



Dry stone wall to be unveiled in four to five weeks

page 8



The construction on Niagara Stone Road is an annoyance and an inconvenience for residents, and it is having a negative impact on businesses. (David Gilchrist)

# Worthy determined to see something good come from son Liam’s death

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

It’s been the support of the community that has kept Barbara Worthy going since Sunday, June 25, the day her 34-year-old son Liam Neumann went missing in Twelve Mile Creek. Nevertheless, she can’t imagine a future without her “super smart, big, beautiful, bad/good boy.”

“There was nobody I would ever want to spend time with, nobody I would ever want to travel with, or have more fun with,” Worthy told The Local sitting in the backyard patio, built by Liam, behind her Dock Area home. “We were super good pals, even though we were both dramatic and could argue a lot.”

Neumann, who had

been living with his father Ron in St. Catharines most recently, went out with his beloved dog Brody on a dinghy in Twelve Mile Creek that day. The waterway runs between the city’s Western Hill and Glenridge neighbourhoods. It’s known for its strong current, which is regulated by Ontario Power Generation.

There were reports that Liam was seen at the shore of the creek below Rodman Hall where the currents pick up speed at the turn. Brody was still on the dinghy, which started to float out from the shore. Neumann apparently tried to rescue his pet, but fell into the water.

The dinghy floated toward Henley Island with Brody still safely on it.

Continued on page 3

# Virgil construction impacting businesses

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

With road construction through Virgil the talk of the town these days, many residents and businesses agree Niagara Stone Road needed to be fixed, but some are questioning the level of disruption and whether the construction is being handled as efficiently as it could be.

The most significant impact is to local businesses who depend on the traffic through Virgil during

what should be their busiest time of year.

Erin VanBussel is the general manager of Silver-smith Brewing Company, right in the heart of the construction zone that began in the spring.

It is severely affecting the numbers of people who drop in for a pint, she says, especially visitors to town who are being led by their navigation systems through an alternate route, bypassing Virgil altogether.

“We’re seeing a huge

decline in the number of guests,” she says.

“Nobody knew what to expect when this started. Originally we were told it was going to pause in the summer, but a whole new proposal meant that it would continue.”

Silversmith’s patio was moved from the side of the building, where it would have been exposed to the dust and dirt of the construction, to the back. But business has still been impacted, says VanBussel. “Our guest count for June

showed we were down 18 to 20 per cent. There was some rain on Saturdays, so that may be a factor. But typically at this time of year the patio fills up first and people would come inside if it was full. Now it’s the other way around — people come inside first.”

She did ask if the sign at Four Mile Creek Road, which says local businesses are open, could include the names of the business-

Continued on page 15



Liam Neumann and Barbara Worthy (Photo supplied)



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# Parking meters ‘a huge problem’ in town

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

Not all visitors to Niagara-on-the-Lake are equipped with the tools needed to easily pay for parking in the Old Town, says Coun. Sandra O'Connor.

Late last month, council voted in favour of replacing 30 of 57 parking meters through a phased-in approach taking place over two years — with an estimated cost of \$375,000 paid for through parking revenues.

In January, most machines in the area stopped accepting credit cards and are now operating on coins or through use of the Honk Mobile app, which users can download and then pay through their credit card.

A report to council on June 27 says the town's current parking machines stopped accepting credit cards earlier this year due to aging infrastructure and new credit card payment protocols. The town's machines, installed about 10 years ago, only have magnetic stripe readers, while newer payment protocols

require chip readers and pin pads to authorize transactions.

“As a result, the town was forced to discontinue the use of credit card payments at its existing parking machines,” staff said in its report.

According to staff, the parking machine vendor provided little notice to the town about a discontinuation of the necessary parking machine hardware.

The report says the municipality investigated updating the current system with its parking machine vendor, but the vendor was “unable to update the exist-

ing parking machine equipment as they had exited this sector of the business.”

The lack of notice provided by the vendor gave the town “no time to replace the machines before the machines ceased to work for credit card payments,” reads the report to council late last month.

In May, the town relocated four parking meters that still accept credit card payments to busier and more visible locations in the Old Town. They were moved from Wellington Street, by the former hospital.



Barbara Hodge, a Montreal resident, pays for parking using coins in the Old Town Monday.



Toronto resident Ashley Rodriguez downloads the Honk Mobile app on his phone after arriving in NOTL Monday. (Photos by Kris Dube)

O'Connor argues that credit cards being a main option for guests to town should be a priority, and that using funds from the municipal accommodation tax to make improvements should have been considered. A motion she brought forward suggesting these steps was defeated at the June 27 council meeting.

“Knowing our demographics, I thought credit cards should also be a priority,” she said, adding that having the Honk Mobile app as the focused option for now will continue to cause problems for people such as U.S. visitors who may not have data on their phones on this side of the border.

“I think it's a really big problem for tourists,” she said, also noting that many who make trips to town are in their senior years.

complaints,” she says, as do those who volunteer to greet visitors through the Ambassador program, with their kiosk set up by the Court House steps.

“We keep change in our office” for those who can't access parking meters any other way, Ward says.

She is discussing possible solutions with the town that can be implemented now, rather than wait until new meters are installed, she says. “It's very concerning to see people aggravated when they come to town. Our Heritage District has been rated one of the top 50 attractions to visit. People plan to come to NOTL and have a lovely day, and the first thing they're met with is difficulty parking. I'm concerned their aggravation is going to cost us our ranking.”

while almost \$600,000 was collected through Honk Mobile.

Slightly more than \$240,000 was collected in coins from machines that accept them.

“This information demonstrates that credit card technology is still the dominant source of parking payment and a form of payment that users currently prefer,” says the report.

Toronto resident Ashley Rodriguez arrived at a municipal lot on Queen Street Monday ahead of spending a day in town.

He previously had the Honk Mobile app on his phone but had since deleted it.

“You've got to have a simple way of paying,” he says, attempting to redownload the app. “It's not very user-friendly — and it's a deterrent.”

NOTL Chamber of Commerce president Minerva Ward told The Local parking has become a huge problem for the town. Her office gets “quite a lot of

In 2022, the town collected about \$2.3 million in parking revenues, said staff.

More than \$1.4 million of that amount was brought in through credit cards,

The town says long-term solutions will need to maintain credit cards, coins and other new payment technologies, such as Apple Pay and debit/credit tap, and look to take advantage of online payment technology.

Council has directed staff to include parking machine replacement as part of upcoming budgets, and to continue educating and guiding people toward the existing online platform, Honk Mobile.

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# Barrier needed to stop people getting into turbulent water

Continued from page 1

Meanwhile, Neumann was missing until his body turned up in the creek on July 1. It took another nine days for police to confirm that the body was indeed Liam's.

Worthy has been living every parent's worst nightmare since June 25. Even so, she is determined to make something good out of her beloved son's death in the form of advocacy for water safety.

Worthy paints a picture of a brilliant, modest young man who could surprise gatherings with his favourite party trick.

"He would stand up and recite poems completely off the top of his head," Worthy says. "He loved Poe, Shelley, Longfellow and Shakespeare. He would write these poems down and then he would memorize them. I'm an actor, and I can learn plays, but I can't remember poems. I don't know where he got that talent from."

Almost presciently, Liam handed that book of poems to his mother just a week before his accident, asking her to look after them.

Neumann, who earned an honours bachelor of arts degree from the University of Guelph and held a masters in development practice from the University of Waterloo, had not long ago returned from a three-year-long stint working for the African Development Bank in Abidjan on Africa's Ivory Coast.

"He was a workhorse, working 24/7," says Worthy, who spent a month with her son in the populous city. "He had this ability to be charming and diplomatic. He could nail a deal like nobody. A super good negotiator, and people loved him."

His friend Krystal Valencia, visiting Worthy on Tuesday, recalled seeing Worthy showing her a video of Liam in a restaurant on the Ivory Coast.

"We were out having a meal in a restaurant," Worthy explains. "It was the end of the night, and they were closing up. He got up, took a white cloth off the piano, and started playing 'Clair de Lune.' He just sat there and played it out while everything was going on around him."

"He stood up at the end," Valencia adds, "smiling, with his thumbs up. It was so 'him.'"

But Abidjan, says Worthy, is a dangerous city, and it began to take a toll on Liam. He left the job that he loved there about 18 months ago and took a contract with World Uni-

versity Service of Canada back in Toronto. When that contract ended last year, he moved back to Niagara.

Because he had given up his Toronto apartment and was between jobs, many of his belongings have remained in boxes. In those boxes sit notebook after notebook that Worthy says document so many moments in her son's life since he was in a skiing accident at 13 years old.

"He had just started Grade 9 at NDSS," Worthy says. "He suffered a brain injury and we almost lost him. They also found a benign tumour that had to be drained. His recovery lasted about 18 months. His memory was affected, so he began taking notebooks with him and writing everything down."

Despite the brain injury, Worthy claims Liam, a global traveller through his work, was bright and vibrant. She calls him the best teacher she has ever had.

"I wouldn't have ever known what was going on in the world if it wasn't for him," says the long-time CBC performer, writer, producer and director. "He brought the world to me in a way that made it so exciting. He could point to anywhere on the globe and he'd tell you exactly what was going on there. He couldn't be stumped."

The mother and son often went camping in the Parry Sound area together, where she marvelled at Liam's ability to start fires in the rain and cook fantastic meals over the hot coals.

"We cabin-camped every year of his life in the same place," she says. "No water, no power. Just the two of us. It was some of our most precious times together. When he came back from Africa we went up there. We'd go kayaking, canoeing. Neither one of us is a strong swimmer but he always felt comfortable near water."

Worthy said they both always got a little scared in deep water, and she made him put his life jacket on before they went out. He even had a life jacket for Brody. That's part of what makes his loss so difficult for her.

"What was he thinking that day?" she wonders. "He loved Brody, and I know he would never put Brody's life in danger. Why would he go out there without those safety precautions when they were ingrained in him since day one?"

As a mother, she's trying to make sense of the tragedy of losing her beloved son. She feels the only way she can do that is to help



Barbara Worthy describes her son Liam as someone she loved to spend time with. (Photo supplied)

other mothers.

"That's where the awareness campaign comes in," she says. "If I don't do something with that, I can't think of how to move forward. I am going to create some kind of foundation, and form an awareness program for water safety so this can never happen again."

She would like to see Ontario Power Generation forced to more effectively inform the public when the current is ramped up on Twelve Mile Creek.

"And why is there anywhere along the shore where someone can get into the water?" Worthy queries. "I'm not making him out to be a saint, and I know he was guilty of breaking the rules. But why isn't there some kind of barrier to stop people getting past the buoys (past Rodman Hall)?"

Worthy has begun collaborating with Whirlpool Jet Boats founder John Kinney, who braved the Class V rapids of the creek in his kayak during the search for Liam's body, on the plans for a water safety foundation. She has promised that funds raised via a GoFundMe campaign created on June 29 in memory of Liam will go toward those efforts. As of press time, almost \$26,000 had been pledged.

"The hardest thing I've ever had to do is write his obituary," says Worthy. "Me, a writer, at a loss for words. He was my shining light. I can't imagine shar-

ing so much fun, so many good times with anyone else in this world."

A service of remem-

brance for Liam will be held at St Mark's Anglican Church at 2 p.m. on Monday, July 31, followed by a

reception at Addison Hall. Interment will take place at St. Mark's Church Memorial Gardens.



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An early drawing of the front view of the Parliament Oak Hotel. (Supplied)

# Urban design committee rejects King Street hotel

**Carrie Gleason**  
The Local

The town's Urban Design Committee is recommending that council reject the proposed Parliament Oak hotel development on King Street in the Old Town.

The applicant, Two Sisters Resorts, is asking for Official Plan and zoning bylaw amendments to allow for general commercial use on the site of the former Parliament Oak

school, currently earmarked for institutional use. At a recent urban design committee meeting, Peter Lesdow, the architect for the proposed hotel, provided the committee with an overview and his rationale for the development, saying that the "architectural philosophy" of the project is "to create a boutique hotel with Old World charm."

