



Six new  
pickleball  
courts open  
**page 20**



Radiant Care chief executive officer Tim Siemens, left, Pleasant Manor senior administrator Fola Akano, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, Niagara Region Chair Jim Bradley, Ontario Minister of Long-Term Care Stan Cho, Pleasant Manor resident Bill Dick, and board president Glen Unruh at a groundbreaking ceremony for a new 160-bed facility. (Kris Dube)

## No date yet for Upper Canada Lodge closure

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

Upper Canada Lodge in Niagara-on-the-Lake will close when a new 160-bed long-term care home in Fort Erie is completed — some time in 2024, says Henri Koning, Niagara Region's director of senior services.

The region is in the process of two long-term care redevelopment projects, Linhaven in St. Catharines and Gilmore Lodge in Fort Erie, which is being built at the site of the former County Fair Mall.

Linhaven's new facility, a \$105-million project, will become home for 256 residents.

The cost to build the new Gilmore Lodge home in Fort Erie is \$85 million.

Completion of both new facilities is approaching, but Koning didn't offer an exact

date in a statement provided to The Local on Tuesday, although she indicated it would be sometime next year.

"As both projects move into the final phase of construction, 2024 anticipated building completion dates and resident move-in days will be determined in collaboration with the construction teams in the next month or two," said Koning.

Upper Canada Lodge, an 80-bed facility, was initially slated to close in 2022, but provincial funding coming through for the other builds was a cause for that delay, according to Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa.

"Those funding commitments weren't received until later, and that kind of dragged everything back," he told The Local.

Koning said 21 per cent of the residents at Upper Canada Lodge

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## Groundbreaking held for Pleasant Manor expansion

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

It's been many years since a major expansion at Pleasant Manor in Niagara-on-the-Lake, a campus of care for seniors that has been in operation since the late 1990s, was first envisioned.

So on Friday afternoon, a steady rain couldn't dampen the celebration when ground was officially broken for a

new long-term care facility to accommodate 160 residents that is expected to open its doors in late 2025.

After several speeches from local dignitaries, Radiant Care chief executive officer Tim Siemens told The Local that the project has been an "evolving story" for 25 years, and that the new building, to be constructed behind the current 41-bed site on a former peach orchard, will serve "today's and future needs for seniors."

He also said the current facility will be put to good use.

"We'll find a purpose for that to meet the demands of the senior population in Niagara-on-the-Lake," he said.

Siemens said the cost of the project will be "just north" of \$40 million, funded by the province, community support and equity Radiant Care already has in place.

In his prepared speech to about 200 people in attendance, Pleasant Manor board

president Glen Unruh provided a timeline of how the project has progressed in recent years.

In 2016, the provincial government approved the site being redeveloped, and two years later, awarded the facility 81 new licences for residents requiring long-term care. An additional 41 spaces were added in 2020.

"It's been a long journey and with this sod-turning, we enter the shortest part of the journey — construction,"

said Unruh.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said Pleasant Manor is an important part of the town, and has played a vital role in allowing local seniors to "remain in the community they love so much."

He told Minister of Long-Term Care Stan Cho, who also participated in Friday's event, that he looks forward to more announcements from the province that will benefit local seniors' ability to age in place.

"There's no doubt Niagara-on-the-Lake has one of the largest segments of an aging demographic in the province of Ontario," said Zalepa.

Cho said projects like this one are important, as the government makes sure it "takes care of those who took care of us."

The work being done at Pleasant Manor is one of 67 long-term care home projects "fast-tracked" by the

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# Councillors discuss town, region sharing resources

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

After Niagara Region and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake agreed last month to begin sharing resources related to planning responsibilities, Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa says a “vast opportunity” remains for lower-tier governments in Niagara to find other forms of shared services that could be beneficial.

In a report brought to Tuesday’s committee-of-the-whole meeting, Niagara-on-the-Lake chief administrative officer Marnie Cluckie summarized work already underway as a joint effort between the heads of staff across Niagara’s municipalities.

Although local CAOs have implemented shared services in many areas and continue to pursue shared services opportunities, “the need for more concerted attention to address these opportunities is crucial,” Cluckie said.

Recently, the town and region agreed that NOTL will have access to regional expertise the town currently doesn’t have, as

well as access to additional planners when work is piling up.

This is a result of the approval of Bill 23, creating significant changes to the Planning Act, with specific impacts involving the removal of upper-tier planning responsibilities. It will take effect early next year.

Asked by Coun. Gary Burroughs if elected officials are expected to weigh in with suggestions on other areas where shared services could be a fit, Cluckie said ideas are welcomed.

