



Strawberry
Festival
returns
June 17
page 13



The Virgil Stampede wrapped up its best weekend ever, with record-breaking crowds and food sales, says Virgil Business Association president Richard Wall. The event concluded with a spectacular fireworks display Monday evening. (Shannon Leboudec)

Local politicians weigh in on provincial announcement about regional governments

Penny Coles
The Local

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa says he considers Premier Doug Ford’s announcement about appointing facilitators to look at regional governments a positive move for Niagara.

The announcement came week, while Ford was speaking about legislation to break up Peel Region..

Like Zalepa, Regional Chair Jim Bradley told regional councillors last Thursday he is also looking forward to the appointment of a facilitator to examine Niagara’s two tiers, and their roles and responsibilities.

But both Zalepa and Bradley stressed they are considering it an opportunity to improve regional service delivery, not to dismantle the region.

Bradley said at last he was pleased to hear the province is “considering the unique circumstances in each of the regions across Ontario,” and making “careful decisions” designed to help tackle the housing shortage crisis.

He is hoping a provincial facilitator may help find ways to build more attainable homes as efficiently as possible, as well as find

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Lyme disease a devastating illness for NOTL woman and family

Penny Coles
The Local

Nicole Legros says her best friend Maverick is who gets her up in the morning. He is also her reason for going outside on walks, but not without being prepared. She dresses in long sleeves and long pants, even just to walk on Niagara-on-the-Lake sidewalks or roads, staying off the grass. She also sprays an all-natural tick repellent on

herself and on Maverick. Legros has been living with late-stage lyme disease for many years, and the most important lesson she has learned is the importance of prevention — there has been no escape for her from this debilitating disease, and she knows she’s not alone. There was a time when Legros believed a diagnosis that would explain her years of living in pain and the long list of symptoms

severely impacting her life would be a dream come true, and the beginning of a journey to wellness. Instead, she says, it’s felt more like a never-ending nightmare. Now 28, Legros was just eight years old, an active young girl who loved figure skating, soccer and swimming, when back and joint pain, fatigue, and even memory loss and brain fog began to plague her. Her first visit to Sick

Kids Hospital in Toronto was a result of severe lower back pains. She was diagnosed and treated for an auto-immune disease — both lupus and rheumatoid arthritis were suspected at some point. Even a rare form of cancer was suggested. Her family was told she would be in a wheelchair by the age of 20. In 2018, after years of hospitalizations and treatments, working with a pain specialist and being referred

to specialists for testing with no clear diagnosis of what was causing her pain and nothing that stopped it, Legros met a local chiropractor who recognized the signs of lyme disease — he was suffering similar symptoms himself. It was not a surprise that a test given in Ontario came back with a negative result — that is a common occurrence, because the testing available in Canada has to be within a short time after

contracting the disease, and it is often years rather than months before lyme disease is considered, explains Legros — in her case, years, before she had the test done. There are tests available in Canada now, she explains, that can be purchased, and sent to the U.S., which is what she did. With a positive result, the next step was to do more detailed testing through a lab

Continued on page 10

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Successful fundraiser for legion friend



Though Saturday's soggy weather moved the party indoors, more than 150 people showed up at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 to listen to Pubdaddy Blues Band, featuring Roger Picken, and help raise funds to support longtime local resident and legion bartender Sue Pauls. A stroke suffered by Pauls last November has left her blind and partially paralyzed. She is currently living in Garden City Manor, a long-term care facility. Legion president Al Howse says more than \$3,000 was raised in one day to support Sue with personal care items and clothing. (Mike Balsom)

Talks about shared services could make region stronger

Continued from page 1

more opportunities for shared services across the region. "That was some of what was discussed during Niagara Week," which saw politicians and staff attend meetings at Queen's Park with provincial ministers to discuss those topics. Bradley says he's glad to hear there will not be a "cookie-cutter approach" to regions across Ontario, adding, "this comes as an open-ended process, with no predetermined outcomes."

Andrea Kaiser, Niagara-on-the-Lake's regional councillor, heard Bradley speak at the meeting, and said she was pleased that "it's not going to be one scenario that fits all. It sounded encouraging, that there will be an opportunity to keep our regional structure."

The region is already discussing "transformational issues" regarding how it charges municipalities for some services, such as garbage, to move from assessment to being charged by household, Kaiser said.

She points to the way public transit is being handled as a step in that direction, taking population into account. "The region is already having those conversations around shared services and population versus assessment. I think that would satisfy many municipalities, that it would be more equitable."

Kaiser said she would

like to see the region share services so that municipalities could access support when needed, such as planning and economic development. "The more we move to less duplication and look at more shared services, the better it bodes for municipalities."

Referring to early reports talking about dismantling regional governments, Zalepa says if that were the case, "who's going to do all the stuff the region does?"

What is happening in Peel is very different, with two large cities that can exist on their own, he says.

"In Niagara, that's not the case. We don't have a Brampton or a Mississauga."

Niagara's distinctive communities "are part of our success," he says. "We can offer a lot that appeals to different people. We can attract businesses, residents and tourism, for different reasons."

Regional council began working on how to improve services during its last term, when Zalepa was a regional councillor. Those discussions also "respected the fact that we have these distinct differences, and that we keep decision-making at the local level because local politicians are in better touch with their community."

When "larger entities have crossed jurisdictions, like health services and schools, they have not equated to better services for local municipalities," Zalepa says. "For me, that's

a hard stop — larger amalgamations do not make bad things better. So I'm glad to see the premier make statements that say he wants to reach out to local municipalities and hear what we have to say. I applaud him for that. But we need to be really serious about how we improve our shared service delivery so that we can control any changes, and have a homemade solution."

Zalepa says he believes the provincial government wants to make sure "our governments are being run more efficiently, but also being respectful of the communities we live in. I'm hoping we can get there, and at the end of the day, the region will continue to provide services such as garbage, social services, housing and public health — all those things that still need to be done. Delivering them at a municipal level makes no sense."

There are other "great things we can do together, things like HR and planning, that can be done as a shared service but still be distinctly delivered to each local municipality. That's what we need to get to, that would bring efficiencies."

"I see it as a great opportunity," he adds. "I feel really encouraged by what I'm hearing, that there will be a conversation about what works best for Niagara."

What he doesn't want, he says, "is for the conversation to wade into amalgamation. I think that would be unproductive. The focus has to be on how we can actually make things better."

The next step, he says, will be the provincial appointment of a facilitator and hopefully opportunities for both regional and municipal representatives to share their visions for service delivery in the future.

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Not yet sunset for horse-drawn carriages in NOTL

Carrie Gleason
The Local

While horse-drawn carriages will still be seen riding off into the sunset this season, and likely in future seasons in Niagara-on-the-Lake, it is not yet known for certain who those operators will be, or how they will be determined.

What is clear is that this council supports caleche operations and wants them to continue, with no end in sight.

After hearing delegations from caleche operators Jeff Sentineal (Queens Royal Tours) at last Tuesday's committee of the whole meeting, and Rhonda Cave, who is seeking a caleche licence, council has requested the town revise its recommended amendments to the 2023 operating terms of reference that would have seen the eventual end to horse-drawn carriages in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The framework for the licensing and operation of horse-drawn carriages in town was approved by council in May 2022 after collaboration between the town and its two existing licensed operators, Sentineal Carriages and Queens Royal Tours. It allows for five licenses to occupy space at the corner of King and Queen streets in Old Town.

However, at a council meeting last month, caleche operator Rhonda Cave sought permission to obtain a licence to occupy an additional space. Cave's request prompted a request from council to town staff to review the 2022 framework.

Cave indicated she had already been operating carriages in NOTL last season, but it's unclear whether she was an employee of Queens Royal or using its licences, explained CAO Marnie Cluckie — that's an issue staff need to clarify.

The town's proposed amendments included the addition of a sunset clause that would see the eventual phasing out of horse-drawn carriages in NOTL; a cap of five spaces for caleches, which could only be granted to Sentineal Carriages and Queens Royal Tours, with the inability to 'sublet'; and the refusal of any new additional licences.

The sunset clause meant that when either of the two current operators ceased to operate for a year or more, their licences would be revoked, with no new operators allowed to take their place. Rome D'Angelo, the town's director of operations, explained that the sunseting of caleches follows a trend occurring in major cities such as New York, Toronto and Montreal.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita addressed the support the carriage companies have had in town in light of the protests that have ongoing since 2017, saying that "residents stepped up, stood up, and fought on behalf of keeping this service, because it adds to the charm and the small-town feel. Visitors and residents love this service."

Councillors agreed they do not support a sunset clause in the framework for horse-drawn carriages.

