anyone again, so I also can’t say how I feel about re-entering the workforce. I’m also married to a ship captain (arguably one of the most “manly” jobs). But when he comes home, he answers to me. There are no gender roles in our house. He cooks (more than I do), cleans, takes care of the baby, etc., so I don’t feel burdened with my ‘role’ in the house.”

As for teaching her boys to respect women, that’s not an issue — they are perfect gentlemen for the most part, with occasional slip-ups, like every human, she says. “There’s never been a conversation with them about how to treat women especi- ally, but we have many con-

versations about how to treat everyone fairly and there is no reason or excuse to treat someone different. A very important point we make is, as they are very protec- tive of their brothers, if they wouldn’t want someone say- ing or doing something to one of their brothers, then they shouldn’t be saying or doing it to someone else.

They do many household chores, she says, and “they know if they get married and expect too much of their wives, they’ll have to me to an- ower to.”

Mariah Reese and her oldest son, Sebastian (Supplied)

Daughter needs to value her time, energy

Penny Coles
The Local

Victoria Balsom, with the family’s puppy, Bailey (Supplied)

Sarah Dalisay, mother of Jenna, 9, says she doesn’t worry about her daughter as she gets older, “as she is very smart, confident and determined. I’m also hopeful that gender equality will improve over time, and will not be as much an issue in 10 to 15 years when she enters the workforce.

Jenna and her mom, Sarah Dalisay (Supplied)

Jenna and her mom, Sarah Dalisay (Supplied)
When the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) men’s hockey championship takes place this Saturday, in a key element in the Lancers’ chance to win at home will be Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Hunter Holmes.

The 23-year-old graduate of St. Davids Public School and A.N. Myer Secondary School is in his second year with the Lancers, who will face the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières Patriotes at 7:30 p.m. for the title.

Having previously spent a season and a half playing with the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League’s Cégep de Trois-Rivières Ramparts, Holmes is quite aware of the style of play the Patriotes will bring to the Cape Pizzazz Recreation Complex. He’ll face some of his former teammates this weekend.

“They play a very different style of hockey than us,” Holmes says on the phone from the Windsor apartment he shares with his girlfriend, Emma. “They’re small, they’re fast, they’re younger. They’re a run-and-gun skill team, and we’re much bigger and older. But they’re coming to our rink, so where we know all the bounces.”

The Lancers finished second in the OUA regular season after losing their final two games 6-2 to the Lakehead Thunderwolves and 5-4 to Western. They knocked off the Brock Badgers in two straight in the quarter-finals, then won two out of three against the first place Thunderwolves, having to play the final two games in Thunder Bay.

“They’re 18 hours away, you have to fly to play them,” Holmes says. “That makes it tough. And there’s not a lot else to do in Thunder Bay, so they pack their rink. They had more than 3,500 people for both games. They treat it like it’s a big deal. It’s a big event, it’s hard to win there.”

The human kinetics major’s stint with the Lancers follows a successful junior hockey career, with three and a half years playing for the Ontario Hockey League’s Flint Firebirds and then his stint with the Ramparts. In 190 games with Flint, Holmes had 29 goals and 64 points, while he added another 13 goals and 31 points in 60 games playing out of Quebec City.

“There were things I liked better about Flint, and things I liked better about Quebec,” he says. “The tradition in Quebec City is honestly second to none in the entire CHL (Canadian Hockey League). The fans love the Ramparts, they have a brand new NHL-ready arena. They pack in 8,000 people minimum a night. It was first class, an unbelievable experience.”

With the Ramparts, Holmes was coached by Montreal Canadiens legend Patrick Roy.

“That was pretty cool,” Holmes says. “He was a really good guy. When it was game time, he was intense. Once the puck dropped his alter-ego came out. We were a pretty good team, so we didn’t see that side of him too much. I enjoyed playing for him, and he seemed to like me.”

Like many former OHL and QMJHL players who follow that experience playing university hockey, Holmes had to adjust last year in his first season with Windsor.

“It’s a lot different than junior,” he agrees. “In some cases you’re playing with guys who are six years older than you. There’s an adjustment period. Guys are bigger and stronger in this league. They play a different style of hockey.”

Many say the OUA is one of the best-kept secrets in hockey. Many former OHL players who don’t get noticed by pro teams end up playing university hockey.