“Certainly, we look to our councils for any input they have in terms of where you’d like to see resources put,” said Cluckie. “If you have feedback, we’re more than happy to take that away.”

Zalepa said it’s vital that municipal councils, including NOTLs, play a role in ongoing steps being taken across the region for shared services.

“It is incumbent on elected people to continue to push for this to modernize government to allow us to be more responsible with taxpayer resources,” he said, adding that if proven to be effective,

it may cause the province to “think twice about amalgamation,” a path the lord mayor has already shared concerns about publicly.

Zalepa said during the committee meeting that he believes it’s important that “local government makes local decisions.”

Niagara’s CAOs meet regularly and “continue looking for ways to deliver services more efficiently and effectively,” said Cluckie.

Also attached to the committee agenda was a report from the region, done in collaboration with the head administrators of Niagara’s municipalities, listing successes achieved as well as potential areas of focus where opportunities could exist to find efficiencies, savings, or service delivery improvements.

In that report, it says shared services, varying in scope, complexity, financial and operational savings, have already been taken place, including shared fire service pilot projects, mergers of libraries, amalgamation of transit and coordination of animal control services.

Last year, regional council approved sharing



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa sees other opportunities to share resources with the region, saving costs and hopefully staving off amalgamation. (Penny Coles)

its financial management system with the City of St. Catharines, complete with an implementation work plan, project agreement, and a shared service agreement, so that the region would become St. Catharines’ financial management software and support provider. It is expected to launch in 2024, the report says.

In October 2021, Grimsby and Lincoln began a shared fire service

pilot, establishing Niagara West Fire and Emergency Services to serve the two neighbouring communities.

Lincoln and Pelham successfully merged their library systems in 2022.

Building upon “initial successes with collective purchasing and reciprocal borrowing agreements,” the municipalities now share services, programs and staff, says the report.

Coun. Sandra O’Connor

said Niagara-on-the-Lake council should “proceed with some caution” when taking steps to implement shared services.

She used the St. Davids roundabout as an example — a regional project the majority of the local council has said it does not support.

“I don’t think they’re taking into consideration what the council is saying,” said O’Connor.

Zalepa said people shouldn’t “be afraid of shared services” and that it doesn’t involve direction being handed from the region to towns and cities.

It should be seen, he said, as “local, elected people making local decisions using resources that are perhaps shared.”

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# New long-term care home will accommodate 160 residents

Continued from page 1

government, says a news release from the ministry.  
The new building will provide 119 new and

41 upgraded spaces for residents, and will feature design improvements, including larger resident common areas and air conditioning throughout the home.  
Its design is centred on

five resident home areas, each of which creates a more intimate and familiar living space for up to 32 residents, with dining and activity areas, lounges and bedrooms, says the news release from

the province.  
The home will employ more than 200 people.  
As of September 2023, more than 43,000 people were on a waitlist to access a long-term care bed in Ontario.

The median wait time is 118 days for applicants to be placed in long-term care, says the province's news release.  
Radiant Care, a not-for-profit organization, also operates Tabor Manor in St.

Catharines.  
Several members of Niagara-on-the-Lake council attended the event Friday, as did Niagara Region chair Jim Bradley and Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates.



Regional chair Jim Bradley speaking at the ground-turning for Pleasant Manor, with Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa. (Photos by Kris Dube)



Pleasant Manor board president Glen Unruh and Radiant Care CEO Tim Siemens.

# Region waiting for completion of Gilmore Lodge in Fort Erie

Continued from page 1

are from Niagara-on-the-Lake.  
Last week, an official groundbreaking was held at the site of a new long-term care site in Niagara-on-the-Lake at Radiant Care's Pleasant Manor, a facility that will be the home of 160 seniors.  
Not a regional home but one operated by a non-profit organization, Zalepa said its con-

struction is still part of the big picture when it comes to a need for housing for seniors in town — especially with the pending closure of Upper Canada Lodge.  
“That’s exactly how the region looked at it when planning it out a few years ago,” he said.  
He said the new Pleasant Manor project, planned to be ready in 2025, creates a “balance” with the region’s plans.  
Koning said families and

residents at Upper Canada Lodge have been working together with Home and Community Care to “select the long-term care home that they would like to move to.”  
Upper Canada Lodge is still accepting residents into the home, said Koning.  
Parks Canada owns the property Upper Canada Lodge sits on, but leases it to Niagara Region.  
Zalepa said it is hoped by all

involved parties that the building will still have a purpose when it is no longer a long-term care home.  
Requests for proposals have been received for future uses.  
“My understanding is that process just closed last week — so there will be something eventually, once staff evaluates the RFPs,” said Zalepa.  
In 2019, Koning said a re-

development of Upper Canada Lodge to bring it up to provincial standards was not feasible.  
Zalepa said this week that there is a need for long-term care accommodation in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and on behalf of the town, said he encourages investors to explore more projects that could allow local seniors to age in place.  
“I think the market will receive it well,” he said.