In regard to Cave's request to operate her own caleche

business this season, council did not decide to allow any additional licences for the 2023 season after it was discovered that there may be an opportunity for her to operate under the existing allotment of five licences.

When Sentineal said he would not be operating this year, Coun. Nick Ruller, who said he was "sympathetic" to Cave's situation, asked that town staff explore the opportunity of letting her operate within the existing capacity, if space exists.

Sentineal did not indicate his intentions for the future.

Councillors unanimously agreed that all five spots should be filled. "The season is upon us, and people are going to expect to get on a caleche. Are we getting five caleches out or are we not?" asked Coun. Erwin Wiens.

While councillors seemed keen to ensure horse-drawn carriages continue to delight tourists in NOTL and that all spots be filled, with the possibility for Cave to fill two of them, the future of the process by which caleche operators are awarded licences is still undecided.

For her part, Cave said the staff's suggested amendments to the framework, which would have allowed only Sentineal and Queens Royal to operate, created a "monopoly" in town.

Councillors objected to the word "monopoly," but did say that the framework should allow for a competitive process to fill any vacant spots, and that parameters for what constitutes

operating be clearly defined.

That was not part of the motion that was approved, said Cluckie, and would be something to look at for the

long term.

The operating framework is now back with town staff to amend based on the feedback provided by council, including

a query from Coun. Nick Ruller about whether the \$500 fee per licence for space makes up for the lost parking revenue for the town.



Protests against horse-drawn carriages continued this weekend at the corner of King and Queen streets. Last week councillors debated and decided not to have a 'sunset clause' for carriage operations, as town staff had recommended. (Mike Balsom)

Learn about the colourful history of NOTL at the fort

Fort George is open for the season, with soldiers in redcoats, historic interpreters, a historic powder magazine, and cannons on the lookout. There is lots to explore for all ages as visitors experience the military post that defended Upper Canada against American attacks.



The fort is now open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily with the last ticket sold at 4:15 p.m. For more information visit parks.canada.ca/lhn-nhs/on/fortgeorge. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Niagara Lake
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Monday 29 **Virgil Sports Park**
1565 Four Mile Creek Road
12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Monday 29 **Sparky's Park**
Tanbark Road
3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday 30 **Outlet Mall Food Court**
300 Taylor Road
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Tuesday 30 **Courthouse**
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Pedal Pub looking at same route as last year

Carrie Gleason
The Local

Despite a Pedal Pub request and a recommendation from town staff to approve a new route for the party-bike tour, councillors have passed a motion that will see the route stay the same as it was last year.

The two main points in the discussion at Tuesday's committee of the whole meeting were traffic congestion in Old Town and a lack of engagement with residents who would be affected by a route change.

In the existing route, the multi-seat bikes depart from the Pedal Pub parking lot on Mary Street, turn left onto Mississagua Street and right onto Queen to Regent Street, where they turn around and follow the same route back to Selfie Mode on Mary Street.

The new route proposed by Pedal Pub encompassed a larger area that looped around town by having the bikes continue on Queen to King, and along King to Mary, to the end point. According to the town's report, Pedal Pub proposed the new route to allow it access to a new business partner on King, to limit the number



Pedal Pub owners had hoped for an extended route from Queen Street to King, and along King to Mary Street, but at last week's meeting, councillors turned it down. (File photo)

of left-hand turns the bike operators have to make, to reduce their presence on Mississagua and to provide safer boarding and disembarking for passengers.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor put forth the motion to keep the existing route, which will be in place until the end of July 2024, saying that the new route "almost doubles the road coverage and the potential

disruption to residents." She also added that "residents' needs were not adequately considered as part of the report," a sentiment echoed by Coun. Nick Ruller, who recalled the community reaction to the noise from music and rowdy passengers on Pedal Pub bikes in residential areas in past years.

On the other side of the discussion, Lord May-

or Gary Zalepa pointed to the potential of the new route to help "mitigate traffic concerns" by not having the bikes transverse "the busiest road into the community (Mississagua Street) twice."

Coun. Tim Balasiuk, however, was in favour of "keeping traffic congestion to the main arteries" to avoid frustration for residents who are "using what

they would consider the back roads into the downtown area."

Pedal Pub has been offering their unique tourism experience in town since 2019. In 2020, council voted not to renew its license for 2021 after complaints about noise, traffic congestion, and safety concerns from residents, but reversed their decision a little while later to allow

the business to continue to operate. The town report made mention of several modifications Pedal Pub has made to its operations in previous seasons to address concerns raised by council and by residents, including reducing noise through residential areas, installing additional dash cams on their vehicles, and adjusting their routes to address safety concerns.

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Kiana Woo (Lucy) and Qasim Khan (Aslan) with the cast of *Prince Caspian*. Photo by David Cooper.

EDITORIAL

Leap of faith needed to believe look at governance will end well

Premier Doug Ford says his phone has been ringing off the hook with mayors wanting to separate from their regional governments. He wouldn't name names, and so far we haven't heard much about who is calling him. Once he successfully manages to break up Peel Region — he says the mayors of Brampton and Mississauga should be doing cartwheels, but apparently not the mayor of Caledon, who said she

didn't want a divorce — he said he would be turning his attention to other regions, including Niagara, along with Durham, Halton, Waterloo and York. He said he's doing it because "everyone wants to call their own shots." While the province is saying facilitators will be appointed to work with the six regions, it has also been reported that facilitators began in November to look at "roles and responsibilities between upper and lower-tier mu-

nicipalities." The main goal seemed to be getting homes built to address the housing crisis. Either way, in Niagara, what we're hearing is that the province wants to know what municipalities and mayors want, and has no intention of forcing change on them. That's all well and good if all 12 municipalities agree on what they want. There may be some cities who prefer to go it alone, or as has been discussed in the past, with the

smaller towns being amalgamated with larger municipalities. We have to hope that's not where this discussion is going, that the picture painted by Regional Chair Jim Bradley, and described very similarly by Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, is not only what the province intends, but also what the rest of Niagara municipalities hope to achieve. And that this is not going to be a matter of eliminating one of the tiers of a two-tier system that while

not perfect, requiring some fine-tuning, is the best system for these 12 municipalities. If all everyone is expecting to come of this is to improve regional government, delivering the services it should deliver, only more efficiently, and letting municipalities make their decisions about what is best for their communities, it could be an attractive option for all concerned. It requires quite a leap of faith though to accept that the province has no intention of

forcing a solution, if it turns out their solution doesn't math up what the politicians and residents want for Niagara. But there has been no hint at amalgamation, no talk of dismantling more regional governments — just looking at how to make it better for everyone. Seems almost too good to be true. Penny Coles The Local

Three waterways, three regions make for a busy week

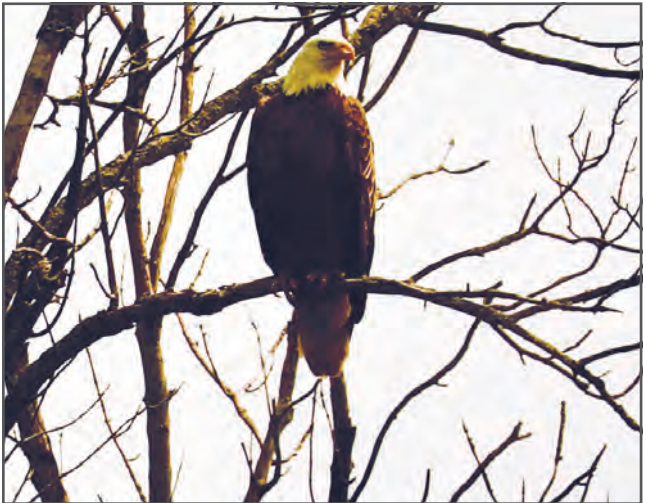


As of late, it feels like my bed is my only resting place. The bed has been in my house, in the back of my Jeep, or in a beautiful cottage on the shores of Lake Huron. How did this all happen within a week, while simultaneously showing up for a full-time job? The answer is carefully and with delight. I drew a giant triangle on southern Ontario and covered it from all angles. I was situated in Niagara as always, but I was also beyond fortunate to spend quality time in Norfolk and Huron counties for tours, speaking gigs, and some valued family

time. Let's start with a crazy 48 hours for the books. I was at work with the school board, with a class of keen and exploratory Kindergarten kids. Their imaginations run wild as their fascinations dig into the very soil they are exploring. We planted pollinator plants and investigated the microcosm world of life under logs with magnifying glasses. The kids are sweet and fun, but they command your energy and focus all day. So when you get an email from someone who wants to go out on a canoe tour that afternoon, you pull up your energy socks and you make it happen. My Jeep was in the shop at this time for a mechanical issue, so I was suddenly in a whirlwind of trading three vehicles and hitches amongst my mom and dad in order to find a way to hook up my vehicle properly for the trail-

er and canoes. If that sounds confusing, it's because it was. Thanks to my parents, I was able to scrounge up the right vehicle and hitch, across the peninsula to Fort Erie, and make a successful canoe tour happen. My guest and I watched terns — a slimmer and more athletic version of a seagull — dive-bomb the water for fish while the stressful rush of my day dissolved into the creek's placid waters. Sometimes, it's amazing how running my tours is the most therapeutic and easy-going part of my week. My day was only on Chapter Two, though. I still had to get home and write an article for this paper, which is a facet of my weekly life I am always truly excited to do. Trouble is, I was almost out of gas. I completed the article on time, ate dinner in bed like a teenager at 11:30 p.m., and had to mentally prepare myself for Kindergarten kids and a 3.5 hour drive after work the next day.