“If you’re not going pro, this is where you go,” says Holmes. “There’s great talent coming out of the OHL, and there’s guys who play Tier II, who hope to go to the NCAA (U.S. College) but that doesn’t work, so they find their way here. The teams are just packed with really good players. There’s plenty of guys who come out of this league who go on to play pro hockey.”

Holmes suffered a dislocated shoulder last year, leaving him on the sidelines for much of the season. The Lancers finished first in the regular season but lost in the first round of the playoffs.

“This year, I just felt a bit more confident in my game,” he adds. “When you’re playing with a great team, and great players, and you’re winning, it’s easy to produce and get points.”

Holmes is carrying a full schedule of five courses.

With the travel being a member of the varsity hockey team requires, sometimes makes that challenging. But he’s good at buckling down and getting his work done when his professors don’t offer him deadline extensions.

He chose the University of Windsor partly because of its strong Human Kinetics program, and partly because Emma, a Michigan native, was completing a Masters degree there.

He is intent on finishing his degree and perhaps applying to teacher’s college following that. But the oldest of Chuck and Maryellen Holmes hasn’t ruled out a pro career in the future.

“I’ve definitely always had the mindset that I want to get my degree before I do that,” Holmes insists. “I have one more year and then, who knows? You have to do all the leg work yourself, it’s difficult. But if the opportunity presents itself, that would definitely be something I would consider.”

In December, Holmes’ younger brother Owen caught on with the near-by London Knights of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League, for whom he has scored 21 points in 20 games.

“I went to watch him play once, but we both play Fridays and Saturdays so it’s hard,” Holmes tells The Local. “But he’s coming Saturday with my mom to watch him. I’ve seen him a handful of times, and I hadn’t seen him play in such a long time. It’s cool to have him, so I can only 30 minutes away.”

Cole, the youngest of the three boys, is playing hockey this year for the Wolves Under-18 travel team, heading into the playoffs.

After the OUA championship game this weekend, Cole will be flying out to Prince Edward Island for the U-Sports Canadian championships. The top two teams in each division get a berth in that tournament, but winning this weekend would give them a higher seeding there.

Because Windsor competes in a different division than the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Saturday’s championship will be the first time the two teams have met all year.

“I think we have a pretty good chance,” Holmes says. “I think we have a pretty good team, and we’re playing our best games in the league, so that should help. I think if we play our game, we have a chance to win the championship. I think we’re playing well when we get them, we should do well. If we counter with good defence, we never know what will happen.”
**Niagara Predators swept away in playoffs by Renegades**

Mike Balsom  
**The Local**

Despite playing some of their best hockey all season, the Niagara Predators were swept in three straight games by the North York Renegades this weekend. The losses eliminated them from the Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League’s South Division playoffs, while the Renegades advance to the division finals.

The series between the fourth and fifth seeds and the first place Renegades kicked off Friday night at Virgil’s Meridian Credit Union Arena. Although North York had home ice advantage for the semi-finals, Niagara hosted game one because of difficulties in securing ice time.

North York’s stretch pass attack and continuous deflating pressure in the Niagara zone proved too much to handle, and the Preds dropped a 6-3 decision in front of the home crowd.

Despite the Renegades dominating puck possession from the start, Niagara escaped the first period with a 2-2 tie on two quick Anthony Tropea goals. They were able to cut the North York offensive attack in the second, forcing turnovers and mounting attacks of their own on Renegades goalie Nick Lewicky. But Darius Mani popped one past Preds netminder Ryan Santini to give his team a 3-2 lead.

Predators forward Declan Fogarty took an elbowing penalty after the second period ended so Niagara started the third shorthanded. Mani scored what turned out to be the winning goal on the ensuing power play. Fogarty redeemed himself about four minutes later when he tipped in an attempt by linemate Savioe to close the gap to 4-3 with about 15 minutes left to go.

The rest of the way, though, all of the time spent chasing the puck in their own zone seemed to catch up to a tired Predators squad.

Johnson scored his second for the Renegades near the midpoint of the period and Joseph Liotti added the exclamation point at 18:49, and the series moved to North York with the Renegades up a game.

The Predators entered Saturday’s game without two of their hottest scorers. Anthony Tropea and Nolan Wyers sat out after suffering injuries Friday night.

Team president Robert Turnbull said he and the coaching staff talked to the players about their team mates’ absence before the game.