The region’s redevelopment plans were announced in 2017 during a media event at the site of the new Gilmore Lodge in Fort Erie.  
As of September 2023, more than 43,000 people were on a waitlist to access a long-term care bed in Ontario. The median wait time is 118 days for applicants to be placed in long-term care, the Ontario government said in a recent news release.



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# Indoor pool advocate urges parents to take town survey

## Penny Coles

### The Local

With the town working toward more programming for families and children, there are surveys online and an open house coming up to allow for a better understanding of what young people and their parents would most like to see.

Dawn McIsaac, part of a group hoping to convince the town it's time to include an indoor pool in future plans for recreational programming, is afraid many of those residents the surveys and open house are targeting

are not aware of the opportunity to share their opinions.

With the surveys only available until Nov. 6, and the open house on Oct. 30 beginning at 4 p.m., "I'm not sure that's enough," she says.

McIsaac spoke to parks and recreation director Kevin Turcotte and director of operations Rome D'Angelo recently about the indoor pool, and was told the town's parks and recreation master plan will be presented to council in January, which is why the surveys and open house are aimed at gathering information as to what families and kids would

like to see in the way of programming.

She was assured there would be more surveys to follow, for all residents to offer their opinions as well. McIsaac also made her fears known to Turcotte last week about the difficulty finding the surveys and the information about the open house online, even for those looking for it, and feels since then it has been made more accessible — those looking for it only need go to the town's home page to find youth and family programming, and information about the surveys and open house.

She was also assured the town would be advertising the open house and surveys in the local newspapers.

She feels the town is mistaken in thinking its Facebook page is sufficient for advertising. Young parents no longer frequent Facebook, she says — they've moved on to other social media platforms, primarily TikTok.

"I follow the town page on Facebook, but I don't think young parents do."

The survey for parents and guardians asks respondents to list the top three recreational programs they would like the town to offer families. "We are hoping to get them to firstly go online and do the survey, and second ask them to make swimming year round one of their priorities," says McIsaac.

Members of the indoor pool advocates have produced a newsletter and a petition, and are asking the schools if the newsletter can be distributed to parents, but have discovered “the schools need board approval, and it’s not that easy to get in front of the board.”

She was able to leave copies of the newsletter and the petitions the group is distributing to be signed at St. Michael Catholic School

and at Royal Oak Community School.

"I feel we have parents' support," she says. "We are just hoping they'll do the survey."

She also wants to talk to council, but is waiting until January when councillors have the information in the master plan in front of them.

She learned during her conversation with Turcotte that an indoor pool would not be “a standalone amenity,” and also that “the community centre, even though it was built in 2011, has already been outgrown. Why not get something done that puts the two together?”

Other smaller communities that have built indoor pools in recent years have made them part of large centres that offer other facilities as well, she added.

Discussions have taken place in the past about capital and operating costs of an indoor pool being too steep for a small town like Niagara-on-the-Lake, but other Ontario towns with similar or smaller populations have been successful in building an indoor pool and paying for its operation, she points out.

McIsaac doesn't have a cost estimate without knowing what an indoor

pool in town would look like — it could be anything from Olympic-sized to three lanes, she says — and any decisions about its size or design would have to be made by the town.

Turcotte told her he isn't sure there is room on the community centre property to add an indoor pool, but it would have to be on land the town now owns.

"We don't care where it is geographically," McIsaac says, but adds that it should be somewhere that is accessible to families and children, and that offers swimming lessons and lifeguard and instructor training so local kids can eventually fill those jobs. "It's not just for us doing our aquafit classes and swimming laps," she says. "We could also have aquatic events, maybe competitions, synchronized swimming, and partner with the school boards to use it for classes as part of their curriculum."

To help the town gauge interest in such a project, McIsaac is encouraging parents of families to visit [notl.com/recreation-events/programs-activities](http://notl.com/recreation-events/programs-activities) before the two surveys close Nov. 6, and also to attend the open house at the community centre Monday, Oct. 30, from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.