I woke up ready to rock — I had no choice. My Jeep would be fixed and ready for pickup after a day of work with the tiny and energetic children, and then I'd begin my drive to an area near Kincardine for an evening presentation about thru-hiking the 890-kilometre Bruce Trail, one of my fa-



A bald eagle discovered on a creek in Fort Erie was a highlight of a busy week. (Owen Bjorgan) Kintail allowed me to stay in one of their cabins on the lakeshore, with a hot shower, kitchen, and bed all to myself. I microwaved cheeseburgers I bought in plastic wrapping at a nearby gas station, to give you a sense of the time crunch I was riding on. My goodness, they were delicious at 10 p.m. though. Even dog food would

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View from the couch



Donald Combe
Special to The Local

I am certain I have seen every episode of the twelve seasons of *Call the Midwife* (Prime), at least twice, and yet,

when in despair of our current world and its monumental and seemingly unsolvable problems I turn again to this London community of caring and compassion and find hope. 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 Netflix series and movies for the Local.

Where's Ben?



Eden 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. No guesses for last week's photo — Ben was at the Turntable Historic Site. Hopefully this week's is a little easier.

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

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Disappointing turnout for St. Catharines soldier

Penny Coles
The Local

Shirley and Finn Madsen may have been the only representatives from Niagara-on-the-Lake joining those who went out to welcome home St. Catharines soldier Cole Zelenco, killed April 26 while fighting to protect the people and freedom of Ukraine from Russian attacks.

A former member of the Canadian military and a Brock University third-year political science student, the 21-year-old volunteer with the International Legion died defending Bakhmut from Russian forces. Also killed in that attack was 27-year-old Canadian Kyle Porter, from Calgary.

Madsen says she was disappointed with the turnout overall, and didn't recognize anyone from NOTL.

She and Finn were on Niagara Street with Irene Newton, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, who organized a homecoming, asking Niagara residents to take their places on the streets and

overpasses to give Zelenco a hero's welcome home as a George Darte hearse made its way from Pearson Airport in Toronto to the St. Catharines funeral home.

His funeral takes place May 25 at Club Roma, St. Catharines at 4:30 p.m. with guest sign-in and formal service to start at 5 p.m.



A motorcade leads the way as the body of Cole Zelenco is brought from Pearson Airport to George Darte Funeral Home in St. Catharines. (Finn Madsen)

Nature and family teach important lesson

Continued from page 6

believe that just a week ago my parents, some friends and I were camping along the pristine woods and beaches of the Long Point area for Mother's Day weekend.

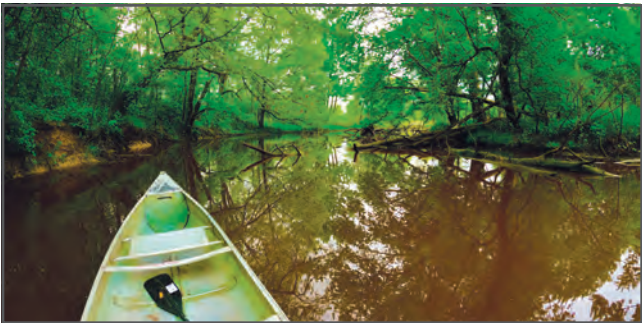
In between all of these outings, I also managed to tour guests on a remote creek in Wainfleet and a stream system of Fort Erie. My attendees and I saw a bald eagle, a massive snapping turtle, beavers, and gold finches performing their aerial dances along the shoreline.

The wildlife and human encounters I had over that hectic week make me feel happy, to the point where joy outweighs the fatigue — and doesn't allow it to set in. Although belated, I ultimately owe it to my mom, Steffanie Bjorgan, a Mother's Day appreciation moment. Between supplying vehicles, good advice and fun during busy times, nobody does it quite like her.

Also, I'm not sure who needs to hear and read this right now, but don't ever let

burnout get the better of you. You will always have people and strategies in life to make things easier, and you should never be afraid to reach out

for help, or give yourself permission to disconnect and do something for yourself. This week, nature and family have reminded me of that.



The 'Amazon' of Niagara in Wainfleet. (Photos by Owen Bjorgan)



A healthy spotted salamander was found on Mother's Day weekend near Long Point.

Local LETTERS

Let's stick to public health care

I had a hip replacement in 2016, a successful procedure after a wait of a couple of months.

Now we have the enactment of Bill 60, where the Ontario government is opening hospital services to private and for-profit companies. Previously this government limited wages for medical personnel, including nurses, who we know were overworked. (Remember how we tried to en-

courage them with banging of saucepans?)

If I were a nurse, tired, over-worked and under-paid I should be very tempted to try the private sector. If many do this, imagine how much more under-manned the public system will be.

What is the result? If you can afford it you go private (at least \$40,000 for a hip replacement before inflation took

hold) or else you wait and wait. The condition can only get worse, or perhaps you die . . . then it is only funeral expenses!

Is it possible to persuade Doug Ford that we do not want private care overtaking a public system that could be an example to the continent . . . if only . . .

Cynthia Rand
NOTL

Time to make DND land accessible to public

I was the former chair and have been involved with The Harmony Residents Group for over 14 years with the sole purpose of working with Parks Canada to open the DND property on Lakeshore Road to the general public, while preserving the habitat, species at risk, wildlife, and the waterfront.

To date Parks Canada has continued to delay, stall and postpone any meaningful initiatives which have been discussed over the years to facilitate access to our waterfront and the parkland.

One of their main talking points for not allowing access to the DND waterfront is Parks Canada's liability to ensure the safety of the general public, specifically along the waterfront. The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, at one time or another, had access to this property and in fact the general public was allowed to walk throughout parts of this property.

Notwithstanding the incredible history that has taken place on the DND lands (i.e., the War of 1812/13 and the landing of the American forces). There is little recognition of how important an event this battle was and the lives lost as well as the logistics of this battle.

Unfortunately, this event has received considerably less notoriety than Fort George and the re-enactments that take place there periodically.

If we are really interested in preserving our history, buildings and honouring lives lost, then the war of 1812/13 is one such event and of historical value.

Which brings me back to my original reason for bringing this to the attention of the residents and taxpayers of the Niagara Region and specifically NOTL.

Parks Canada erected a small monument many years ago in recognition of the Battle of 1812 located at the end of the NOTL Golf Course on Queen Street (although this is not on the actual site where the main battle took place).

Then, Parks Canada decided to construct a break wall and walking path along the waterfront bordering the oldest golf course in Canada for fear it would ultimately succumb to erosion caused by the outflow of the Niagara River current and the Lake Ontario shoreline wave erosion, at the cost of millions of dollars.

Don't get me wrong, it is a wonderful walking path (mind you with limited parking) and it certainly improves the accessibility to the shoreline, facilitating wonderful walks and views of the sunset. However, in terms of importance, history, and significance, the Vision of the War of 1812 by far out-shadows the oldest golf course in Canada.

Which brings me to what is possible and how it would benefit the residents, merchants,

tourists, students, boards of education, universities, Indigenous history and most importantly maintain and protect the wildlife, wetlands, creeks, the Carolinian forest, and the historical Secord homestead and battleground.

So, what we need to understand is that other communities, towns and cities situated along the shores of Lake Ontario have made their parks and waterfronts accessible, while recognizing and honouring historical events and sacrifices made during times of war.

I have detailed a link to the Town of Ajax and what they as a community have accomplished in honour of their history during the second world war: ajax.ca/en/play-and-discover/waterfront.aspx#Lions-Point.

Surely, NOTL is worthy of such a recognition of our deep history and sacrifice. We are missing the fourth leg of the chair we sit on (i.e., wineries, agriculture, entertainment, and the complete story/location of our history).

Fort George, Fort Mississauga, The Commons, and the battleground of Niagara need to be linked as one story over time with a significant recognition of the battleground site. This can be a win-win for all — let's not have to wait another 14 years (2037)!