“We told them each player would get an opportunity to play, probably more than they thought,” he told The Local. “We explained, you just have to do your role. For most of the game they did. We had a couple of bad goals against us. But we took them down to 3-3 and we had the opportunity to score.”

For over 58 minutes the game could have gone either way, but untimely back-to-back penalties gave the Renegades a two-man advantage, allowing Darius Mani to score the winning goal again, with only 1.17 left in the third.

The Preds actually took a 2-1 lead in the first two periods of the game one because of a goal by Declan Fogarty, but the Renegades were up 3-1. They proved too much to handle, forcing head coach Kevin Taylor to make the phone call to exit interviews with each of the players.

“Our jobs aren’t done yet,” emphasized Taylor. “We have to start making the phone calls to get some of the officers to their next place. For some that will be college.”

North York now awaits the winner of the series between Durham and Bradford to play in a best-of-seven series for the South Division championship.

The South Division champion will then take on the winner between the North’s High Prairie Red Wings and the Northern Alberta Tomahawks for the Russell Cup.
Pickleball tournament at Virgil arenas first in Niagara

Zahraa Hmoood
Special to The Local

Pickleball enthusiasts will come from far and wide for a weekend-long celebration of the sport, as the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club is set to host its first-ever tournament in June.

“It has never been offered in the Niagara region: not a single pickleball tournament,” said John Hindle, club member and organizer of the event, sharing news of the Classic Pickleball Tournament at Tuesday’s council meeting.

The tournament will take place indoors at the two arenas from Friday, June 9 to Sunday, June 11. Hindle asked council to consider a municipal partnership with the club and sponsor the tournament by waiving rental fees for using the arenas for the competition.

The pickleball club has seen a rocky few years recently, with their courts closed last spring after the club and town were approached for sponsors, “There’s obviously a lot of organizations that use the arena and outdoor courts at the Virgil Sports Park closed last spring after the club and town were convicted in court for a noise by-law violation. The conviction, delivered in June, included a $1,000 fine and a two-year probation on using the outdoor courts.

“There are a ton of organizations that use the arena instead. My fear is that we’re closing soon, once 200 players register, there may be a two-year closing for the club,” said Hindle.

The goal is for the tournament to be a fundraiser for the club, which wants to make financial contributions to the town and to open outdoor courts in a new location, he said.

Tickets are $10 for the exhibition tournament on Friday, June 9, which will see eight professional players face off in teams to win $2,000 prizes, from 7:30 to 10 p.m.

The competitions on June 10 and 11 are free for the public to attend, starting at 8 a.m. on Saturday and 9 a.m. on Sunday.

Registration is open for the tournament, which is looking for competitors in the men’s or women’s doubles. Players can register for $55 to compete in one of two categories: by age or by skill level. Registration may be closed soon, once 200 players have signed up. Demand to participate has been high, Hindle said, with 80 players registering on the first day alone.

“There’s obviously a great interest in coming to the region and playing pickleball,” he said. According to chief administrative officer Markie Cluckie, it is typical to charge the market rate for renting municipal arenas to groups, but over the years, they’ve sometimes turned to subsidized rates instead.

“My fear is that we’re opening the door to being approached for sponsors,” said Coun. Maria Mavridis. “There are a ton of organizations that use the arena and the surrounding recreational spaces.”

Coun. Adriana Vizzari proposed using the town’s discretionary grant program to supplant whatever the cost would be for the club to rent the arena.

During the latest budget committee meeting on Wednesday, March 1, councillors were told the town has budgeted $102,000 in its discretionary grant program for the 2023 operating budget.

Starting in April, groups can apply for partial funding for events and initiatives through a discretionary grant: the program’s committee would determine who gets funding and how much.

“This is the ideal kind of set-up where a discretionary grant, 100 per cent or partial, would apply,” said Coun. Gary Burroughs of the pickleball tournament.

Lord Mayor Gary Za- lepa recommended council defer its decision on the pickleball tournament funding options to the budget review committee, once staff have a number for the total fees that could be waived for the tournament.

While the tournament wasn’t mentioned during Wednesday’s 2023 operating budget meeting, the committee has a second meeting scheduled for March 9 to further discuss plans for operations spending and revenue this year.