"Integration of this development with the downtown heritage character area was

very important to our team, and was the main criteria for the creation of the Parliament Oak hotel design," he said.

Inspiration for the 129-room hotel was drawn from other "grand" buildings in town, namely the Prince of Wales Hotel and the Court House, Lesdow explained. Like the Prince of Wales, the Parliament Oak Hotel would be built in a Second Empire architectural style. Lesdow listed several architectural features

the two buildings would have in common, such as a mansard roof, ornate dormers, articulated corners below the mansard, narrow windows placed at regular intervals, and brick construction with contrasting masonry. The Court House, he said, is representative of the British Classical tradition and the hotel design drew from it the classical architectural detail, including smooth stone finishes along the base and a stone entrance portico. Lesdow also noted that the stately Plum Residence, which featured a mansard roof, once existed on the property. That home was constructed by Senator Josiah Plumb in the mid-1800s and stood until it was destroyed by fire in 1913.

In terms of the hotel's size, Lesdow compared it with other Niagara-on-the-Lake hotels. The four-storey hotel would be basically the same massing as Queen's Landing, one storey taller and a little bit longer than the Prince of Wales, and roughly the same height as the Rand Estate. A stone wall would surround the property, creating an estate-like effect.

Although the streets surrounding the property are made up of one- and two-storey homes, the property is set in the downtown heritage area of the Official Plan and is a short walk to the commercial districts on Queen and King Streets, Lesdow said. "Our proposal is consistent with existing hotels in the area, such as the Oban Inn, Queen's Landing, and Pillar and Post. Both the Oban Inn and Pillar and Post are within residential areas of the town. One should note that Parliament Oak Hotel is 1.5 blocks from the Prince of Wales hotel and if the project were to move ahead, they would be visible to each other."

Lesdow acknowledged that "it has been presented that this building's architecture should reflect the buildings abutting the site to be in keeping with the area." However, he con-

tinued, "It is our position that this is not the right approach. When one reviews the character of the area, one notes that the architecture of its buildings should reflect its individual use — a church, court house, hotel, commercial and residential buildings will each have an architectural aesthetic which clearly reflects the building's prominence and use. It is a combination of different buildings' architecture, massing, and materials which help make up the character of any town. For this reason, a prominent hotel development such as this need not mimic or reflect the architecture of the houses in the area, as this approach would not be consistent with the downtown heritage character of the area."

However, the architect did say that he took the surrounding residential neighbourhood into consideration in his design by using various architectural devices. He also provided a 'shadow study' showing that the shadow cast by the building at certain times and months of the year (but not the shortest or longest days of the year) would not exceed the limits of the property. He also noted that the building's U-shape design "creates a compact square floor plan providing a minimum amount of building mass exposure to the surrounding four streets and allows for very large landscaped lawns and gardens around it." Thirty per cent of the hotel units would face inward toward a courtyard, rather than overlooking the residential neighbourhood, he added.

Committee member Allan Killin was just one member who didn't agree that the hotel should stand out from the residential area and spoke of the "urban hierarchy" of the town's buildings. "What is it about this 'giant house' that makes it deserve the architecture that you're proposing?" he asked.

Other members also pointed out that hotels like the Oban Inn, which is set in a res-

idential neighbourhood, has a design that fits with the neighbourhood and that the new Parliament Oak hotel cannot be compared to the historic Rand estate as it is a new development.

The hotel is too high, too large, and doesn't fit the neighbourhood, committee members agreed. And although the committee was asked to provide input on specific urban design issues related to the development's size, setback, building materials, landscape and parking plans, as well as its general appearance, members were vocal about whether or not commercial use is appropriate for this site at all, given its location.


In its recommendation to council, the committee is asking that council and town staff carry out studies to determine the need and location of new commercial areas in Old Town before considering any new commercial developments requiring rezoning.

Although residents are anxious to hear the staff recommendations for the proposal, and how council will deal with it, town spokesperson Marah Minor was unable to say when the next steps in dealing with the project would take place.

There is no date set for those recommendations to go to the planning committee — first Two Sisters Resorts has an opportunity to respond to comments made to date.

Under the planning act, Two Sisters can appeal to the planning tribunal if a decision is not made within 120 days, which in this case was July 1, says Minor.

As for more public input, "a further public meeting is not required unless there are significant changes made to the application, and council requests further notice be given," Minor says, although the planning committee could receive delegations from the public when the staff recommendations are brought forward.



## 2023 MUNICIPAL TAX REMINDER NOTICE

### FINAL INSTALLMENT DUE JULY 28, 2023

Tax Rates as per Final By-Law No. 5513-23

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- **In-person** to the Town Administration Building (1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)
- Via drop box at the Town Administration Building, front and side entrance (1593 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil ON, L0S 1T0)
- **Electronically** from a bank account using the 19-digit roll number
  - If payment is made at a bank or other pay station, the account will be credited only after the Town has received settlement from the bank. Please allow ten (10) business days for payment processing.

A penalty of 1.25% will be added on the first day of default and the first day of each month thereafter. To avoid penalty and interest charges, payment must be received by the Town by the due date of July 28, 2023. Penalties may not be waived.

Failure to receive a tax notice does not excuse a taxpayer from the responsibility of payment of taxes and penalty. If you have not received your tax notice, please call the Finance Division at 905-468-3266 to ensure that your correct mailing address, including PO Box number, is on file.

To save time and potential late fees, pay your taxes through a Pre-Authorized Payment (PAP) plan, online or through telephone banking. Property owners can also request to receive their property tax bills and notices from the Town by email through an eSend service. For information on payment options or to sign up for eSend, please visit [notl.com](http://notl.com) or call Town offices at 905-468-3266.

Thank you.



# Creek team gets cleanup with a little help from their friends

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

A group of eight employees of SunOpta in St. Davids came out Friday afternoon to assist the Friends of One Mile Creek in their efforts to maintain the park at the corner of King and John streets in the Old Town.

Most of the members of the neighbourhood group, which formed in 2003, are owners of properties that abut the creek as it winds through Niagara. Klara Chin-Young, vice-chair and project coordinator, was pleased to have the extra help from the SunOpta team.

“We brought out the management team,” explained Erin Hagar, the human resources



The SunOpta team of Parneet Kaur, Hardeep Kaur, Michelle Riley, Becky Goertz, Erin Hagar, Greg Dunk, Ray Sliter and Sean Brennan help the Friends of One Mile Creek with their cleanup. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

manager at the facility that manufactures healthy, non-GMO and organic fruit snacks for private label and co-pack applications.

The former Niagara Natural Fruit Snack Company was acquired by SunOpta in 2015. The

Four Mile Creek Road operation currently has 100 employees.

“I’m fairly new to the team,” said Hagar, “so I wanted us

to get together for a team-building activity. Our company provides a day for us to volunteer out in the community, and

we saw this a great opportunity to volunteer together.”

The eight managers from SunOpta worked alongside members of the environmentally-focused One Mile Creek group to pull out weeds and remove invasive species from the area that flows through the park before pooling in Lansdowne Pond at its outlet to Lake Ontario.

“Removing these invasive plants helps the monarch butterflies and the bees,” said Hagar. “There are a lot of issues with the population of honey bees, not enough of them to pollinate all the plants. We’re a company that produces food, we rely on bees and what they do. It makes perfect sense for us.”



Michael Fox and Nigel Young-Chin dump a load of weeds.



The Friends of One Mile Creek hard at work cleaning up around the creek.

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# EDITORIAL

## How Bill C-18 could impact local news

Those of you reading this with a printed newspaper in your hands, as opposed to on-line, expect that this is the way you get your local news. There is still TV and radio news, but long before they came along there were newspapers, and they remain a source of news, especially about your own community.

Now, though, printed newspapers also rely on websites and Facebook for the growing number of people who like to read their news on-line. It's all about giving readers choices, and making it easy for them to find what they're looking for.

Often, that begins with a Google search to find a particular news item, and for Niagara-on-the-Lake readers, that

would take you to our Village Media website.

That is about to change. "Sadly — for your sake, and ours," explains Village Media editor-in-chief, respected journalist Michael Friscolanti, "that digital gateway is about to slam shut. As you've likely heard by now, Facebook and Google have both announced that Canadian users will soon see zero Canadian headlines on their platforms. Not one. And that includes every piece of community journalism produced right here at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Local."

Because of Bill C-18, the federal government's misguided attempt to support Canadian journalism, The Local, and every other news outlet in Canada, will disappear from

Google and Facebook, "as if we never even existed," says Friscolanti. Those two portals "have both announced that Canadian users will soon see zero Canadian headlines on their platforms. Not one. And that includes every piece of community journalism."

The Liberals, Friscolanti explains, "determined to protect Canadian media from online giants that supposedly poach our content, passed a flawed piece of legislation that will devastate far more news outlets than it saves."

Village Media, which operates the website for The Local and websites for many other communities, most without a printed version, "never bought into the prevailing wisdom behind Bill C-18: that Facebook

and Google somehow steal our stories, and should therefore compensate us for that theft," says Friscolanti. "Born digital, our news company believes the exact opposite: that Facebook and Google are critical to our success, helping us reach more readers, expand our audience, and share as far and wide as possible the stories that matter most — the ones right in your neighbourhood."

"We want Facebook to be chock full of our hyper-local articles. We want Google News to feature our latest headlines. Just look at what we have proudly built as a result of all that traffic: a thriving local news source staffed by talented journalists who actually live in your community. In this modern age of newsroom cutbacks,

that level of on-the-ground reporting is a rare resource," says Friscolanti.

While no doubt Bill C-18 will make it difficult for our readers to find the stories they are looking for online, we hope you will continue to visit our homepage, while Village Media continues to find ways to provide the same online coverage you've come to expect.

If you haven't already, please subscribe to our free email newsletter. It will arrive in your inbox every afternoon at 3 p.m., full of headlines you won't find anywhere else, from hyper-local to news from across the province and the country.

The Local isn't going anywhere. We have just hired Kris Dube, through the federal Lo-

cal Journalism Initiative program to help us report even more local news. He has been covering Niagara for many years, and will expand our news coverage and help us be an even better voice of your community.

Our printed edition will still be delivered to you every Wednesday, and thanks to Village Media, our website will continue to offer not only our local news, but so much more.

If and when Google and Facebook follow through with their intentions — the timeline is still not clear, and the legislation could change — please keep looking for us in your mailbox and on our homepage. We'll be there.

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

## Plane lands on water, leaving men stranded in far north



**Owen Bjorgan**  
Special to The Local

By southern Ontario colloquial speak, one could find themselves 'up north' just two hours from Toronto, and therefore 3.5 hours from Niagara. My dad and I, plus some of his friends and mine, endured the 12-hour drive to White River, an hour and half north of Lake

Superior. We then boarded a plane that makes you feel like you're flying inside of a pop can with a propeller.

This is the typical routine to kick off this biannual fishing trip, which has been happening for 60 years, starting with the Letkemann family. However, every trip is an experience apart from the last one, as if comparing an orange to an apple and continuing to throw them into the same basket of memories.

I have been beyond fortunate to have joined this exquisite multigenerational outdoorsman experience since

2018, and just like the 36-inch record pike caught on this trip, I am officially hooked.

When the six-seat plane known as the Otter roars off of the lake, you leave behind cell phone reception and any modern-day responsibilities. You are thrown into the void of spruce trees, bugs and bogs, where mother nature indifferently churns her stews of sensory experience. The men in the plane have traded WiFi for interaction with a purity of nature that still survives in Ontario's far north.

The scenery from the plane window keeps everyone quiet, presumably due to the confounding and massive abyss of nature that lies beneath them. You are more likely to see a moose than a vehicle on this flight, as the lakes layer their way to the horizon. In one glance, you may see a dozen of the 250,000 named lakes in Ontario — and those are just the named ones.

One-fifth of the world's fresh water resides in the province's aquatic wonderlands, which have an incalculable amount of undisturbed shore-



Owen Bjorgan with a northern pike. (Owen Bjorgan)

lines teeming with feisty fish, stately spruce and sedentary cedars, which fall into the water as deadfall while the layers of

timber behind them slowly replace their waterfront estate. It is mind-boggling how much of Ontario and Canada's interior

shorelines must look like this.