Finn Madsen
NOTL

Two- and four-legged walkers were wet but happy

Saturday's Paws on the Trail event, held to raise money for the restoration of the Upper Canada Heritage Trail, did not have the weather on its side. Most of the event took place in heavy rain, said organizer Tony Chisholm, but "that did not drown the 'fun' quotient, however, and many dog owners and volunteers really enjoyed the experience." The event raised more than \$3,000 for the trail. Also in attendance at the walk were some adorable dogs from Mexico, now in the care of the PetsAlive rescue organization.



Participants seemed to agree, the dog walk was wet, fun, and financially successful. (Rene Bertschi)



Rescue dogs from Mexico, cared for by PetsAlive, created cuteness overload at Saturday's Paws on the Trail event. (Joan Coyne)

Residents asked to speak out on town goals, priorities

Carrie Gleason
The Local

A vital step in which Niagara-on-the-Lake residents and community stakeholders have a say in the development of the current council's mission and visions, priorities and goals, has begun with a town survey.

Town staff reported their work on council's Strategic Plan during last week's committee of the whole meeting, outlining opportunities for public involvement.

Lord Major Gary Zalepa was pleased "that we're moving to stakeholder engagement next. I'd like to hear what the community has to say. Let's let the community give us some thoughts and then we're going to meet back together and go through this and

really fine-tune where we want to be."

The town staff update on work done so far includes drafts of a new mission and vision statement, an evaluation of the town's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (called a SWOT analysis), and a list of potential (as well as current) priorities and goals.

This information was compiled after meetings with town senior management and council members, in which some of the top priorities identified included traffic-calming, maintaining heritage aspects, zoning and bylaw amendments, and short-term housing.

Despite the suggestion by Couns. Wendy Chero-pita and Sandra O'Connor that an additional meeting

was necessary to review and refine the information collected before receiving public input, councillors voted to receive the report as is in an effort to keep things moving.

With the proposed deadline for the final version of the Strategic Plan set for July 25, Coun. Nick Ruller said that it would be "detrimental" to try and delay timing of community engagement, because it would "push us into the summer months, where there will be competing interests with staff availability and with young families trying to get in vacations in between the school years."

He suggested staying the course, and pointed out that having a completed plan sooner rather than later is important in setting the budget for next year.

As well as setting goals, there should be a plan to achieve them. It is intended to focus on the long-term, and to provide direction to councillors as they make their decisions.

The town and council are asking for resident and stakeholder input to ensure the plan will reflect and align with the priorities and issues of the community, so that they can deliver services and spend time, energy and money accordingly.

The survey on the town website allows residents to provide input into priorities and goals in areas such as transportation, housing and business development; municipal governance; infrastructure development; and the delivery of public services.

The survey also asks

residents to suggest any additional priorities that they would like to see considered in the plan.

The survey is open until Thursday, June 1, and can be completed online at jointheconversationnotl.org/.

Also beginning this week, the town will be setting up public information centres at the following dates and locations where residents can provide feedback and ideas:

- Tuesday, May 23, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. in the community centre lobby
- Tuesday, May 23, from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Queenston Library
- Monday, May 29, from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. at the Virgil Sports Park
- Monday, May 29, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at Sparky's Park in St. Davids

- Tuesday, May 30, from 11:30 to 1:30 p.m. at the food court in the Outlet Mall
- Tuesday, May 30, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Court House steps

For those who cannot attend in person, a virtual public information centre will be held on Tuesday, May 30, at 6:30 p.m. To register for the virtual session, email Victoria Steele, the town's strategy and government relations officer, at victoria.steele@notl.com.

Residents should also keep an eye on the town's social media channels for polls and questions for additional opportunities to provide input.

The town staff update, including a complete list of priorities and the SWOT analysis, can be found on the town's website at notl.com.

Cornerstone hoping to sever, sell part of Virgil property

Carrie Gleason
The Local

Cornerstone Community Church is hoping to sever a portion of their Niagara Stone Road parking lot and the former parsonage, if they get the zoning amendment they need from the town.

A virtual open house was held last week for the public to comment, and the town's committee of

adjustment has agreed to the severance, on condition of rezoning.

Currently the north end of the church property is zoned residential, and the south end is zoned village commercial, which allowed the church to operate. For the past several years, the church has been holding its worship services at its Hunter Road location, with the Niagara Stone Road campus being

used for its youth ministry.

According to William Heikoop, the planner from Upper Canada Consultants representing the church, it is looking to offload the north end of the property because it is "surplus land."

Heikoop explained that the current zoning boundary line runs through a small sliver of the church building it-

self, and was drawn after the church was built. The bylaw amendment would see this zoning deficiency fixed and the boundary line redrawn to match the severance line.

The church would then be looking to sell the just over one-acre parcel of land on the 2.3-acre property.

During the open house, Virgil resident Dorothy Froese expressed concern

that a new property owner might be planning to construct a four-storey apartment building on the severed lot if it were sold to him. However, as Heikoop and town planner Aimee Alderman explained, the current rezoning application does not allow for this type of development on the property. The rezoned new lot would only permit single detached dwellings. If a

developer who purchased the severed lot wanted to construct an apartment building or townhouses on it, they would have to apply for a second zoning amendment.

No development plans have yet been submitted for the property, those attending the open house were told, and if they were to be received, they would have to be approved by town council.

Ambassadors back on the street greeting visitors

Local Staff

Niagara-on-the-Lake Ambassadors returned to Queen Street this weekend, launching the 2023 season.

Laurie Harley, co-lead of the program, says it's a unique program, designed by volunteers and tourism stakeholders, to welcome visitors to NOTL and enhance their overall

experience.

On Fridays, weekends and holiday Mondays from May 19 to September 4, ambassadors will stroll the streets of Old Town and staff a kiosk on Queen Street, connecting with visitors, answering their questions, and providing current information on what's happening each day in NOTL.

During last season, ambassadors engaged with more than 9,200 people from all across Canada, the U.S. and more than 25 international countries.

This year the team of 59 ambassadors includes 22 new members, says Harley, all of whom have completed a comprehensive orientation.

Minerva Ward, pres-

ident and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism NOTL, summed it up after the first outing: "It's wonderful to see this amazing group of volunteers sharing their pride and stories with visitors from around the world.

We look forward to having their energy, passion and enthusiasm back again this year."

Harley says the all-volunteer program wouldn't be possible without the support of Tourism NOTL and a dedicated group of

tourism partners. "They are our champions. They host site visits, provide in-kind support, keep us informed and most importantly encourage us to keep sharing the unique NOTL story and create unforgettable memories for our visitors."

Marine theme passes muster for Melville Street condos

Carrie Gleason
The Local

After being sent back to the drawing board over objections from area residents, the developer proposing to build Melville Street condos presented a new design at last week's open house that is said to be marine-inspired.

Hearing from neighbours that the first plan for the condos replacing the King George III Inn was "too dark, too bulky, and too high," Blythwood Homes has returned with a plan that owner Alexa Mills described as "complementing the historic Dock Area."

The renderings for the three-storey, 12-unit condo show a building that takes a "marine-inspired approach," featuring light neutral colours, pillars, circular windows, and balconies to give it a "more desirable residential feel," according to planner William Heikoop from Upper Canada Consultants. The building plans also show decorative pitched roofs, intended soften the look of the flat-roof building, as well as landscaped surroundings.

The design is by Wayne Murray and Connie Tintinalli from Chapman Murray Architects, both Niagara-on-the-Lake residents. Mills said they "felt it was important to have a project team that is familiar with the area." Local residents who



Residents at last week's open house seemed to like the new design of the Melville Street condos, as shown in the architects' renderings of a street view and a close-up of the entrance. (Supplied)

spoke out at the open house seemed to appreciate this fact, as no objections to the look, or the height, of the building were raised.

Although the property is currently zoned for marine commercial use, the proposed development would see the property rezoned to allow for multiple residential use. In 2020, area residents objected to having a new hotel built on the site, which has led to the current proposal.

Jim Reynolds, who lives opposite the property on Delatre Street, said he appreciated Murray's involvement in the project, but questioned the lot coverage and setback of the building. Under the new rezoning allowance, 50 per cent lot coverage is permitted, while the new building would cover 67 per cent of the lot. He

also raised questions about external lighting and the necessity for outside parking. The requirement is for 1.5 parking spaces per unit, while the building plan allows for two spots per unit, 14 of which would be contained in a ground-floor garage with eight outside parking spots. Reynold's concern was that some owners may view the additional parking as potential to use their units for short term rentals.