Garron Wells, Pam Lillos, Dawn McIsaac and Sheila Serio talk about their group's ideas and motivation for an indoor pool. *(File photo)*



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# Liam said he would die for his dog; tragically, he did

Barbara Worthy

*Liam Neumann: Son. Dog lover. Adventurer. Game changer. Born Feb. 17, 1989, in St. Catharines, Ont.; died June 25, 2023, by drowning; aged 34. Published as a Lives Lived column in the Globe and Mail, and in The Local, with permission from the Globe.*

Liam grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., surrounded by water, theatre, streets with no sidewalks, and where hockey was played outside all year round. He loved all things active – hockey, basketball, lacrosse, snowboarding; but he was also a devotee of David Attenborough, poetry, classical music and Queen.

A child of separated parents since he was 3, he could walk between our homes in under half an hour. An independent traveller even then, finding his way home would often take him far longer than his playmates.

Liam grew into a citizen of the world. He had multiple trips to Europe as a child and after high school, he spent a gap year traversing Asia. When he returned, he studied at the Universities of Guelph and Waterloo. After graduating from Waterloo with his Master of Development Practice in 2016, he began his work in international Development with UNAC (United Nations Association in Canada) and joined the African Development Bank in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, as part of its Young Professional Program. His career took him to four continents, specializing in humanitarian affairs, gender equality, food security and sustainable socioeconomic development.

Liam was a rule breaker – especially when there was no obvious reason for a rule to exist. But significantly, he was making a huge difference by breaking rules that were set up to disadvantage women and children around the developing world. And he was succeeding.

After university, Liam de-



Liam Neumann with Brody, his mother Barbara Worthy and her dog Louie. (Supplied)

veloped celiac disease. While it was often debilitating and certainly changed his social life, it made him an expert in nutrition. It also heightened his wit as he became preoccupied with bathrooms and the most minute of food ingredients. Recurring malaria, after working in West Africa for nearly three years, was another huge challenge to his physical and mental health. But he went from the dark to the light, brilliantly.

He would routinely recite his favourite poems off by heart, from Shelley, Wordsworth, Pope or Shakespeare, to anyone who cared to listen, with a doobie in one hand and a cider in the other.

His travels with his beloved dog, Brody, a feisty, tough little Morkie, were legendary. Brody became as well known in Cote d'Ivoire as he was on the streets of Toronto.

Liam always said he would die for his dog and tragically he did. One Sunday afternoon, he took Brody

out on his dinghy on Twelve Mile Creek in St. Catharines. Liam was unfamiliar with the dangers of this dammed inland waterway, regulated by Ontario Power Generation, where calm waters can change quickly, without notice, producing dangerous undertows and currents. Liam was attempting to get himself and his dog to the shore. Brody survived, Liam did not.

I learned so much from my son, about myself, about the challenges of unconditional parenting, and how to nurture a mother-son relationship that allowed us to become each other's champion and confidante. But it wasn't always easy. And our passionate red-headed arguments were legendary.

He could be annoying – using our kitchen as a gymnasium, showing off acrobatic feats on the counter, juggling foot-long knives, and getting a kick out of hiding and scaring me when I walked into any room. And

indulging Brody's habit of drinking water from the bathtub tap was a little extreme. However, he did fly me over to Africa first-class when I took Brody to him but, notably, he sent me home in economy.

Everything about Liam

was loud, busy, smart, rich and funny. He routinely changed my world. When I think of Liam, I think of all that history. All those stories. All those adventures. And all that laughter.

He once told me that for his end-of-life event, he

wanted to be in a glass coffin and sent to the stars. Later this year he will find himself in a firework, in a rocket, fired up to the stars.

Because he was my ultimate superstar.

Barbara Worthy is Liam Neumann's mother.





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# EDITORIAL

## NDP creates its own program to get homes built



**Wayne Gates, MPP  
for Niagara Falls,  
Fort Erie and NOTL**

As your Member of Provincial Parliament for Niagara-on-the-Lake, addressing the housing crisis remains one of my top priorities. It's no secret that the people of Niagara and across the Province of Ontario are dealing with a historic affordability crisis, and that includes the cost of housing.

Too many young people in our community feel they can never achieve the dream of home ownership. Too many seniors are dealing with rising rents and mortgage rates while on a fixed income. We have a waitlist for affordable housing in Niagara that runs decades-long.

The provincial government, under Premier Doug Ford, promised to address the housing crisis by building 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years.

But their plan was flawed from the start. They believed that we needed to open our Greenbelt to accomplish this task — even though the province's own housing affordability task force said a shortage of land wasn't the issue.

By trying to open up the Greenbelt, the Premier put the protection of our farmland, agricultural and viticulture industries, and our local biodiversity, in jeopardy — alongside the livelihoods of everyone whose paycheck depends on those lands, from our grape growers to people working in tourism.