When the plane lands on

**Continued on page 7**

### NEED HELP? MAKE THE CALL

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## View from the couch

**Donald Combe**  
Special to The Local

*Maybe I Do* (Netflix, 2023) is a French farce, and belongs on the stage; however, it has

made an excellent film chiefly because the premise is very clever and the acting excellent.

*Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to the movies. Until he re-*

*sumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through "short and sweet" exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.*




**The Trusted Voice of Our Community**

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## 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.

Tracy Brown was the first to email The Local and identify Ben's location last week as outside Red Roof Retreat.



## Local LETTERS

### Vegetarian option at Cherry Festival barbecue

Your correspondent is disappointed that no vegetarian option was available at St. Mark's Church 2023 Cherry Festival. In fact, a vegetarian burger was available on request.

However, if this was not clearly advertised, we apologize. Be assured that St. Mark's will ensure that vegetarian al-

ternative availability will be clearly communicated to our visitors in future.

**Greg Walker, Kathy Taylor**  
2023 Cherry Festival Co-Chairs

### Sustainable transportation infrastructure necessary to support tourism



**Wayne Gates, MPP**  
Niagara Fall Riding

I have been proud to serve as the Member of Provincial Parliament for Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie for four terms now, since first elected in 2014, and I truly believe we have the defining tourist experience in all of Canada.

Niagara-on-the-Lake offers some of the most beautiful places to visit in the country: from the Old Town and the Shaw Festival to Fort George, and the wineries, breweries and restaurants in between — not to mention Niagara Falls, the casinos, the Fort Erie Racetrack, and all the other incredible sights the Niagara region has to offer.

This is why I am so concerned about the recent closures on the Niagara-bound lanes of the Burlington Skyway Bridge, and their effect on our local tourism industry — and why we need to invest in other forms of transportation infrastructure.

While we do need to invest in improving Ontario's highway infrastructure, the repairs on the Burlington Skyway Bridge, resulting in traffic closures on Friday evenings, are occurring during the absolute busiest time of year for the tourism industry in Niagara, and one of the busiest travel times and routes for in-province tourists.

I have spoken directly to local business owners, industry

representatives and important stakeholders, who have noted the timing of the closures for the repairs has already had a dramatic negative impact on local businesses, resulting in high levels of cancellations on Friday evenings for hotel room bookings, and fewer overall weekend bookings.

Industry representatives have noted that the highest source of tourism business comes from those visiting from other parts of the province; in particular, from the Greater Toronto Area.

As noted by industry experts, alternate routes add significant travel time, leading to cancellations and delays of travel plans, along with the bottlenecking and added traffic volume before and after the closures. The planned construction has now already been extended into August.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of the tourism industry to the Niagara region, a sector of the economy still recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are more than 2,800 tourism businesses in Niagara, employing more than 40,000 people. Tourism in Niagara sees over \$2.4 billion in annual expenditures.

These closures have already resulted in huge negative impacts on hotel room bookings in my community here in Niagara. This has a downstream ripple effect on the entire tourism industry: fewer people visiting from out of town and staying overnight means less business for local restaurants, wineries, breweries, performing arts establishments, golf courses, bed and breakfasts

and other local attractions.

This means lower economic growth, fewer jobs, smaller paycheques and less tax receipts for municipal and regional governments.

It also points to the need to invest in other, more sustainable transportation infrastructure — namely, all-day, every-day, full-day GO train services.

This is something I have been fighting for since 2014 — and while progress has absolutely been made on this issue, we need to deliver all-day, two-way GO all the way to Niagara, for our community.

This expansion of services will be a boon to our tourism industry here in Niagara-on-the-Lake and across the region, which is still recovering from COVID-19. It will reduce congestion on our highways, which is a massive win for our environment — which we know we must do a better job protecting. Cars idling on highways and nearly three-hour commutes simply mean more and more emissions. And finally, for professionals who live in Niagara and commute to the GTA for work, it will make daily life so much easier.

We cannot jeopardize our tourism industry and the 40,000 families who depend on it to put food on the table. This is the first full year back for tourism since 2019, and we need to do everything possible to support the industry.

We need to come together as a community to ensure that we support local tourism, and invest in smart infrastructure decisions that will benefit Niagara.

## Local LETTERS

### Gardens Wanted

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society is actively seeking diverse gardens, from sprawling landscapes to cozy and intimate spaces, for next year's garden tour.

Whether your garden show-

cases abundant greenery, colourful blooms, or innovative container designs, we would love to feature it.

We invite your garden to be part of our upcoming 2024 Garden Tour.

For more information on how to submit your garden please visit [www.notlhortociety.com](http://www.notlhortociety.com)

**Susan Jurbala**  
**Sandra Stokes**  
Co-chairs, NOTL Horticultural Society Garden Tour 2024

### 'Reality hangover' on return

Continued from page 6

Shekak Lake, the fishing and exploring commences with excited haste. Rods in the water mean fish on the line in lakes like these, which are rarely fished, in comparison to southern Ontario's human population and ritzy cottages. We expected to catch northern pike, walleye and perch.

Our expectations were not only met, but exceeded, with a couple of moose sightings, beavers, loons, groundhogs and a late night visit from a jarringly talkative barred owl. When we cleaned the fish for consumption, the remains were discarded across the lake on a rocky shore where bald eagles squabbled for an easy meal. I must mention that a black bear was also spotted on the drive up, just to add to the wildlife checklist of northern inhabitants.

When you are this far north, the iconic white pine and its sweeping branches elude the commanding winters. A

deciduous tree becomes a visible minority. The spruce trees look like soldiers in silence, or perhaps a crowd of musical enthusiasts standing shoulder to shoulder to hear the loon's next tune.

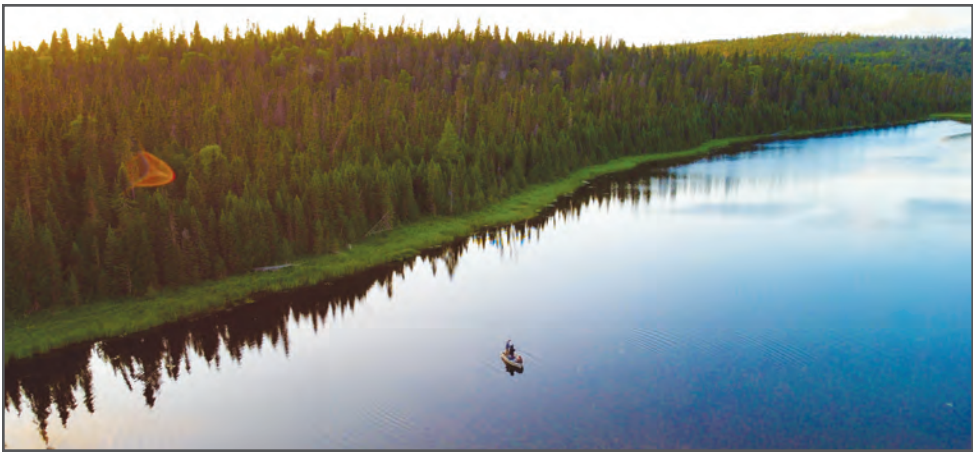
On one night, I boated across the lake with two other campers to set up a remote backcountry camp area next to a smaller lake which we had to hike to with our gear. We camped amidst mysterious matchsticks of spruce and spongy sphagnum moss, knowing that bears, wolves and moose pass through these realms like it's their living room. We were overjoyed with the peace and solitude of the night, knowing that such a scenario is becoming a rare act of adventure for people to enjoy nowadays. Back at the cabin, hot meals of various fish-related concoctions were served up on a daily basis. Yes, there were salads, too.

All things this wonderful seem to have a finite time, and a

week later, the Otter landed on our lake and was ready to take us back to our vehicles and cell phone reception.

As I write this article, I feel like I have a reality hangover for the books. I always find it appreciably challenging to come back to our defined normal lives of clock-watching, schedule managing and the state of affairs with billionaires and world issues. There is something remarkably invaluable about that sort of isolation and nature exposure that many of us lack in day-to-day life. The northern wilderness gives you full permission and no choice to disconnect and do something healthy for yourself.

I suppose that when we choose to bond with the land, we find ourselves growing like one of the eight billion spruce trees looking for sunlight in Ontario's treasured north. I was grateful to do so with my dad, my best buddy, and our friends new and old alike. Until next time.



Drone shot of an unnamed small lake and shoreline where Owen Bjorgan and two of his group camped overnight.

## Ted's thoughts: on NOTL tourism vs. Martha's Vineyard

**Ted Mouradian**  
Special to The Local

This year a friend of mine who lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake joined us in Martha's Vineyard for our family's annual summer vacation. We have been going to Martha's Vineyard since the late 1980s and this was my friend's third time there. On our long drive home we started to talk about the differences between the two tourist destinations. This is not to say that one is better than the other; we were simply comparing how we felt as visitors from another country.

As a person who frequents NOTL from St. Catharines on a regular basis, I have not ever

been treated poorly, but I have to tell you there is a different feel in Martha's Vineyard. My friend noticed it as well. We came to the conclusion that the locals in NOTL accept that they live in a tourist destination, whereas locals in Martha's Vineyard actually celebrate and embrace tourists. Now remember this is simply our experience — yours may be different.

The home we go to in Martha's Vineyard has a large porch and we often sit on the porch. Everyone who walks by greets us with a smile and a happy 'good morning.' When we are in a store we are asked where we are from and if this is our first visit. This creates interest and good conversation.

Sitting on a bench enjoying an ice cream, others (tourists and locals) who share the bench with us more often than not start up a conversation that usually brings a few laughs and some knowledge about where each has come from. Each time we part with a good feeling, no matter the race, colour, gender or place of origin.

The cool thing is that we are embraced by all as Canadians. It makes us proud that most people talk very positively about visiting Canada. When we say we are from Niagara they become even more excited. Many equate Canada with either Montreal or Niagara Falls and when we talk about NOTL and wine country they are very intrigued.

Martha's Vineyard is not a vineyard — there really is no wine production or presence there. So when we say that we live in a place that has vineyards and that we actually produce wine, they simply end up being wide-eyed and gobsmacked. Talking about ice wine is another conversation entirely. Most have not a clue what ice wine is.

Another difference is that entire houses are rented for between one week and a month as opposed to shorter stays in NOTL. Similar to NOTL, Martha's Vineyard has many day trippers who take a forty-minute ferry ride from the mainland to the island, and it's interesting to see them rushing around to see all they can see before they have

to take the ferry back late in the day. I am sure that is the same feeling the NOTL day trippers have before they take that drive back to Toronto and beyond.

Both places have very historical significance to their area: NOTL for being the site of the War of 1812 along with being where the first parliament of Canada was formed, and Martha's Vineyard where religious bible camps were held and where all of the gingerbread houses are located. The other draw to Martha's Vineyard is that it is where *Jaws* was filmed.

Either way, having been in Niagara all my life and visiting Martha's Vineyard for many years, both places have a special place in my heart and both are

unique in their own way. I can't tell you how many people I met in Martha's Vineyard and told about NOTL ever took my advice to visit, I hope many have. I can tell you that every time I mention that I spend a few weeks every year in Martha's Vineyard they say that they have always wanted to go there.

Both locations have a very special place in my heart and both have given me many wonderful memories. I am blessed to say I feel at home when I visit either.

*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 [ted@the2percentfactor.com](mailto:ted@the2percentfactor.com).*



# Dry stone wall expert explains his work at gateway project

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

Sharp shards of limestone fly from the edge of Menno Braam's chisel behind the black-screened fence at the Mississauga Road and Queen Street intersection. He has just shaped the next stone to be placed onto the new gateway project welcoming visitors to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

After about three weeks of solitary work under the hot summer sun, the new structure is beginning to take shape. Though much work has been completed, Braam maintains there is still much left to go.