Recalling the 2019 flooding on Melville Street due to the high water levels of Lake Ontario, nearby resident Ron Simkus, a retired engineer who tracks water levels for locals, asked the development team about any plans to mitigate flood damage to the residences on the ground floor. Murray assured him they had taken this into con-



sideration in the design, and that there is an additional allowance in the finished first floor level that is three feet above the highest water level recorded in the flood.

Developers and residents in attendance agreed that an important factor in managing stormwater levels on

the site would be the use of permeable pavers and green space landscaping, a significant improvement over the large asphalt coverage of the property currently.

A public meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 13, at 6 p.m. in the council chamber to discuss the site plan.

Residents wishing to attend or speak at the meeting can contact the clerk's department at clerks@notl.com to register.

The complete application can be found on the town website at notl.com/business-development/public-planning-notices.



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Legros family hoping for help with out-of-country treatments

Continued from page 1

in Germany that she says is recognized world-wide for providing information about co-infections and co-viruses that ticks carry and transmit, of which she was found to have several, Legros says.

With those results, things started to fall into place for her and her parents. She had had a bad bite when she was eight, while playing on the escarpment with a friend who lived on York Road, she says. It was severe enough for her parents to take her to a doctor, but they were told it was nothing to worry about. Looking back, her parents say she had the typical bullseye rash, but they didn't see or remove a tick — she hadn't felt a bite, which is not unusual, she explains. Although, she adds, it could also have been a spider bite — ticks are not the only insects that carry lyme disease.

Once armed with positive test results, Legros began her search for answers.

She was referred to a lyme-literate naturopathic doctor in Fonthill — 'lyme-literate' a term used to distinguish between those in the medical community who recognize, understand and treat the disease, and the many who do not, including her own family physician in Virgil, she says, although the lobby offers a brochure about it.

After her diagnosis she continued to see her naturopath, started a long course of an oral antibiotic typically used to treat lyme disease, and continued working with her chiropractor using holistic treatments.

She also sought treatment in Toronto, trying blood treatments, vitamin IV therapy, stem cell therapy injections, something called spinal freezing — anything that might help with the symptoms she was still experiencing, she says.

But instead of getting better, her health was declining — she was nauseated, vomiting and losing a significant amount of weight.

There are still few doctors in Ontario who will



Nicole Legros says her dog Maverick is her reason for getting up in the morning. He also gets her out on walks, and she ensures they are both sprayed with a natural tick repellent, even when she sticks to pavement. (Penny Coles)

treat lyme disease, says Legros, and they are difficult to see, even with a referral and a positive result. One in particular she sought out, she was told, was overloaded with patients and not taking on new ones.

By the end of 2020, she says, she realized her treatments were not helping.

At one point during her treatments, she says, she felt so sick she told her parents she felt like she was dying.

She had continued doing research, looking for help, she says, sick of being doubted. "This is a disease that doesn't show on the outside. I was bullied, I was treated differently. Even my friends doubted me. I didn't want to be treated differently, I wanted to be like everyone else."

She finally found a highly-recommended doctor in Washington D.C. at a specialty clinic, who agreed to see her. Driving to Washington with her father and seeing that doctor for the first time, she says, was when she finally felt understood by a medical doctor.

Thus would begin what was expected to be a long journey of IV antibiotics for late-stage Lyme disease, travelling to the U.S. every other month.

Border crossings were easy — she has the paper-

work to say she is seeing an American doctor and border guards are accustomed to Canadians with medical issues crossing. "I'd just say I'm headed to see my lyme disease doctor, and they'd wave us on. They're so used to hearing that."

Even during the pandemic, the crossings were quick, although she and her father, who accompanied her, often had to stay in a hotel for several days.

"If I had an appointment on a Tuesday, and another on a Friday, we weren't able to come home and go back again — we had to stay there," she explains.

However, a few months into her IV treatment she became very sick, and was admitted to a local Niagara hospital with severe stomach pain. Doctors didn't recognize what was happening, she says, and told her to go back to the U.S. She finally found one doctor who helped her gain back some weight, and when she was well enough to return to the U.S., doctors recognized the problem was with her gall bladder, damaged from lyme disease, and she was able to have surgery there to remove it. "I would have died without that surgery," she says.

After a total of seven surgeries in the U.S. includ-

ing two for reconstruction after one that was botched, all related to problems with eating and digestion, she thought she was ready to return to her IV antibiotic therapy. But her body had a different idea. By that time, she says, her body could no longer cope with the heavy regimen, and instead of her health improving, she was becoming increasingly ill.

She still has problems with digestion, has little energy, and is constantly in pain. Her family is now looking at other, better methods that have higher success rates, says Legros, but they are only available in Florida or Germany — she is still researching and talking to others who have gone that route, trying to decide which is the better option.

"It's a difficult decision," she says, "and we have to make it as a family. There are no right or wrong answers — what works for one person might not work for others."

For either option to be possible, her father, Rick Legros, has set up a GoFundMe page. On it is the story of her journey since that bite when she was eight — it's such a long and complicated series of appointments and disappointments, it

was hard to keep it short, she says. It also describes the treatment she is seeking as a "hybrid of conventional and alternative medicine that promotes holistic healing for the patient, while addressing underlying infections and toxicity."

That bite 20 years ago, she says, has cost her family about \$350,000 USD. They can't go any further without help, and there are still no options for treatment in Canada.

The number of reported cases in Canada, based on Canadian testing, has jumped from 144 in 2009, the first year of surveillance, to 3147 in 2021 with more than 17,000 cases since 2009, but as the government website says, "There's under-reporting because some cases are undetected or unreported."

The Niagara Region reports a small number of reported cases on its website — less than five in the first quarter of 2023, with comparable numbers in 2022. It also says "reportable disease data are stored in and retrieved from the provincially mandated Integrated Public Health Information System. Only confirmed cases are provided. Infectious disease data may be underreported due to testing availability, case and contact management guidelines and delays in data entry."

In an emailed response to questions from The Local, Niagara Region Public Health says there were "24 confirmed or probable lyme disease cases in Niagara in 2022."

Case definitions are provided in the Ontario Public Health Standards through the Ministry of Health, the

region says. "A confirmed case has several potential definitions and a positive test result may not always be necessary to be considered a confirmed lyme disease case. Testing information/approaches are provided by Public Health Ontario."

Legros' advice to others is not to take a chance on getting lyme disease in the first place and to take precautions when outdoors. While those measures are typically aimed at specific areas, such as when hiking in long grass or bogs, she is convinced tick prevention is necessary even if out walking her dog on pavement — ticks can be everywhere, not always hiding in tall grass, she says.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa shared his experience with ticks and lyme disease with The Local. He recently volunteered for the Glendale area cleanup, and walked around the stormwater management pond picking up garbage.

While still in the park at the end of the cleanup, he discovered two ticks on his body, and he wasn't the only volunteer to be brushing them off. He found two more when he got home.

Finding the ticks didn't surprise him, he says. "I went into what is literally a bog. That's where these guys live."

He had on long pants, but short sleeves. "I should have worn long sleeves," he realized.

He agrees we are hearing more about ticks, and says he believes both the region and municipalities can play a role in prevention by doing more in the area of awareness and education.

He says he had some experience with a friend whose son had lyme disease. This was several years ago, "and it took quite a long time to identify lyme disease. The medical community may not be thinking of that. It's very scary — if the medical community had been looking at it, if it had been identified much sooner, he would have got treatment much sooner and had much less impact."

Zalepa says he hopes "it's getting better" as far as diagnosis and treatment locally, but doesn't have any way of knowing if it is.

"I do know if I had young kids playing outside now I'd be sure to be checking them. And we weren't thinking of that 20 years ago."

For more information on prevention visit lymeontario.com.

To help Legros, donations can be made at go-fund-me.com/f/46phdx-help-nicole-beat-lyme.

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REAL ESTATE WILLS BUSINESS

Upcoming Trails Summit big step for aspiring Niagara Geopark

Mike Balsom
The Local

With just over a year to go before UNESCO assessors arrive to take stock of its offerings, the team behind the aspiring Niagara Geopark are already busy preparing for their visit.

First up is the Niagara Geopark Trails Summit, taking place at Niagara College on June 2. The purpose of the summit is to bring together key stakeholders responsible for all of Niagara's publicly-accessible trails and routes. These include the likes of the Bruce Trail, the Wine Route, the Greenbelt and the Greater Niagara Circle Route.

"We've always had this network of different trails across the region," explains Ian Lucas, the aspiring geopark's municipal outreach coordinator. "We're trying to pull together the knowledge and cooperation of all the different trail stakeholders to create a cohesive network of trails across Niagara."

The goal is to make it easier for Niagara residents and visitors to the area to build their own experiences based on the trails. Whether they want to hike, run, bike or kayak and whether their aim is to have a picnic, see the sights or learn more about Indigenous history, they would have the ability to curate a self-guided tour that encompasses the many different trail systems across the region.