For more information on the tournament, which is looking for sponsorship, or for registration, visit pickleballbrackets.com.
MARGARET DOLORES DEMENINT
July 14, 1937 – March 5, 2023

On March 5, 2023, Dolores Demenint, our Mom, Grandma and Great Grandma passed away peacefully at Albright Manor at the age of 85. Dolores will be dearly remembered by her children, Garth Demenint, Lynn Roselli (David Roselli) and Gary Demenint, her grandchildren Kevin, Lisa and Christine and her great-granddaughter Annika. She is predeceased by her husband Theo (Ted) Demenint and her brother Allan Clark.

She will also be remembered by her nieces and nephews and her many friends, all of whom will cherish her memories of happy times together. Dolores enjoyed sewing and was a figure skating judge for many years. She also taught skating to children with special needs and started the Special Olympics program at the Cambridge Skating Club.

Cremation has taken place and a Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

LILY’S SONG: Lily Ann Falk was born on January 31st, 1982 in St Catharines. She was the second of the five daughters born to Hedy and Henry Winter. As a young girl, Lily spent a happy childhood cultivating many of her many different talents. During these years, she developed her extraordinary ‘green thumb’ working at Reimer’s Nurseries, her appreciation for Linda Ronstadt, and her unique brand of ‘kind aggression’ playing competitive volleyball for Eden Christian College. Most significantly, Lily’s passion for music, her servant heart, and her deep love for her Savior, were becoming central aspects of her life. On the periphery, however, a short-but-cute young man from her youth group began to slowly wear down her dating sensibilities. He, David, who helped Lily on her way into the arms of Jesus, her Lord. Though we grieve now, we are confident that she is secure in the divine love and care that God has promised His children.

Predeceased by her mother, Hedy (nee Neufeld), and nephew, Michael Labonte. She will also be greatly missed by her husband, Larry, children, Brittany (Christian) Minoprio, Craig (Morgan) Falk, Candice (Joshua) Gifford, eight grandchildren, and father, Henry Winter. She will also be mourned and fondly remembered by her sisters, mother – and father-in-law, brothers – and sisters-in-law, nieces, nephews, and countless others. Thank you to Dr. Kais and all the wonderful staff at St. Catharines Hospital for your compassionate care. Funeral service was held on February 28th, 2023. Special thanks to Cornerstone Community Church for their generosity, the use of their facilities, and to all who contributed that day. The service can be accessed on Cornerstone Community Church Niagara’s YouTube channel.

In his retirement, David enjoyed travelling with Carol, gardening, building models, and qualified for the Boston Marathon several times including running a 3:17 in 1979, and was the winner of the Buffalo NY Runner of the Year series in his age group multiple times over a 30 year period. He also participated in cycling, sailing and more recently rowing where he won the Canadian indoor rowing championships in his age category and competed in several World Indoor rowing championships well into his eighties. He also undertook to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa in his mid-seventies. In his retirement, David enjoyed travelling with Carol, gardening, building models, and fine dining. Cremation has taken place. Friends wishing to pay their respects are welcome to join the family on Friday, March 10th, 2023 between 2 and 4 pm at MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake. A celebration of David’s life will take place at a later date. Those who wish may make a memorial donation to the Canadian Cancer Society or Médecins Sans Frontières.

WILLETT, DAVID—Passed away unexpectedly on Monday, February 27, 2023 at the age of 91. Beloved husband of Carol for over 36 years. Loving father to John (Edele), Tim (Louise), Jane (Jimmy) Jaggs and Paul (Devon). Caring grandfather of Audrey (Praeven), Ross, Matt (Ivana), Taylor and Sarah.

David graduated in Engineering from Imperial College in London and retired from Acrel-Hatch in 1994 after 40 years as a Civil Engineer specializing in Hydro Electric projects. In his spare time David enjoyed many hobbies and was an active and successful athlete. He took up running in his forties and qualified for the Boston Marathon several times including running a 3:17 in 1979, and was the winner of the Buffalo NY Runner of the Year series in his age group multiple times over a 30 year period. He also participated in cycling, sailing and more recently rowing where he won the Canadian indoor rowing championships in his age category and competed in several World Indoor rowing championships well into his eighties. He also undertook to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa in his mid-seventies. In his retirement, David enjoyed travelling with Carol, gardening, building models, and fine dining.

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from March 1, 2023

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Sudoku solution from March 1, 2023
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