The Toronto-area resident and proprietor of Whistling Dwarf Stonework has been chipping away stone by stone through a 40-tonne shipment of limestone sourced from a Buckhorn-area quarry by Upper Canada Stone, a business owned by NOTL resident Perry Hartwick. Each piece is carefully chosen for its size, shape and colour quality.

"As soon as the stone was dropped on site I was scanning for the largest stones, which go on the bottom of the wall," Braam explains. "I also look for stones with solid 90-degree shapes. I hold them for the corners. It helps me to establish each corner, to make it strong and sturdy."

The founding board member of the non-profit organization Dry Stone Canada has been practising the trade for 20 years, and working on his own for the last 15.

His expertise as a certified professional member and instructor with the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain has seen him involved in projects such as the Legacy dry stone bridge in Perth, Ontario, the Northumberland Hospital entranceway wall

in Cobourg, Ontario, and the Dry Stone Amphitheater at Hart House Farm for the University of Toronto.

Locally, Braam also worked with Dean McLellan on a dry stone wall blacksmith building at the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts.

It was his reputation that led to Braam's selection to complete the NOTL project, funded by the Gerald Kowalchuk Family Foundation.

"The town decided last summer to pre-qualify three general contractors who were capable of doing this," Kowalchuk says of the design created by Brad Smith of Burlington's Seferian Design Group. "All three contractors who went to tender chose Menno to build it. From our point of view, that was a feeling of great comfort."

Working with Smith's design has gone quite smoothly for Braam.

"I had to make sure that they understood the dimensions of the thickness of the wall," he explains. "The thickness changes the taller the wall gets. That wasn't accounted for in the original drawing. The 'batter' of the wall, how it leans into itself on both sides, requires it to be thicker at the bottom than it is at the top for structural reasons."

That design creates a centre of gravity, so the wall doesn't lean one way or the other. That's important, of course, as there is no mortar holding the stones together.

"It just wants to settle and strengthen over time," continues Braam. "That wasn't accounted for in the design. Only a dry stone waller would account for that. Overall, it's been great working with their design, to see it come to life."

Braam may be a whistler, but he's hardly a dwarf. On the contrary, at about 6'2" tall and 260 pounds, he

is about the size one would expect from someone who will be moving tonnes and tonnes of stone over about an eight-week period.

When requested, he holds up his large hands. Not surprisingly, they are covered in limestone dust and calloused from years of chiseling away at his trade.

Besides the stone on site, there's not much else there, not a power tool in the vicinity. Braam shows The Local his brick hammer, fitted with carbide on its impact zone. He also has a hammer and a chisel, and a wheelbarrow that he uses to ease the pressure on his back while he moves the larger stones. And he has a marquee tent that he can move over the wall to block the sun.

"I don't wear a hat," he says. "I find I sweat a lot more when I do."

When he arrived on location, the first step for Braam was to paint lines to mark the footprint of the structure. Then, he erected wooden frames at each end and corner, attached to each other via string to help him to keep each row level from end to end.

In his initial scanning of the 40-tonne delivery Braam also searched for longer stones to use as 'through stones.'

"If you think of this as two walls leaning against each other," he says, "the through stones go from front to back, acting like a stitch. I have two rows of those laid down already."

From there, he adds, it's working from biggest to smallest as he builds his way up. There's about a tonne of stone in every linear foot.

"There's structural reasoning for a lot of the stylistic choices," says Braam. "I don't like to use anything smaller than two inches (high), because anything less than that won't be strong enough to last. For



Menno Braam demonstrates how he shapes a piece of limestone. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Menno Braam lays a cut stone carefully onto the east corner of the gateway wall.

this project, the bottom layer is three inches, and I'll go to about two-and-a-half at the top."

Looking from above at the most recently completed row, there are smaller bits of stone sitting between the larger pieces. Braam explains that those pieces are not just rubble that he picked up but actually pieces that he cut to fit into those crevices.

"It's all fitted, and wedged in," he explains. "They help to lock it all together, but not as rigidly as mortar would do. Think of all of these joints as expansion joints, which allow these walls to breathe and move with our frost. It's referred to as 'harding'."

Menno picks up a stone and demonstrates how he trims a piece to fit correctly on the wall.

"It really comes down to practice," he says of getting

the clean cut on each piece. "It's all about the angle that you use to cut. You can anticipate where the stone will break and control it."

As he gets closer to the top of the wall, where he will begin to create the gateway arch and the circular section that will hold the town crest, he expects the job to get more intricate and time-consuming. There may be the need for another delivery from Upper Canada Stone.

"I work with Perry's stone more than anyone else's," says Braam. "The workability is just fantastic. I also really just enjoy the look of it. And Perry has been a great force in the dry stone walling world. He's helped out on a lot of things."

With the screened-out fence hiding Braam's work, passersby would hardly think anything is going on

there. But the 46-year-old craftsman is there every day for about seven hours, adamant as he is that he takes on only one job at a time, working it from start to finish before moving on to his next project. After NOTL, he's off to Halifax.

"I'll be working with the association to help restore a dry stone wall at a little church in Halifax," he says. "The wall was first built in the 1850s. Last year we rebuilt half of it, and this year we're going back to finish it in two stages."

Until then, though, he'll continue to work in solitude, practising a craft that he refers to as somewhat romantic, while he creates a lasting impression for local residents and future visitors to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Braam expects the gateway to be ready for its unveiling in about four or five week's time.

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# Library Pop-ups fun for kids

The NOTL Public Library is offering a Pop-up program for kids, which included (below) Milania, Gianna, Naome and Vivian enjoying a fun storytime at the Outlet Collection at Niagara with Tess from the library. Button-making at the Pop-up Library was also fun (right), with Tess helping Summer Reading Club participants Vivian and Naome make buttons at the Outlet Collection mall. (Supplied)



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# Chamber, businesses struggle with accessibility

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

It's been many years since David Onley, who served seven years as Ontario's Lieutenant Governor and visited Niagara-on-the-Lake at least twice, began his advocacy for accessibility.

It was his priority during his two terms, but as a polio survivor left with his own mobility problems, it had begun back in the 1990s.

Onley, who died earlier this year, spoke of his frustration over the lack of progress being made to improve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities, outlined in a review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which he wrote for the government in 2019. The legislation had been passed in 2005.

Another review in 2022, the fourth to examine the implementation of the legislation — or lack of it — said little progress had been made since the law was passed.

And as Dave Antaya, NOTL's representative on the region's Joint Committee on Accessibility, told The Local, very little has changed to prepare local businesses for the deadline of compliance by 2025, as set in the 2005 legislation.

Last month, the town raised a flag for the regional committee, which has a goal of making Niagara municipalities more accessible.

Antaya says despite the work of the committee, at least 50 per cent of NOTL businesses have accessibility

issues — “and some have said the number is well north of 60 per cent,” he adds. With that legislative deadline looming, it's going to be a financial crunch for businesses that haven't started to budget or prepare for accessibility improvements.

What the implications of that deadline might be aren't known, he said. “Will businesses be fined? And if so, by how much?” he asks.

Considering “the fundamental lack of change,” or even of awareness of what needs to be changed, the deadline is not realistic, he says. “In reality, I don't think that is going to happen. This isn't going to be resolved in two years.”

There seem to be more questions than answers, and more problems than solutions.

It's a complicated issue that begins with how businesses become compliant, given the problems presented by heritage buildings, crowded sidewalks and streets, and the costs associated with any work that needs to be done, says Antaya.

During his two terms with the accessibility committee, he has come to realize that public buildings across all Niagara municipalities, in fact all levels of government buildings, have for the most part become compliant with the legislation, “and in instances where problems are discovered, they are quickly addressed,” he says.

But it's a different story with privately owned businesses that are required to be accessible to the public.

About 20 per cent of visitors who come to NOTL have disabilities, says Antaya.

Businesses face a struggle of how to become compliant and the cost of improvements, with some tax credits available but no grants to help.

However, there is an added economic benefit to being accessible, he adds. “Why would you ignore 20 per cent of the people who might want to come into your business?”

Minerva Ward, NOTL Chamber of Commerce president and CEO, is working on accessibility in the Old Town, and has come across one solution available that would help businesses with a step to get through their door.

In a recent letter to business owners, she encourages them to look at installing single-step ramps. By doing so, she says, businesses will become more inclusive and welcoming to a larger customer base. “Accessible entrances allow individuals with mobility challenges, such as wheelchair users, parents with strollers, and the elderly,” access to businesses, creating a positive and inclusive experience for visitors and also demonstrating “a commitment to diversity and equal access for everyone in our community,” she says.

“Moreover, installing accessible ramps aligns with the principles of social responsibility and customer service excellence.”

Ensuring accessibility, she tells business owners, “sends a powerful message about your values and your dedi-

cation to providing exceptional customer experiences. Inclusivity has become a priority for many customers, and they are more likely to support businesses that share their values and demonstrate a commitment to accessibility.”

Integrating wheelchair-accessible ramps “also presents a compelling business case,” she adds, by attracting and retaining customers who rely on mobility aids.

Ward mentions a non-profit organization called STOPGAP, which makes affordable, portable ramps for single-step entrances that can be easily installed and removed as needed.

However, she told The Local, there doesn't seem to be a lot of interest on the part of the merchants — there was not much of a response to her letter.

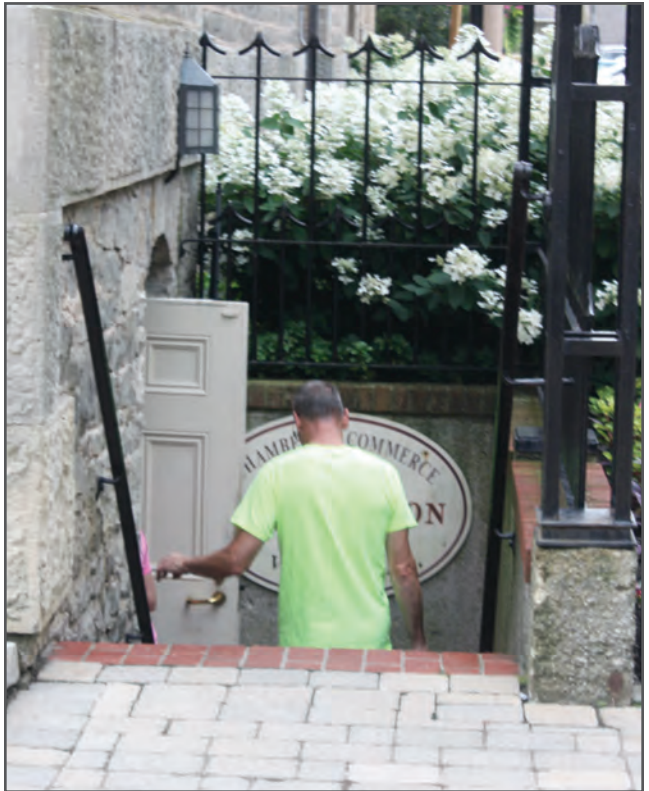
Antaya says while the ramps might provide some accessibility, there are many businesses that have more than a single step that makes their space inaccessible. He also envisions problems with using them on a busy sidewalk at the height of the tourist season.

That is the biggest issue for NOTL, he says — possible solutions are made more difficult by the lack of space at the front of buildings. One possible long-term solution would be removing parking from Queen Street to allow more room in front of doorways to make them accessible, he suggests. That would require parking nearby, possibly underground, with lots of room, such as the former hospital site.

Whatever the solution, it's not going to be quick or easy, he says.

Ward agrees that the portable ramp would not help all merchants, but it would help some, and the town has applied for a grant to help offset costs, she said, although CAO Marnie Cluckie confirmed there has been no response to that request yet.

The provincial act to provide accessibility for all has limited exemptions where compliance might affect the natural, cultural or heritage value of a protected facility or environment, Cluckie says. While it aims for a barrier-free province by setting accessibility standards, “the exemptions acknowledge the challenges that accessi-



The Chamber of Commerce offices in the basement of the Court House are not accessible to those with mobility issues. (Kris Dube)

bility features may pose to preserving the heritage value. Therefore, there may be limited exemptions for heritage buildings regarding certain accessibility requirements, depending on the circumstances.”