"We're offering the Niagara Geopark as a kind of umbrella for trails to be properly networked and categorized," Lucas says. "It will be easier for people to figure out where they want to go depending on the kind of experience they want to have."

Partnerships have already been formed with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, the Bruce Trail Conservancy, Greenbelt Ontario and others.

"And there are numerous Indigenous trails across Niagara as well," adds Perry Hartwick, a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident and chair of the geopark's geology working group. "They're not all well-known or even understood. The Iroquois Trail, for example, goes right through the Niagara Regional Native Centre. We want to weave these all into the trail network, as well."

The full day summit at Niagara College will feature panels of experts and representatives from the different trail systems. One of those panels, moderated by Phil Davis, chair of the geopark's Indigenous working group, will focus on that network of Indigenous heritage trails.

Other topics for panel discussions include restoration and conservation, technology and resources, sustainable economic benefits and healthy living and healthy visiting.

"If people are active, eco-conscious respecters of nature," explains Lucas with regard to that last panel, "we want them to be able to select their experience based on trails

that suit their various interests. If they love bird watching, there are various trails that are suitable. Or they might be into butterflies, or fishing. We want to categorize those experiences."

As Hartwick points out, there are a number of trails that are very well-known and very popular in the region. The Niagara Glen and the trails at the Balls Falls Conservation Area come quickly to mind.

"But there are so many other nooks and crannies, at Decew Falls, for instance, that are lesser known," says Hartwick. "The geology there is incredible. It's an absolutely beautiful place, with beautiful views of the escarpment and trails all over the place. There's so much more to Niagara."

Beyond the trails, another goal is to bring together businesses and other organizations within Niagara under the geopark banner. That would mean that someone would be able to more easily combine a trek through a portion of the Bruce Trail with, for instance, an Indigenous walking trail in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and also visit the bed and breakfast locations, wineries and restaurants nearby.

A visit to the geopark's website (niagarageopark.com) reveals a number of local wineries who have taken the pledge, as well as art galleries, adventure clubs, museums, eateries and retail outlets.

"We've built up a membership of around 100 businesses committed to sustainable operations," says Lucas. "They have to sign a pledge to that end to become members of the geopark

initiative. These businesses will be highlighted as to where they are in relation to the trails."

The idea is for it all to be downloadable via the Niagara Geopark's website using any device, to find themed trails, interconnections, points of interest, special events, sustainable businesses and services nearby. Lucas envisions popular apps such as Strava, MapMyRun, RideWithGPS and Runkeeper all seamlessly connecting with the website.

Organizers of the Trails Summit first reached out to representatives of local chambers of commerce, municipal governments and destination marketing organizations to invite them to the June 2 event. Once those spots were taken, the invitation was extended to everyone on the aspiring Niagara Geopark's mailing list, and the spots were filled within 15 minutes.

The summit will also include a talk by Hartwick and Lucas, along with Darren Platakis, founder and chair of the Geopark's education outreach working group, that will focus on examples of impressive trail networks in other parts of the world. Hartwick recently visited all three UNESCO geoparks in Ireland and plans to share his discoveries.

Platakis is responsible for the genus of the Niagara Geopark idea, considering a push for a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) designation as far back as 2017. He first approached Niagara regional council in 2019, but the pandemic slowed down the group's progress for some time.

Canada currently has five UNESCO-designated geoparks — one each in B.C., New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Quebec. In contrast, China hosts 41 such areas, while Germany has eight.

Hartwick and Lucas expect to submit the Niagara Geopark's final application for UNESCO designation some time this fall.

"We're building our website, adding more information and improving our interactions through that platform," says Hartwick. "We need to get our

submissions into Paris UNESCO in September or October. We'll field some questions from them over early winter, and make some changes. If all goes well, inspectors should be visiting us in the next 12 months."

To prepare for the process they are getting some trail signs made, ramping up the organization's activity on social media and holding the summit next week. It's all about acting as a geopark even before receiving official designation.

Objectives over the next year include assembling a working group to develop the

connectivity with specific apps, publishing two major trail routes within a chosen framework, defining the process for adding new trails to the network and updating the existing trails, and engaging with one or more DMOs to build a model for itineraries and to assess the potential costs of the project.

"This is a big deal," says Hartwick. "We've come a long way. This thing is going to happen. And it's going to be much, much better if we start to get some buy-in from various groups. We need everybody on board for this."

Fort George history as written by local authors



The authors of *Fort George: A History*, were at the fort Sunday for a meet and greet and book-signing event. Authors of the publication (from left) are Joseph Last, Ron Dale, Richard Merritt, Wesley Turner, Tony Chisholm, Amanda Gamble and Dan La-roche. The book is available at the Fort George Gift Shop. (Supplied)

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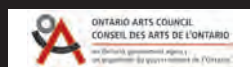
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Two of the trails to be included in the geopark are (top) the Bruce Trail, which meets the Beamer Memorial Conservation Area, and Walkers Creek Trail in St. Catharines.



Even Monday evening incidents couldn't spoil a great event

Penny Coles
The Local

The Virgil Stampede had two days of perfect weather, record-setting attendance, record food sales, and lots of very positive feedback, with more people in attendance than they would normally see over three days, says organizer Richard Wall.

As president of the Virgil Business Association, which has been putting on the event for decades, Wall says the entertainment was phenomenal, with lots to see and do, especially for the families the event

is geared to attract.

He received many positive comments at the food booths about both quality and prices, he says, and they were sold out of almost everything by the time the fireworks started.

"Phil (Leboudec, of Phil's Your Independent Grocer) does a great job of figuring out how much food we need, but all we had left at the end of the evening was a few hot dogs."

This year's event, however, also had some unfortunate incidents to deal with, says Wall.

In his recap of the weekend, he says he can't ignore some

trouble that occurred Monday night, as a huge crowd of people surged into the park just before the fireworks were to begin.

In recent years he's had to hire security for the event, and increased it this year, going with a very reputable company who had a good plan to keep it orderly.

But it wasn't enough to prevent one knife incident, with police called and one person ejected from the park; a separate incident with a group of teens wearing ski masks pepper-spraying two young people, one of them requiring an ambulance to take him to a hospi-

tal; and a couple of fights that had to be broken up.

One carnival employee said she saw a group of teens drinking alcohol, which should have been confiscated at the gate, says Wall.

The problem was that the security people were called to the soccer field to clear it for the fireworks, leaving nobody at the gates as more kids piled in, and then trouble began in other areas — security was stretched too thin to deal with everything that was happening in the last hour or so before the fireworks started.

"We're already having disc-

cussions about what we can do for next year. We were pleased with the company we hired this year. They had a good presence, and it worked well pretty much of the weekend. But there was a large influx of people just before the fireworks, and we didn't have enough bodies."

Wall said he saw lots of teenagers at the park enjoying the events, having fun, going on rides, "doing normal teen-aged stuff, but it just takes just a few exceptions to spoil it."

On the positive side, he says, he loved walking around the park seeing the number of families

with kids, young ones in strollers, enjoying the best slate of family entertainment they've ever had, getting their faces painted, and going on pony rides.

The new rock-climbing attraction was also very popular, and the skatepark demonstration put together a great show.

"That's what keeps me coming back and doing this every year, seeing everyone having so much fun," says Wall.

"And the fireworks — what an amazing show. At least 16 to 18 minutes long, with a spectacular finale. Overall, it was a great weekend."



Sunday and Monday were great days for the Virgil Stampede, for families, and for kids who loved the rides, including the pony rides. Even the volunteers had fun, including Kevin and Marcia Penner, the cutest couple of volunteers at the stampede.



Farmers' Market at The Village opens Saturday



The 2023 Farmers' Market will open this Saturday, in its usual place in front of The Village. Sharon Brinsmead, organizer of the market, says the nearby construction won't interfere at all. There is lots of room for vendors at the end of the parking lot, lots of parking, and picnic tables on the grass. Past vendors are returning, new ones coming on throughout the season, and in addition to local growers and food producers, take-out meals and breakfast and lunch options to eat at the market, there will be crafters and artisans selling their products. It will run for 20 weeks, and is open Saturdays from May 27 to Oct. 7, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Ken and his wife Rose are always there to start off the season with lots of rhubarb, other seasonal vegetables, and plants. *(File photo)*

Volunteers gearing up for popular Strawberry Festival

Penny Coles
The Local

When the Strawberry Festival returns for its 38th year, it will be offering all the favourites regulars look forward to: there will be flats of fresh, juicy local strawberries for sale, and all kinds of strawberry goodies on the grounds of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

Mark your calendar for Saturday, June 17, and expect to find strawberry shortcake, crepes, strawberry jam, strawberry pies and even strawberry frozen yogurt.

Julie Hunter, chair of the

festival, says she's expecting the berries to be very sweet, "if the sunshine continues and we have little precipitation before June 17. St. Andrew's is purchasing 200 flats of berries from Tighehaar Berry Farms in Vine-land, and Seaway Farms is also donating berries again this year. We set the festival date for the third week in June as this is usually when the berries are at their peak."

There will be a bake table piled with goodies, and great barbecue to enjoy, including hot dogs, hamburgers and bacon on a bun. And fresh corn cooked and ready to en-

joy, says Elaine Landray, one of many long-time church volunteers who helps make the day a success.

As always there will be activities for kids, and great entertainment outside throughout the day, as well as a silent auction.

One of the entertainers will be Dianne Ticknor. Locals might remember her as the singer who led a Christmas sing-along at the Wayside Chapel last December, but she laughs when she says she is actually better known in Nashville than in NOTL, which she calls home now. She will be heading off to

Nashville for the next few weeks, where she will appear as a background singer at the Grand Ole Opry, with Brenda Lee and other artists, but will be back in time to sing "an eclectic mix of songs," including hits from the '50s and '60s, appearing at 1:30 p.m. for about a 40-minute set, she says.

Nancy King, organizing the entertainment, says it begins at 9:15 with the Niagara Olde Time Fiddlers.

Throughout the rest of the day will be Ziya; Whitney Fowler with children's music; Ley; then Ticknor; finishing up with the Bethany Bells.



Ley and Ziya are from Waterloo, and both have R&B styles, says King.

Inside will be tours of the historic church, with history provided by Richard Merritt

and Rob Montgomery.

The festival, Saturday, June 17, runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Simcoe Street church.

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LocalSPORTS

Niagara Predators shore up positions with strong league draft

Mike Balsom
The Local

On-ice hockey development sessions at the Gale Centre run by Niagara Predators general manager Andrew Ferlatte reaped benefits for the team in the form of draft picks last week.

At the Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League entry draft, a number of the nine players chosen by the team that calls Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena home were invitees to Ferlatte's sessions.

"This year, I geared it toward players who are interested in playing for the Predators," he tells The Local. "I wanted to see how they would hold up against stronger players. I get to see them up against guys with experience in the ECHL (East Coast Hockey League) and other junior leagues, some as

old as 25." All of the Predators' first three picks last week are from the Buffalo area. The reopening of the border to the U.S. last year made it possible for some of those prospects to skate in Ferlatte's twice-weekly scrimmages. "It's just the way the cards fell," Ferlatte explains. "We had a lot of interest from the American side this year. We had a handful of players from the U.S. skating with us last season. It's been great to see the number of American prospects coming to our Wednesday sessions."

Choosing in the ninth spot in the first round the Preds opted for Dylan Denning, a 19-year-old defenceman who played 37 games for the Buffalo Stampede of the United States Premier Hockey League (USPHL) last year.

"Dylan is a very big-bodied defenceman," says Ferlatte. "He



Dylan Denning (Photos supplied)



Dalton Wright



Mike Mankowski



Kyler Brocklebank

has excellent offensive awareness that allows him to make that first crisp pass to get the puck up in the zone. And he's very gifted defensively. He'll allow us to get the puck up the ice a lot more quickly this season."

The Preds did not have a pick in the second round. In round three they took Hamburg, New York native Dalton Wright 68th overall. Wright skated for the Junior B Thorold Blackhawks and the USPHL's Charlotte Rush in 2022-2023.

"He's an offensive forward," Ferlatte says of Wright. "With his experience there and in the NAHL (North American Hockey League) with Bismarck, he'll be looked at as one of the GMHL's top forwards this year. He's a big forward, with qualities similar to Ryan Fritz (the GMHL's North York Rangers forward who had 51 goals and 80 assists last season)."

The third Buffalo-area draft pick is 6'4" forward Connor

Weiskerger, Denning's teammate on the Stampede.

The Preds' round five pick is Aidan Jones, who played his AAA hockey last year with the Blyth-Deerview Academy. Jones is another prospect who has skated with the Predators this spring. Ferlatte is sure the stay-at-home defender is ready to make the jump to the Predators' Toronto league.

After signing 18-year-old Daniel Arnold of St. Catharines just a few days before the draft, Ferlatte felt comfortable choosing Daniel's younger brother Ben in round six. Ben was also chosen in the 11th round of the Ontario Hockey League draft by the Niagara Ice Dogs.

"We'll see where the cards fall there," Ferlatte explains. "He may end up with us this year, but it really depends on where the Ice Dogs see him. Usually with late-round draft picks like that it's unlikely that he'll go to the OHL this year. He's been

to our skates, and for him to choose to play with his brother seems very probable, actually."

Kyler Brocklebank, chosen by the Predators in round seven, comes to the team from the Niagara Junior Knights, a prep team that competes in the North American Prospects Hockey League against Jones' Blyth-Deerview Academy.

"He's a very gifted two-way forward," says Ferlatte. "He's the captain of our partner organization's team. He's also very gifted in the faceoff spot. He's going to come to camp and we'll see where he's at. He'll get some time with us this year."

The team has already signed contracts with their eighth and ninth round draft picks, 17-year-old forward Nicholas Nicoletti of Stoney Creek and 17-year-old goaltender Mike Mankowski, another player from Buffalo.

"He played with the Florida Jr. Blades," Ferlatte says of Man-

kowski. "He's a young guy, very low maintenance. He has the mindset of wanting to develop into the best goalie that he can be. He knows Zane Clausen will be seeing the majority of the games in goal this year. Zane will be a great mentor for Mike this year."

Niagara's final pick came in round 11 when they chose Owin Hendsbee of St. Catharines. Hendsbee, a forward, has spent the past two seasons between Thorold, Welland and Fort Erie of the Greater Ontario Junior B Hockey League.

Besides Clausen and Arnold, the Predators also recently announced the re-signing of brothers Cameron and Nick Savoie and Russian player Georgi Kholmovsky, whose difficulty securing a visa kept him from joining the squad last year.

With Kholmovsky and as many as 13 other players returning from the 2022-2023 team, the Predators will have experience heading into their third season in NOTL. That's something the team lacked last September, with only a handful coming back from their debut Niagara season.

"Last year we had a really young team," Ferlatte says, "and they developed immensely. We had a good playoff run and we're looking to really make a run at winning it all this year. With the added experience we have we're expecting a big push this year."

Ferlatte expects the team to hold a prospect camp in mid- to late-July, with the main training camp taking place in late August.

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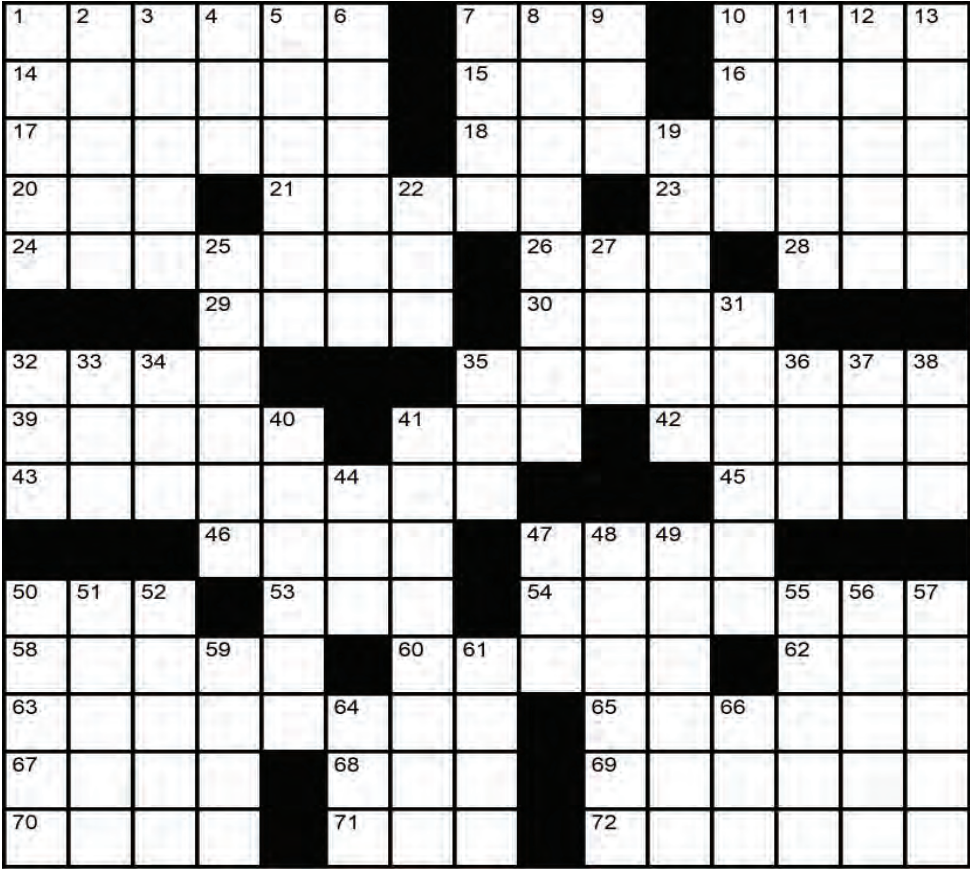
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- Across:
- 1 Name which sounds like a name