It's important to consult with experts about specific circumstances, she says.

The town needs someone to take on a management project and work with businesses on accessibility issues, also possibly coordinating with the NOTL Rotary Club, which has also offered to partner on the project at some level, Ward says.

In addition to helping other businesses, Ward is also working toward an accessible, street-level location for the Chamber offices.

Their space is currently on the lower levels of the historic Court House building, now a National Historic Site — a building which was completed in 1847. For many years in recent history the downstairs space was the location of the town's public library, but was vacated when the new building on Anderson Lane was ready to open in 2000, and at that time, the Court House space was taken over by the Chamber of Commerce.

The Chamber needs a new location, both for accessibility, says Ward, and because the basement is too small to accommodate the Chamber of Commerce and NOTL Tourism.

Visitors have to make their way downstairs to find a wall of brochures regarding accommodations and attractions in Niagara-on-the-Lake, or to talk to a staff member for recommendations. The space is not accessible to visitors with mobility issues — an elevator in the building intended for accessibility is not open to the public, unless the upstairs is being used, says Ward.

“We need to find street level space,” she says. “It's our business centre, and it's not accessible. It's really far beneath what we should be doing as a chamber of commerce. We should be accessible for all. We're just making do until we can move.”

However, finding space can be issue, especially with the high cost of rents in the area.

Since the town partners with the chamber on the cost of information services, a decision to move, and who would be responsible for the rent, would have to be made in partnership with the town, Ward says.

But those decisions have to be made, both for the chamber office and local businesses, she adds.

“We should be doing better as a town,” says Ward, especially as a world-class destination. “We need to think ahead about how we can serve our visitors. We're not doing a good job of serving all of them.”



Niagara-on-the-Lake raised a flag for the Joint Accessibility Committee on June 5. Dave Antaya, NOTL's representative on the committee was onhand for the event, with Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens, committee member Joey Hewitt from Thorold, and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa. Antaya says at least 50 per cent of NOTL businesses have accessibility issues and are unlikely to be able to meet the provincial goal of being accessible by 2025. (File photo)

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# Battle of Fort George event attracts hundreds of re-enactors

**David Gilchrist**  
**The Local**

This past weekend a major event took place at Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake: a re-enactment of the Battle of Fort George

during the War of 1812. The original battle, when American forces in a combined naval and land assault captured the fort, took place in May of 1813. This yearly event at the fort brings hundreds of re-enactors from

across Canada and the U.S. to take part. The event featured a number of period displays both inside and outside the fort throughout the weekend. During the two-day event, a series of mock bat-

tles took place, with the fort being captured and then re-captured. This offered several opportunities to view the manoeuvres of the various British and American regiments. The battles were held outside the fort, allowing vis-

itors to view them well. An excellent narration during the battles offered many historical details of great interest. It is amazing to see the rows of white tents, the soldiers, the ladies and chil-

dren in their period costumes, the preparations of gun crews, and the inspection of troops, and also to hear the music of the Fife and Drum Corps. This annual event certainly helps to bring history to life.



Period displays, both inside and outside the fort, and mock battles brought the Battle of Fort George to life this weekend. (Photos by Dave Gilchrist)



## Two Pride and Prejudice events coming up at Fort George

**Local Staff**

The Friends of Fort George have two Jane Austen events coming up: a tea and a lecture. This Thursday is a Pride and Prejudice Tea Party, commemorating the 210th anniversary of the English author's book. Austen wrote during the early 19th century, contemporary to the time period portrayed at Fort George National Historic Site, and her work provides a glimpse into the middle and upper class lifestyles of the regency period — something many officers left behind when they came to Upper Canada. *Pride and Prejudice* was Austen's second novel, origi-

nally published in 1813. The *Pride and Prejudice* Tea Party is July 20 at 7 p.m. at Navy Hall on Ricardo Street, and will include tea and treats, book trivia, book discussion, shopping, period games and more. Participants can try writing with a quill pen in the style of Jane Austen, as well as other fun regency-era activities. Those who come dressed in period costume will receive a 10 per cent discount in the Fort George gift shop. On Aug. 3, at 7 p.m. at Navy Hall, the Friends of Fort George will present a special lecture: *Pride and Prejudice*; Or How to Write the Perfect Novel, also commemorating the 210th anniversary of the publi-

cation of the book. Dr. Barbara Seeber, a Brock University English professor specializing in Austen, will be at Navy Hall to discuss Austen's most popular book, with tea and treats available. Tickets for both *Pride and Prejudice* events are available through the Friends of Fort George online gift shop at [friendsoffortgeorge.square.site](http://friendsoffortgeorge.square.site). Proceeds from these events will help to support student summer employment opportunities at Fort George and Brock's Monument. For more information call the Friends of Fort George, 905-468-6621, or email [admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca](mailto:admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca).

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# Sea of Gold and Burgundy recorded at Shed Studio

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

Niagara Falls-based band A Sea of Gold and Burgundy have found a kindred spirit in Niagara-on-the-Lake musician and producer Steve Goldberger.

Never mind the obvious similarities between the producer's name and the trio's, which was derived, by the way, from the members' names: C.D. Onofrio (the 'Sea') Nathaniel Goold (the 'Gold') and Aaron Berger (the 'Burgundy').

"It's pretty crazy," Onofrio tells The Local during a private listening session at Goldberger's NOTL studio. "It's the perfect name for our producer. I think it was Nathaniel who put it all together."

"Steve tried to steal our copyright," laughs Berger.

The good-natured, joking atmosphere during the listening session reflects the working relationship that developed between Goldberger and the band over more than six months of jamming, rehearsing, recording and mixing that began in December 2022.

Though the group had met Goldberger a number of times at various gigs on the Niagara music scene, they had never had a chance to collaborate. Goldberger took the initiative to invite them to work with him. "We had 10 songs when we got here," Berger says. "It began with Steve just jamming with us, and he became the one who chose the songs for this project."

"They were pretty together with their vocals when they arrived," Goldberger says of the trio known for their intricate three-part harmonies. "I ended up choosing the songs that they knew really well, the ones they didn't even need lyric sheets for. I figured that would be a great place to start working with them."

Goold says it took the band

about eight sessions at the Shed to lay down the tracks for the four songs. "It went really well," he adds. "Every time we came to do tracking we hit on pretty much exactly what we wanted to do. It went really quick. When we got into the mixing and all the back and forth, it slowed down and took a little more time."

Berger, Onofrio and Goold originally formed A Sea of Gold and Burgundy more than a decade ago. Their self-titled 2011 debut album is a slice of folk rock Canadiana that would fit in nicely on a playlist with City and Colour, Great Lake Swimmers and Neil Young.

The band went separate ways shortly after that album release, but during the COVID years, the three long-time friends happened to attend a gathering where their creative spark became rekindled. Last year they released an EP called *Ghosts in These Walls*, a collection of four introspective, dark acoustic songs that laid bare feelings of despair and depression.

Conversely, the new four-song EP, tentatively called *Golden Horizons*, takes a complete 180-degree turn. All four songs are joyous, upbeat and positive. Rather than looking back at loss and regret, the tracks look forward with excitement about what's to come.

Written by Berger, *I Will Abide*, the first song on the EP, is reminiscent of the Southern California sound of the mid-'70s, with an uptempo, Jackson Browne or Eagles driving rhythm. Jangly guitars open the number, and a swirling organ sound punctuates the back-up harmonies.

"The drums really drive that song," Goold says, giving much credit to drummer TJ Rogers, like Goold, a veteran of a number of local bands. "We had talked about tempos for each of the songs. He really nailed it."

"I wrote it just before my

son Owen was born," says Berger. "It's from the father's perspective, a reassurance to my family that I will stand by them. We're a lot older than we were when we were first together. It talks of the big shift we've had when it comes to where we are in our lives and what's important to us."

*Golden Horizons* (*That's Alright*) takes A Sea of Gold and Burgundy into a very different sonic direction. It opens with a funky bass line before drums and percussions come in to set up an almost calypso style beat. Goold rips off an amazing solo on the bass guitar, while Laurel Minnes and Zan Dominick join in on background vocals on the second half.

"I want to kiss the sunrise, I want to hold the setting sun," sings Onofrio. "I want to press my lips and kiss the golden horizon."

It's a positive, feel-good sing-along and a sure-fire perfect dance-floor filler for the band's future live sets.

"C.D. wrote it, and right off the bat it came out sounding very islandy," Goold says. "MJ (Matthew James Blake) did the percussion. He's a master of everything, and he's on every song."

Onofrio also penned track three, the piano-driven *Big Sky*. Goold takes the lead vocal and plays piano, organ and harmonica. It's another joyous song about freedom, about looking to the possibilities of the future.

"Don't you worry about me," Goold sings, "I'm just looking for a big sky to set me free. Breathe in, breathe out, don't you worry what it's all about."

"It's yearning for transcendence," adds Berger.

The EP concludes with *Take the Bad*. It's a song Goold wrote and recorded many years ago with his folk-roots band the Black Flies. *Take the Bad* slows the tempo down a



Nathaniel Goold, Aaron Berger, C.D. Onofrio, and producer Steve Goldberger in the Shed Studio in NOTL. (Mike Balsom)

bit. Rogers brushes the drums softly and acoustic guitars are up front in the mix. Lyrically, Goold sings about taking the bad and making something good out of it. The three singers push the limits with their vocal interplay on this one.

"It took me a little while to get used to the fact that these guys don't sing traditional harmonies," Goldberger says. "Sometimes they're doing alternate notes, they don't do the

obvious. I came to realize that I just had to shut up. This is their sound, I just had to let go and let them be themselves."

Goldberger's production works perfectly on each of the group's four songs. He provides the aural punch where necessary. It's obvious he stepped back and let the band take things where they wanted it to go, while adding the bells and whistles exactly where they were needed.

"We really appreciate Steve's creative philosophy," Onofrio confirms. "The whole process was very enjoyable. There was a spirit of being in the laboratory at times, seeing what kind of chemistry comes about"

A Sea of Gold and Burgundy plans to release each of the four tracks to all streaming services once a month, starting with *I Will Abide* on July 29. An EP release party is being planned for October.

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## Turning rainy evening into magical concert



Saturday night's downpour didn't dampen the spirits at TD Niagara Jazz Festival's Jazz Under the Stars event at the Jackson-Triggs Estate's amphitheatre. As the skies opened up, headliner Laila Biali invited audience members who were sitting exposed to the elements up to the relatively dry stage, where she continued to perform with her band. It was a magical, memorable and fitting way to kick off the festival's summer concert series in celebration of its 10th anniversary. Next up for the festival is Soul Jazz in the Vineyard with Cinnamon Jones and the Quincey Bullen Quartet at The Hare Wine Co. on Thursday, July 20. (Jeff Friesen for the TD Niagara Jazz Festival)



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# Road construction inconvenient but necessary

Continued from page 1

es. She was told no, but that she could put an extra sign out in front of Silversmith saying it is open, which, she adds, won't be much help if people are avoiding the construction zone.

The potholes, as well as slow-downs, also continue to be a problem.

VanBussel says a cyclist hit one in front of the brewery recently and fell to the ground. They watched him get up, but then fall a second time. They called an ambulance, which took him away, she says.

"It wasn't until after he was hurt that the signs went up, telling cyclists to walk their bikes through the construction zone," she says.

What is concerning her now is the construction is expected to continue until October.

"That's our whole season. September is just as busy for us as July and August. We know this needed to be done, and I keep telling myself next year it will be beautiful, there will be bike lanes, and it will be great. But we had one summer after COVID that we were fully open, and now we're dealing with this."

Bricks & Barley may not be located in the construction zone, but with the restaurant on Four Mile Creek Road as traffic is heading into Virgil, it is also suffering from a significant downturn in business.

Michael Frendo, one of the owners of the popular restaurant, says "local support has been phenomenal," but business since the start of the summer, with the large patio usually in full swing, has taken a hit.

"Google maps are a wonderful tool — they tell you the quickest route, but they are rerouting people around Virgil," he says.

Visitors, especially if they're coming from Niagara Falls, are directed to turn at Line 2 and although they avoid the construction, they miss out on Bricks & Barley as well as Niagara Stone Road businesses.

"We get a lot of tourism traffic in the summer. And when the patio is open our capacity is doubled. Locals typically reserve online, so we know most of those stopping in are tourists. Whereas before they might have seen us as they drove past, now they don't — they're turning long before they get to us."

Frendo says it's not that the restaurant is down 50 per cent — they've been tracking their numbers for years, and what they



Traffic is stop-and-go along Niagara Stone Road, some days there are large potholes, and tourists are avoiding Virgil as a route into the Old Town. (David Gilchrist)

are seeing is a decline over previous years of about 10 to 30 per cent, "but in the restaurant business, 10 to 30 per cent can kill you."

It's especially difficult given the rising cost of supplies, some increased by 300 per cent, while retaining the quality they're known for, and just coming out of a pandemic, he adds.

Frendo said when he was first told about the project, it was expected to be done by May, but the timing changed.

"And the majority of days, it seems there's nothing happening. There's just this rough road, with little going on. I'm not saying it doesn't need to be done, but I'm an engineer. I think good planning and engineering could have moved this project on a little faster."

While it is a significant amount of work to be done, he recognizes, "it shouldn't be taking so long."

The potholes that are also slowing traffic are not necessary, he adds.

"You have to take a grader across them, but that costs money. It's not magic, it's just work."

Jamie Slingerland of Pillitteri Estates Winery is being philosophical about the inconvenience of the construction.

He tells the story of construction on the road in front of the winery about 15 years ago, when his father-in-law, Gary Pillitteri, stood at the edge of the road and watched the digging, fearing that a force main carrying wastewater would be hit, and it would

be an expensive problem with a lot of disruption to the operation of the winery.

"He would stand out there for hours at a time. And then one day just as he was coming in for lunch, they severed it. We had to have trucks come in to take away our sewage."

This time, Slingerland says, the winery put a sign out by the road reminding the workers of the force main.

They still managed to cut it, but because of the timing, it was repaired before there was any disruption to the winery operation, he says.

There is no doubt the stop-and-go traffic due to the construction is hurting the winery business — tourists especially are taking different routes through town, he says.

It's a double hit for the winery, which is still suffering from the lack of tourism caused by the pandemic, especially Asian tourists who came by the busload pre-pandemic — that has not rebounded.

But Slingerland is concentrating on "the bigger picture," he explains. "This road really needed to be rebuilt — no question about it."

Traffic gets backed up as vehicles try to turn into their driveways, people have difficulty exiting, and heavy traffic volumes have made left-hand turns impossible sometimes, as locals will attest to. "There have been many collisions," he says. "It's really been a safety issue."

And it's not a small project, he continues. "The amount of infrastructure

below the ground is off the wall — there's a giant web of infrastructure down there. It's a very difficult task. And we know this project has to go ahead. It has to get done. I'm looking at it as the glass half

full. They're finally going ahead with it. Yes, it's a great inconvenience, but what are you going to do. Do I want to suffer the inconvenience? No. Is it inevitable? Yes, it is. And it will be amazing when it's

finished."

He's hoping business will pick up when the road is finished, and that the left turn lane will help not only with traffic but with public safety, and vehicles entering and exiting driveways along Niagara Stone Road.

His one thought on how this could have been avoided, he says, "is if it had been done during the pandemic, but that ship has sailed."

And it couldn't have waited another year, he adds. "When would this go ahead if it didn't happen now? The pain has to be felt."

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, asked about the project by residents through an email thread about the project, says in his response: "The major construction project that has been in the works for Niagara Stone Road for over a decade is no doubt inconvenient. Complaints are fair and can be dealt with, but misinformed is not appropriate. This project is a major rework of the road and utility services that do not currently serve the needs of our community."

Both timelines and budget are on track, he added.



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# Local hockey player catches eye of Florida Panthers

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

A chance to prove himself to the Stanley Cup finalist Florida Panthers last week was everything 19-year-old Matteo Giampa thought it would be.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake native spent July 8 through 15 at the Panthers' IceDen facility in Coral Gables, Florida, as one of 37 participants in the NHL team's 2023 prospect camp.

Giampa closed out the 2022-2023 hockey season on April 14 playing for the Bonnyville Pontiacs of the Alberta Junior Hockey League. The second-year right winger led the Pontiacs with 27 goals and 65 assists in the regular season and added another 23 points in the playoffs, leading the team to the league final, where they lost in five games to the Spruce Grove Saints.

Though the 6'1", 180-pound forward watched this year's NHL draft come and go without hearing his own name, he was overjoyed to get the invitation from the Panthers.

"Right after the draft a couple of staff members called me and invited me down to the camp," he tells The Local on a break from his summer job as a lifeguard at the Simcoe Park wading pool. "It happened really quickly after the draft. I was really excited to get that phone call."

And the ball got rolling right away for Giampa. The very next day he received his itinerary, including his flight information for the trip to the Sunshine State. He was off to Coral Gables just an-



Matteo Giampa was invited to spend a week at the Florida Panthers prospect camp. (Supplied)

other day later.

Giampa was joined by hockey players from across the U.S. and Canada, as well as others from Finland, Russia, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Austria.

"I didn't know anybody going into the camp," Giampa says. "I ended up meeting a lot of really great people, and made some new friends. For the whole week, there wasn't really even a second where we weren't together doing something with the team, with the staff members."

That included plenty of daily on-ice sessions and

workouts, but the off-ice sessions were just as important for Giampa.

"We had some analytics people come to talk to us," he explains, "some of their food and nutrition staff too. We learned a lot about what it takes to be an NHL player. And a couple of the NHL guys came and did a Q & A with us."

That included former Niagara Ice Dog Carter Verhaeghe, 2014 number one draft pick Aaron Ekblad, Brandon Montour and Ryan Lomberg.

"They popped in for a

couple of hours for a workout, and then they stuck around for the session with us," he remembers. "They shared their experiences on how they got to the NHL."

Richmond Hill native Lomberg's story resonated greatly with Giampa. The undrafted left winger caught the eye of Calgary Flames scouts while he was playing for the Youngstown Phantoms of the United States Hockey League. The Flames invited him to their development camp in 2015 and assigned him to their East Coast Hockey League

affiliate in Adirondack. He moved up to their American Hockey League farm team in Stockton, and in his second season with the Heat he was called up to the Flames.

"It was good to see different players and learn about their different paths to the NHL," he says. "It showed me that I need to keep pushing every day, keep grinding, and that if I do, I can get to where I want to be."

"Going to this development camp made me realize that I'm definitely not that far away from my dreams," adds Giampa. "Overall, it

was a really good experience. It was definitely a good thing for my career."

Giampa will be taking that experience and that attitude with him across the border to Buffalo's Canisius College this fall.

"I start there on Aug. 23," Giampa says. "We'll start skating then. I'm going there with two other guys from the Pontiacs, and I've talked to a couple of guys who played for the Golden Griffins last year. The coaching staff is really great, too. I think this year will be a really great year."

## From Summer Games to Winter Games for Carter Simpson



**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

After carrying the torch through Niagara-on-the-Lake for the Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games last year, local resident Carter Simpson will be on his way to Calgary to participate in Special Olympics winter version next year.

A Special Olympian, 29-year-old Simpson won a silver medal in alpine skiing at the 2011 Provincial Winter Games and captured multiple medals in track and field at the 2017 Provincial Summer Games.

Simpson was named to Team Ontario and will compete in alpine skiing in next year's Special Olympics Canada Winter

Games, to kick off in Calgary, Alberta, on Feb. 27. More than 1,250 athletes, coaches, friends and family members are expected to attend the five-week event.

Carter's parents, AnnLiz and Mike, were away attending the Tour de France when they got the email that Carter's performance at a provincial competition had earned him a spot on the team. They planned to keep it a secret until they could tell Carter, who was staying with some family friends in Sault Ste. Marie, where he grew up, while his parents were in Europe.

"But someone from his West Niagara team posted it on Facebook," says AnnLiz, "and of course he

saw it. He started Facetimeing everyone to tell them about it — he couldn't contain his excitement."

Carter, who also swims competitively, is a natural on the ski hill. AnnLiz and Mike, as well as Carter's brothers, are all skiers. While living in Sault Ste. Marie, Carter trained at Searchmont Ski Resort, where he was the only Special Olympian on the team.

When the family moved to NOTL, he was able to find a spot on Milton's ski team, where AnnLiz points out he has three dedicated coaches and skis with between five and eight other Special Olympian athletes.

"He's actually improved so much since we moved down here," she tells The

Local. "Even though the hills in Milton are smaller than Searchmont's, he's improved his time so much."

Carter will be competing in both the giant slalom and slalom events in February.

Alpine skiing is one of eight sports at the 2024 Special Olympics, along with five-pin bowling, cross-country skiing, curling, figure skating, floor hockey, snowshoeing and speed skating.

AnnLiz and Mike will make the trip out to Calgary with their son, along with his brothers.

"And we have friends out there in Calgary, so there will be a larger cheering squad out there for him. He's so, so excited about this."

Carter Simpson is excited to be competing in alpine skiing events in the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games. (Supplied)



# Select Under-10 soccer team plays in first tournament

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

Coach Conor MacNeil was on a bit of a high after his Niagara-on-the-Lake Soccer Club Under-10 team participated in Club Roma's annual TiAmo Festival Cup this past weekend.

They lost both games Sunday, 4-0 to a team from Paris, Ontario, and 6-2 to the Maple Leaf Cavan Football Club from the Peterborough area. But the improvement MacNeil and fellow coaches Mike Pillitteri and Will Reid saw was enough to assure them that they are on the right track.

"Our kids just kept getting better," MacNeil told The Local Monday. "Both teams we played were rep teams. They've been playing together for four or five years. I assume they are probably playing in the winter as well. Their chemistry is way better than ours, but technically, I thought our kids were right there."

MacNeil's U-10 team was pieced together this spring from the NOTL Soccer Club's U-9/10 house league program.

"This is totally new for NOTL Soccer," says club president Carrie Plaskett. "Conor was calling it a select team, because it's very similar to what is done with hockey — a team built out of the house league. He was so enthusiastic about it. He wanted to have some elevated play for these U-10s. It was presented to the board and everyone agreed it was a great idea."

MacNeil gathered his fellow coaches and organized a series of tryouts in early May.

"We had no rep team for this age coming out of COVID," MacNeil ex-



The U-10 soccer select team: Coaches Will Reid, Conor MacNeil and Mike Pillitteri; middle: Matt Keda, Declan MacNeil, Edwin Shepard, Eli Pfeffer, Martina Tempelaars, Avery Warren, Wyatt Neufeld, Noah Wertsch, Phillip Leanovitch and Leo Pillitteri; bottom: Jack Friesen, Nathan Reid; and missing from the photo: Emmie Cherney, Jordan Dulas, Charlie Hiebendaal and Evelyn Olsen. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

plained. "I had a great time coaching these kids in house league last year. It's a really great group of kids. They're passionate about soccer. The goal is to get them the opportunity to play some games against other clubs, to hopefully turn them into life-long fans and players of the game."

MacNeil is a life-long soccer player himself. The professor with Niagara College's Game Development program grew up playing soccer in NOTL and has fond memories of his father Patrick coaching him as a young player.

"He took us to tournaments in Erie, Pennsylvania," he recalled, "Pittsburgh and Rochester too. I had a great time bonding with my fellow players on those trips. That really made me fall in love with the game."

And he continues to play today. For the past 10 years MacNeil has been a member of the NOTL Gunners, a men's over-

35 team that plays in the Peninsula Veterans Soccer League. Their home games are Friday evenings at Memorial Park on King Street.

The U-9/10 house league plays its games Tuesday evenings. MacNeil coaches one of the five teams that evening, then the members of his select team, both boys and girls, stick around for a practice right after. It gives MacNeil and the other coaches a chance to work on skills and position play.