7 WWW access enabler

10 Salad variety

14 Agreeable odors

15 Akhenaten's son, briefly

16 Rich Little, for example

17 Render innocuous

18 --- & Evelyn (body-product brand)

20 Fish eggs

21 Have a soak

23 Long

24 Touchdown turf

26 "Cogito, ergo ---"

28 "The buck stops here" monogram

29 Banded chalcedony

30 Funds for the golden years

32 Put down

35 Unattractive quality

39 Former immigration island

41 Convert into leather

42 Unhand me!

43 State with more corporations than people

45 First Bible book after the Gospels

46 Annie Oakley's employer

47 Big rig brand

50 Service score

53 "% Daily Value" forerunner
- 54 Saber cuts

58 Scarcely detectable amount

60 Arrived

62 Sink a sub?

63 Airplane statistic spawning confusion

65 Join battle

67 One more thing ...

68 Beyond tipsy

69 Lunkhead

70 Young lice

71 "Sail --- Ship of Stadel!" (Longfellow)

72 Never left
- Down:
- 1 Mexican mom

2 Three bright stars are his belt on high

3 Just defeated

4 John Denver "Thank God --- Country Boy"

5 Old file copy

6 The same number of

7 Desire

8 Rings Sue about conclusive indication

9 Bake-sale org.

10 Blanchett of "Blue Jasmine"

11 Probably the most prominent native of Kosciuszko MS

12 Round at the bar

13 Musburger or Scowcroft,
- 19 One way to deliver

22 Country singer Ritter

25 Home to an archer, a lion and a bull

27 Web address

31 Shifty types

32 Low-energy source of illumination

33 Malt beverage

34 Queasy

35 Persian Gulf federation

36 And so on

37 Three-striper

38 Shortest-named ABBA single

40 Knights fought with them

41 Persist

44 Go on to say

47 Colorado winter time

48 Visitors from afar

49 Lacks what it takes

50 Nile dam

51 Official state dish of Texas

52 Surrealist Max ---

55 Intoxicating

56 Well under par

57 Charger

59 Causes of personality clashes

61 Aware of

64 Ramallah-based group

66 Former Portuguese Indian colony
- for example

OBITUARY



EPP, Edward — It is with sadness that the family of Edward Epp announce his passing on May 17, 2023. He died quietly after a long and painful battle with the effects of cancer radiation, at the age of 71. He leaves his wife of 46 years Edith (Koehn) and his three children and their families. Andrea & Allen Poapst (Adrian & Annabelle), Scott & Bobbi Epp (Emilia & Elliott) and Audrey Epp Neuhoef & Marty Neuhoef (Holly & Kenny). Survived by his father Abram Epp, brother Dan Epp (children Jennifer Epp & Nic McGinnis with daughters Wren and Maeve; Andrew & Jessica Epp) and sister Kim Epp-Frenette (with Norm Frenette and children Stephanie, Nathalie and Andre.

A life long peach grower from Niagara-on-the-Lake, he was well loved by everyone with his outgoing personality and zest for life. He delighted in his connections with his grandchildren. Ed loved reading, amassing a very large library of old books. He craved sunshine and adventure, while sailing his boat Rosie. He and Idy travelled much of the world, from Argentina to Egypt to Thailand. He now makes one more journey, joining his mother Eleanor and sister Shirley.

Viewing at Bethany Mennonite church in Virgil (572 E & West Line, Niagara-on-the-Lake) Tuesday, May 23rd between 6-8 pm and funeral service is Wednesday May 24th 11am.

Online condolences at www.tallmanfuneralhomes.ca

IN MEMORIAM

Matthew John Magee
March 9, 1947 - May 27, 2019

If I had a box just for wishes
And dreams that had never
come true
The box would be empty
Except for the memory of how
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Happy travels Matthew.
I love you.

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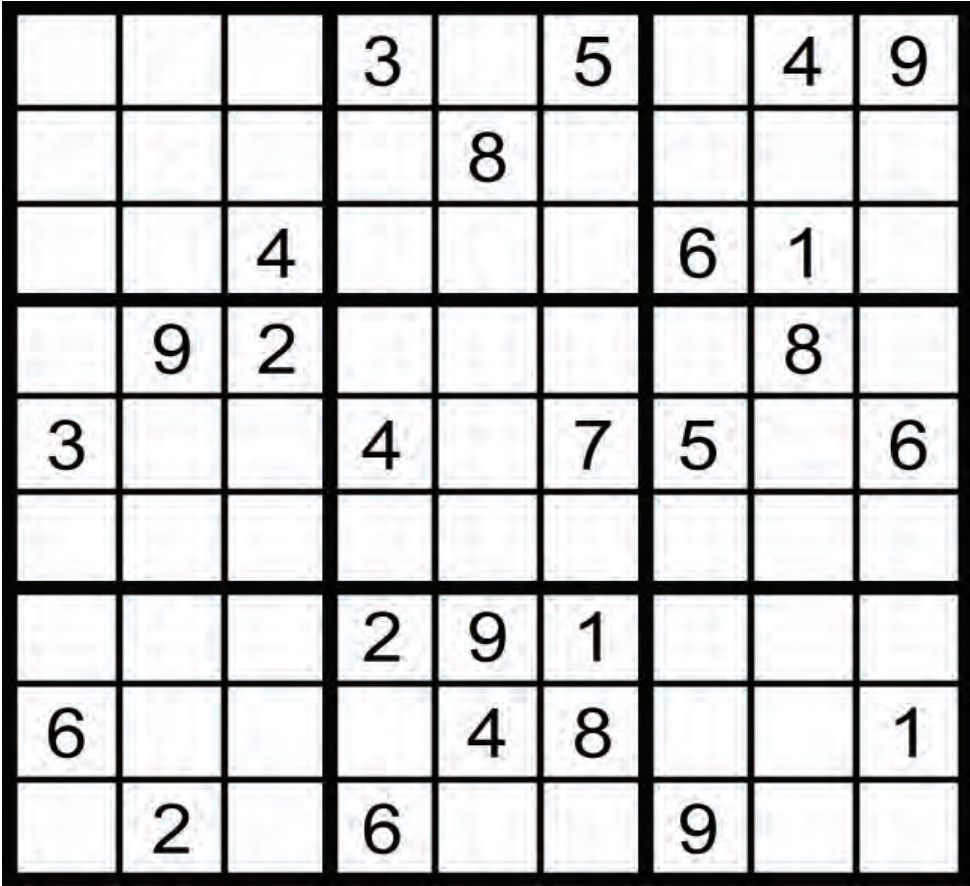
PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from
May 17, 2023

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

Across: 1 Monica, 7 I S P, 10 Cobb, 14 Aromas, 15 Tut, 16 Ape, 17 Disarm, 18 Crabtree, 20 Roe, 21 Bathie, 23 Yearm, 24 End zone, 26 Sum, 28 H S T, 29 Onyx, 30 I R As, 32 Laid, 35 Ugliness, 39 Ellis, 41 Tan, 42 Let go, 43 Delaware, 45 Acts, 46 Cody, 47 Mack, 50 Ace, 53 R D A, 54 Slashes, 58 Shred, 60 Got in, 62 Eat, 63 Wingspan, 65 Engage, 67 Also, 68 Lit, 69 Noodle, 70 Nits, 71 On, 72 Stayed.

Down: 1 Madre, 2 Orion, 3 Nosed, 4 I'm a, 5 Carbon, 6 As many, 7 Iich, 8 Sure sign, 9 P-T A, 10 Cate, 11 Oprah, 12 Beers, 13 Brent, 19 By mail, 22 Tex, 25 Zodiack, 27 U R L, 31 Sneaks, 32 L-E D, 33 Ale, 34 Ill, 35 U A E, 36 Etc, 37 Sgt, 38 S O S, 40 Swords, 41 Try again, 44 Add, 47 M S T, 48 Aliens, 49 Cannot, 50 Aswan, 51 Chill, 52 Ernst, 55 Headly, 56 Eagle, 57 Steed, 59 Egos, 61 Onto, 64 P L O, 66 Goa.



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