"The teams we played Sunday had better positioning," MacNeil admits. "But our team made some big jumps on positioning throughout the day. They were starting to realize that the stuff they get away with in house league was not working. They realized by the second game they had to get their passes together and work more as a team."

From the club's perspective, the new situation involved a bit of extra thought. Some creative field scheduling was re-

quired to ensure the select team could practice, and the players needed a second uniform other than their house league kit.

"There's an extra cost for tournaments, and to pay for referees for exhibition games, too," says Plaskett. "Conor found some sponsorship for the team, and the players did contribute some funds through an additional registration fee to help pay for it."

Through his veterans soccer league contacts MacNeil lined up an exhibition game against a team from Fort Erie a few weeks ago. NOTL lost 6-3, but it was an impressive start for a team that had only been together for a short time. The two games in the TiAmo Festival, hosted by Club Roma, were the next big test.

Goalkeeper Eli Pfeffer was the star in their first game against Paris. The nine-year-old's fearless, strong play between the posts kept the game within reach for the NOTL selects,



Avery Warren moves the ball into the Paris end.



Jack Friesen challenges a Paris attacker with Phillip Leanovitch behind him.



Wyatt Neufeld fights for the ball against a Paris defender while Edwin Shepard provides support.

who weren't able to get much past a strong Paris backfield.

"In the second game our wingers were picking up players way, way better," MacNeil said. "And we had a couple of breakaways that we missed. We gave up early goals in both games by just being out of position. If we solve that in future games things will be different."

Nathan Reid and Wyatt Neufeld scored the NOTL goals against Maple Leaf Cavan.

Up next for the U-10 selects is a rematch against that

Fort Erie team, then an exhibition game against Club Roma. MacNeil is also trying to arrange a friendly match against Niagara Falls before they play in the A.C. Douglas Memorial Festival Aug. 12 and 13. It's one of Canada's largest tournaments.

"Conor's vision is that this will lead to a travel, or rep team for this group of kids next year," says Plaskett. "It really looks like there will be enough interest at this age group so that this select team can turn into a true travel team next summer."

## No portable soccer nets in NOTL parks, club president says

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

A bill to improve the safety of portable soccer nets passed an important hurdle to becoming law last week at the Ontario Legislature.

Known as Garrett's Legacy Act, Bill 99 passed through its committee study Thursday and will be returned to the house for its third reading as early as in the fall.

The proposed law is named for Garrett Mills. The 15-year-old Napanee, Ontario, boy was killed in May, 2017 when a soccer goal post in a park tipped

over and fell on his head while he was doing chin-ups on it. His father, Dave Mills, has become a vocal advocate for safer movable soccer goal posts since Garrett's death.

"We don't currently have any portable soccer nets in use in our parks," says NOTL Soccer Club president Carrie Plaskett. "Other than the very small Pugg nets (pop-up all-mesh mini-nets) used by our Timbits division, all our nets are permanently anchored to the ground."

Bill 99 is the fourth version of the proposed law that's been introduced

since Garrett Mills' death. The current attempt to pass the law, spearheaded in April by Progressive Conservative MPP Ric Bresee, whose Hastings-Lennox and Addington riding includes Napanee, has already gone further than the previous three tries.

If passed, the new law will require that movable soccer goals be securely anchored to the ground whenever they're available to be used. Any additional requirements for portable goal posts will be up to the minister of tourism, culture and sport to set after the law is passed.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, 42 people, mostly kids, were reported killed in the U.S. and Canada between 1979 and 2017 by falling soccer goals that can weigh as much as 400 pounds. Hundreds more are hurt each year.

"When I am on the soccer fields I constantly see kids climbing on our nets," Plaskett says. "Even one situation, one death or injury, one tragedy is too many. Definitely, the NOTL Soccer Club would support whatever changes that would make things safer for kids."



NOTL Soccer Club president Carrie Plaskett, promoting soccer at the community centre, says the club will do whatever necessary to keep kids safe. (File photo)



# LocalSPORTS

## Swim team comes first at Memorial Pool meet

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

The Electrifying Eels experienced the thrill of competition as a team Saturday against swimmers from Pelham and Dunnville.

About 30 youngsters, aged five to 16, took part in the meet at Memorial Park. The team has a full complement of 40 swimmers, but not all could attend, says Adriana Vizzari, mother of four kids who are part of the team.

The swimmers will compete against other municipalities in four different pools over four weeks, and then in a final regional meet mid-August, she explains. They were in Dunnville last week, and will swim in Grimsby and Lincoln over the next two weeks.

This year the regionals are at Brock University on Aug. 12, and next year will be hosted by the NOTL team. “We’ll have to be ready for that,” says Vizzari.

“The Electrifying Eels had a great Saturday,” she adds. “The team won our meet and there were quite

a few first-place ribbons taken home.”

It was a great experience for the kids, she says, “so positive.”

Practices, Vizzari explains, are held at both the St. Davids and Memorial pools on alternate days. Members of the swim team can attend all of the practices, or if transportation is a problem, they just go to the practices they can get to.

The coaches, Ella Carrique and Sierra Kelly, are former lifeguards at the town pools, and former swim team members, says Vizzari — to her, that’s one of the reasons local pools are so important.

“It’s awesome to see this go full circle for the swimmers,” she says. “These kids are our future lifeguards,” as well as instructors and coaches, and they are creating an important community that teaches kids to swim, passing on a love of swimming, and most importantly, contributing to water safety.

In addition to the swim team, swimming lessons are also full, she says, and the summer camp run by the town brings bus loads

of kids to Memorial Pool as part of their program.

The team held a fundraiser Saturday with a concession stand at the meet. “Caps are the first order of business,” Vizzari says, as one of the basics — swim caps help the kids feel like a member of the team, and also help identify swimmers according to their team. Other teams, she adds, have caps — so far, the NOTL kids are the only ones without them.

In past years, “there were caps and T-shirts or sweaters for the swim team, but this year there just hasn’t been any money. I think it would cost about \$200 for the caps,” she says. “We’re hoping to receive some donations.”

The swim team offers an accessible sport, with little cost, she adds. “It helps kids learn to swim, and to learn their strokes. They don’t have to be a racer — they just have to be able to swim 25 metres.”

Living in Niagara-on-the-Lake, swimming is a skill that’s essential, “and not all homes have swimming pools,” she says.

Memorial Pool is look-

ing good, with a new high diving board — as a town councillor, Vizzari asked for it to be in the town budget, and other councillors agreed — and St. Davids has been painted and given a face-lift. It is being well-used, as are the tennis courts beside the pool, she says. And every day she sees kids using the path that connects the large

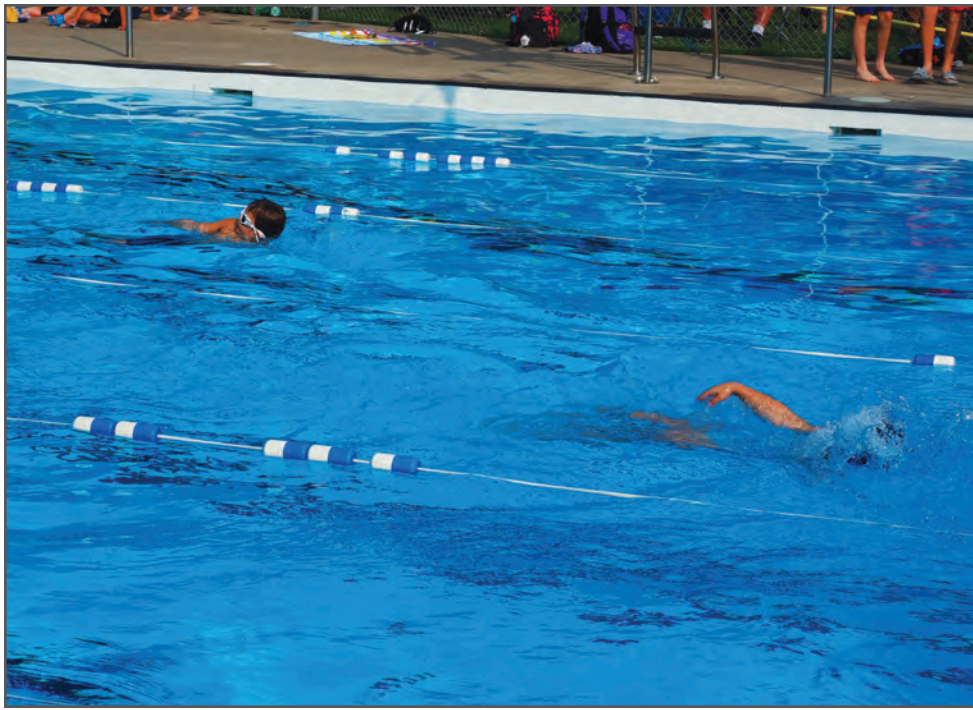
Cannary Park subdivision to the park and pool.

As for the pool’s future, last year’s St. Davids Pool Fundraising committee, to which she belongs, ended with a mandate for the committee to look into either repairing or replacing the pool, but it hasn’t met since the October election. She hopes it will soon. “I would like to see

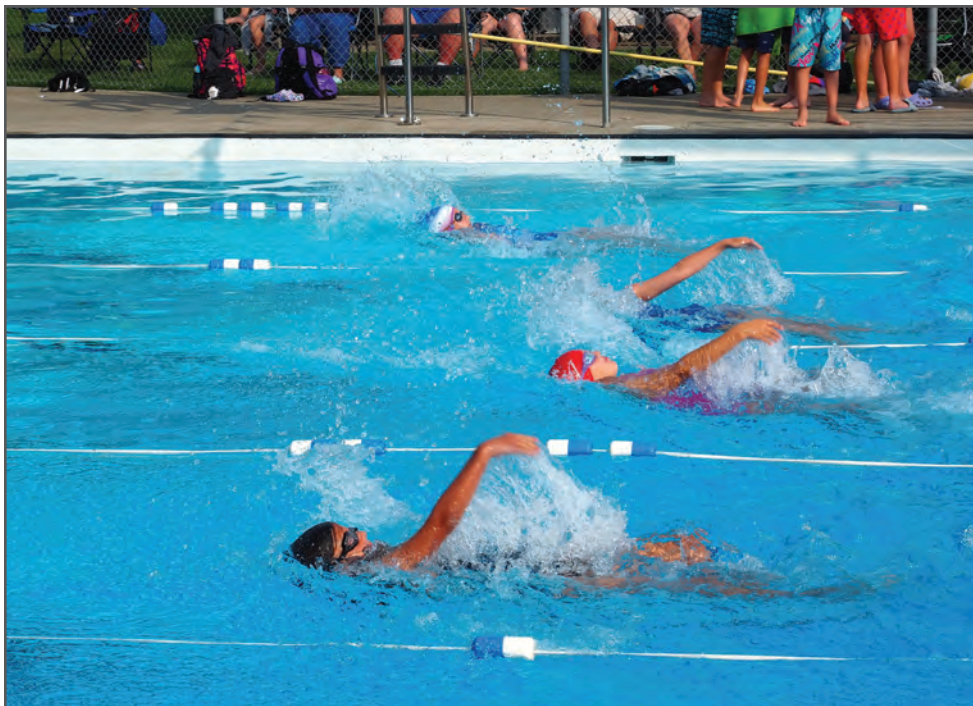
a facility in St. Davids that supports the community. These pools are both essential. And this pool is so accessible, and really well-used, especially on the hot days we’ve had. Plus kids can meet their friends there, and kids from other schools. This pool is very community-driven, and it’s so important we continue to offer it.”



Swimmers line up for the start of a race.



Kids from NOTL competed against swimmers from Pelham and Dunnville.



Girls swimming the backstroke at Saturday's competition.



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa starts Saturday's swim meet at Memorial Pool. (Photos by David Gilchrist)

## LocalWORSHIP

**CORNERSTONE**  
COMMUNITY CHURCH

**Sunday, July 23rd**

**9:45 a.m.**

**Kids Ministry Sign In**  
(Nursery - Kindergarten)

**10:00 a.m.**

**Worship Gathering**  
Online & In-Person

**Message:**

**Kevin Bayne**  
**Jesus on Entering**  
**the Kingdom**  
(Matthew 7:13-29)

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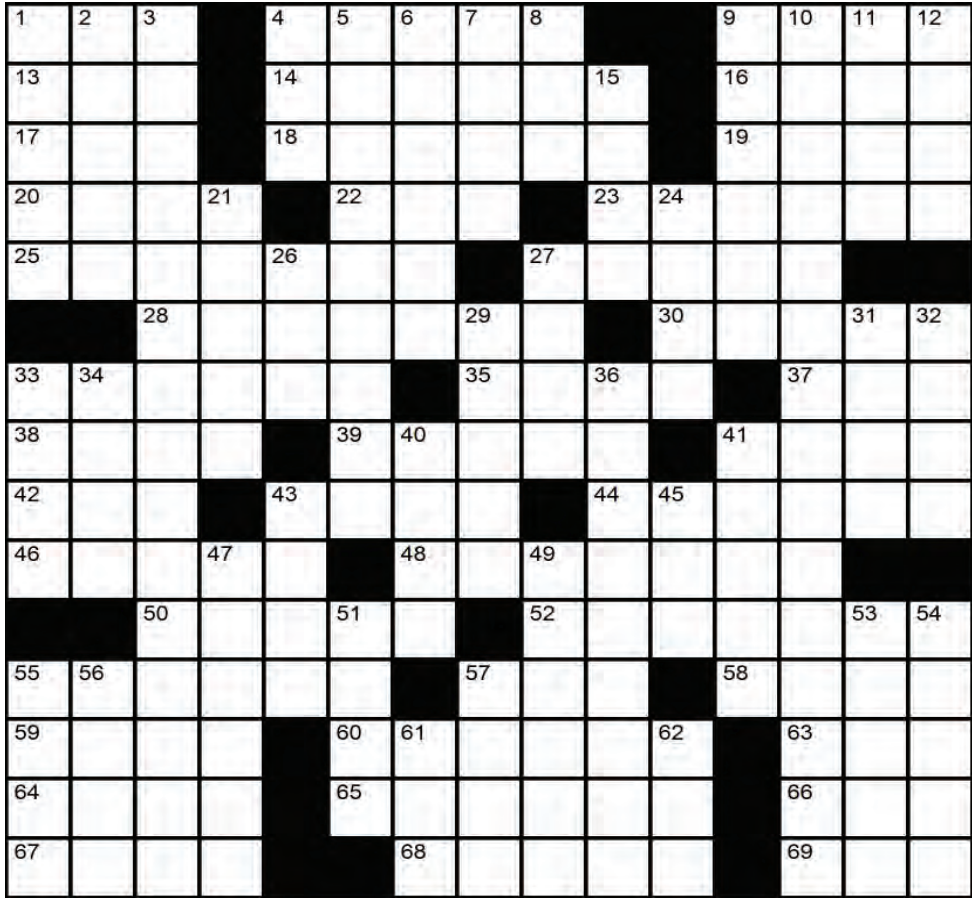
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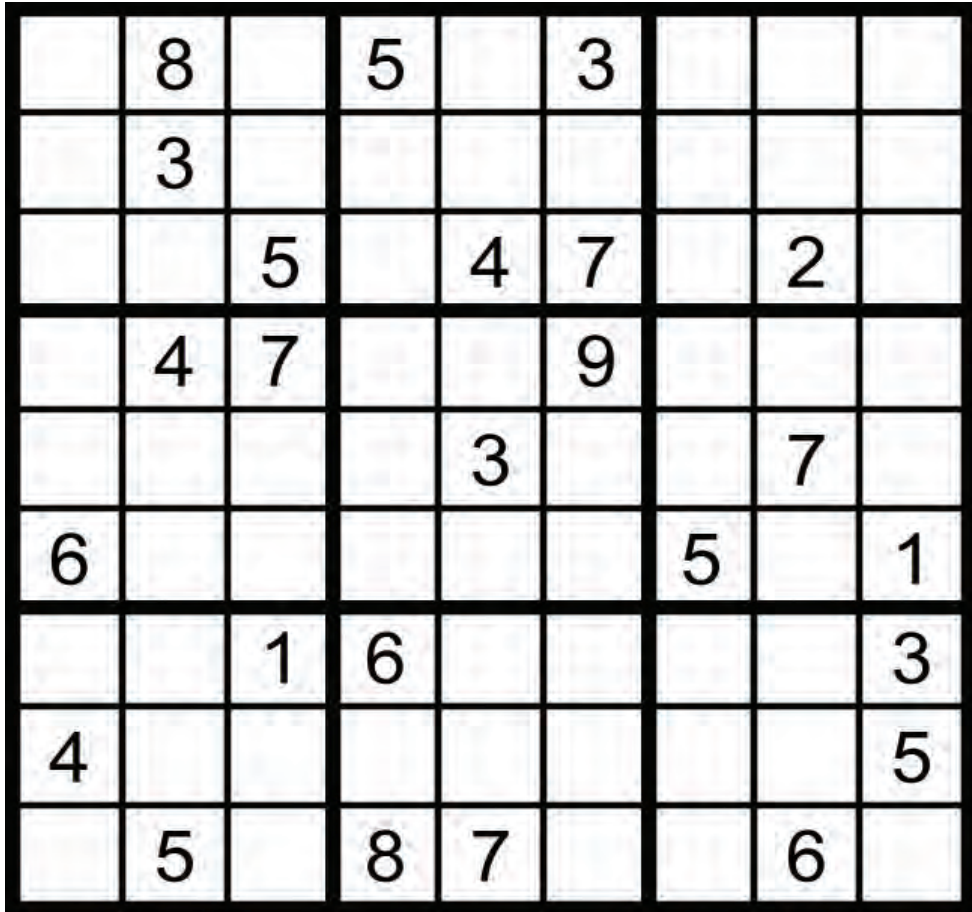


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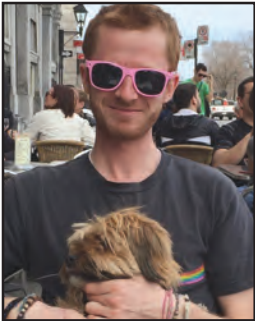
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- Across:  
1 Concert appearance  
4 Dirty  
9 Cooking meas.  
13 100 square meters  
14 Contradiction  
16 Chief Hawaiian island  
17 Short for the least  
18 Tennis great --- Gonzales  
19 Tax  
20 Applications  
22 Tap's partner  
23 Hoop dunk  
25 Added for free  
27 About this size  
28 Surrounded by  
30 Subject of spectacular bankruptcy case  
33 Very similar to  
35 Flashy  
37 Tokyo Yoko  
38 The Pobble had none  
39 Engender  
41 One of four  
42 "You've Got Mail" company  
43 "The hour --- hand": St Matthew's Gospel  
44 Dangerous feats  
46 G W T W's --- Butler
- 48 Green, blotchy frog type  
50 Toque wearers  
52 To do with plants  
55 A machine's productive hours  
57 Honorific title in India  
58 --- of the above  
59 Happy feline rumble  
60 Letters, these days  
63 Of a thing  
64 Surrounded by  
65 I'm sorry --- you waiting  
66 "The sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing ---" (Dylan Thomas)  
67 Egg holders  
68 Peter Pan's pal  
69 Blunder
- Down:  
1 Complete range  
2 Whiskey choice  
3 Thomas Edison was once a director of it  
4 National economic indicator  
5 State of preparedness  
6 Baseball segment  
7 Clickers or squeakers  
8 Expression of derision  
9 Add as a bonus
- 10 Hi-fi is not supposed to suffer from it  
11 Card dispenser  
12 Golfing short shot  
15 Gray wolf  
21 18-wheelers  
24 Sleeping  
26 Stir-fryer  
27 Pack  
29 Election list  
31 That show's going to be --- 9 pm  
32 Silently indicates assent  
33 State emblem on Old Glory  
34 Expression of amazement  
36 Pristine  
40 Chums  
41 Holy book of Islam  
43 Agenda topic  
45 Make lace  
47 Musical intervals  
49 "1984" antagonist  
51 Bases  
53 Bury  
54 Hotelier --- Ritz  
55 Poisonous Javanese tree  
56 Catamountain  
57 Japanese rice wine  
61 Cut  
62 Intelligence officer



OBITUARY



**NEUMANN, LIAM**—Died in a tragic accident on Sunday June 25th, in St. Catharines, Ontario, at the age of 34. Beloved son of Barbara Worthy and Ronald Neumann, brother to Jordin Neumann, uncle to Bowan and Sophia, and devoted dog parent to Brody. He is survived by members of the Worthy family: Uncle John, Ian, Jenn, Josh, Justin, Jarrod, Jake, Carri-Ann, Chelsea, Taylor, and Alex; and many members of the Neumann family including Uncle Vince, Aunt Pauline, Nancy, Christine, Jim, Peter, Denise, Karen, Lisa, Kim, Wayne, Bryan, David, Janet, and John, in Canada and abroad.

Liam was a graduate of Parliament Oak Elementary School and Niagara District Secondary School, (Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario); University of Guelph, (Bachelor of Arts, Honours, International Development); and University of Waterloo (Master of Development Practice).

Liam was a lover of all things active (hockey, basketball, lacrosse, snowboarding); a devotee of David Attenborough, poetry, classical music, and Queen; preferred all things pink; was a fearless adventurer, disobeyed countless rules, and above all was passionate, witty, and brilliant.

A citizen of the world, Liam travelled the globe his entire life. He had multi trips to Europe as a child, spent a gap year traversing Asia, travelling on a motorcycle, wagon, boat or tractor; and then as a young professional his career took him to four continents, working in project management and external relations, with a specialty in humanitarian affairs, gender equality, food security, and sustainable socioeconomic development.

He was also the recipient of numerous academic grants and awards, as well as published in the International Conference on Sustainable Development.

His travels with his beloved dog, Brody, were legendary. Brody became as well known in Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa, as he was on the streets of St. Catharines.

Liam always said he would die for his dog, and tragically he did. Brody survived, Liam did not.

Those who wish may make a memorial donation to the Liam Neumann Water Safety Awareness Program, at [gofundme.com/f/liam-neumann-water-safety-foundation](https://gofundme.com/f/liam-neumann-water-safety-foundation)

Cremation has taken place. Friends and family are invited to join a Service of Remembrance at St Mark's Anglican Church, 41 Byron Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, at 2 p.m., on Monday July 31st, followed by a reception at Addison Hall. Interment will take place at St. Mark's Church Memorial Gardens. Arrangements entrusted to Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](https://www.morganfuneral.com)



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julia@notllocal.com or  
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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from  
July 12, 2023

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

Across:  
1 Giga, 4 Grimy, 9 Tbsp, 13 Ave, 14 Denial, 16 Oahu, 17 Min, 18 Panchito, 19 Scot, 20 Uses, 22 Die, 23 Basket, 25 Threw in, 27 So big, 28 Amongst, 30 Enron, 33 So like, 35 Loud, 37 Ono, 38 Toes, 39 Spawm, 41 Quad, 42 A O L, 43 Is at, 44 Stunts, 46 Rhet, 48 Leopard, 50 Chets, 52 Botanic, 55 Uptime, 57 St, 58 None, 59 Purr, 60 E-mails, 63 Its, 64 Amid, 65 To keep, 66 Sea, 67 Sacs, 68 Wendy, 69 Err.

Down:  
1 Gamut, 2 Irish, 3 General Electric, 4 G D P, 5 Readiness, 6 Inning, 7 Mice, 8 Yah, 9 Toss in, 10 Background noise, 11 Shoe, 12 Putt, 15 Lobo, 21 Semis, 24 Abed, 26 Wok, 27 Stow, 29 State, 31 On at, 32 Nods, 33 Star, 34 Ooch, 36 Unspoiled, 40 Pals, 41 Qurlan, 43 Item, 45 Tat, 47 Thids, 49 O'Brien, 51 Feet, 53 Inter, 54 Cesar, 55 Uipas, 56 Puma, 57 Sake, 61 Mow, 62 Spy.





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