And now we know the process was tainted from the beginning. Although the Premier has withdrawn his plans to develop the Greenbelt, the RCMP has now opened a criminal investigation into the matter.

I believe the RCMP will conduct a fair and thorough investigation — but the bottom line is, we have now wasted over a year's worth of precious time and energy that should have been dedicated to fixing the problems we face.

And I believe it's not enough to stand on the sidelines and cri-

tique — we need a bold strategy to build more housing while keeping what makes Niagara so unique intact.

That's why I was so proud last week to announce the creation of Homes Ontario — our plan to fund and build at least 250,000 new affordable homes across the province.

These homes will be built over 10 years, and will be both constructed and operated by public, non-profit or co-op housing providers.

This is a part of our broader strategy, from ensuring we have real rent control, to building the homes we need, to address the housing crisis, and make sure everyone in Ontario has a place to call home.

Now, I want to be clear — we know Niagara-on-the-Lake is a unique community. There's so much that's special about this town — from its important place in our country's history, to our tourism and wine industries, to the small businesses that have been a part of our community for generations. This community and its heritage need to be protected, full stop.

That means that any new de-

velopments need the input and approval of the community, local government, and all residents — and we must be careful to ensure that, while we need housing development, it must respect the character of our town.

This means we need a voice who can be an effective partner of the local community and the town government. I am proud of my record working with all levels of government to get good things done, regardless of

party affiliation. I was elected to work for the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake, and making sure your voices are heard is always my top priority.

Whether it has been getting shovels in the ground for the new South Niagara hospital, getting the funding needed for Niagara Nutrition Partners, or working with the lord mayor and town councillors to get a nurse practitioner back in the town, I have a record of work-

ing with everyone and anyone to accomplish big projects for Niagara.

Working together, with proper input, planning and funding, we can address our housing crisis, make sure young people feel they have a future in our town and community, protect seniors and ensure every Ontarian has a place to call home, while protecting and preserving what makes Niagara-on-the-Lake so special.

### Grate-fall for these autumn days



Fall colours and Halloween displays captured along Queen Street, at the Sunset Grill (above), and the Shaw Cafe, by Local photographer David Gilchrist.



### View from the couch



#### Donald Combe Special to The Local

In *Lost in Austen* (BritBox 2008), an ardent Austen fan swaps places with *Pride and Prejudice's* Elizabeth Bennet.

She finds herself living life in early 19th-century England with fictional characters she knows, understands and indeed, loves deeply. A beloved classic receives a modern twist.

Donald Combe is a retired

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

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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. We received several correct answers regarding last week's photo. Margie Enns was the first to tell us Ben was at Bethany Mennonite Church.



# COMMENT

## Local LETTERS Hatred can lead to justice

I would like to applaud Penny Coles, for what I believe to be her support of Israel. At this critical time we should be seeing more of the media coming out in full support of Israel and the annihilation of Hamas.

However, I would quarrel with her opening statement that, “no good comes of hate.” At times, “hate” is a moral good. At times justice requires

“hatred.” Justice requires that you hate your enemies, not love them. It is an injustice to, “love” your enemies. To hate your enemy — those who would do you harm — is a moral act of

self esteem, to love your enemy — embrace those who would do you harm — is an immoral act of self sacrifice.

While there should never be room for prejudice and big-

otry in our lives and of course we should not be teaching our children to hate, it is, however, a moral imperative as an adult to judge those that wish you harm with hatred. And, as we’re see-

ing in Israel, the hatred towards Hamas will lead to an absolute good, Hamas’ destruction.

Alexander Evans  
NOTL

## Local LETTERS Citizen involvement in planning never more important than now

So, it seems Rainer Hummel has now been interviewed in the most recent edition of The Local to “explain why he and other developers push and exceed the envelope of what the town zoning bylaw and the Official Plan allow, rather than work within it. And why they usually get what they want.”

And then both NOTL papers run columns this week on the issues of public meetings and the challenges faced by planning staff and council in the face of short time frames imposed by the Province in Bill 109, the More Homes for Everyone Act and Bill 23, the More Homes Built Fast Act, 2022.

My first observation is that both of these acts stress the

building of homes, not hotels, and given the province has this emphasis, perhaps the tribunal will be less helpful to the developer if the town judiciously considers these hotel applications and makes a timely decision based on staff recommendations, community input and common sense.

I would like to agree with Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa’s observation that NOTL has “the fortunate advantage that people want to invest here,” meaning there are lots of developers wanting to build in NOTL. However, I would suggest his comment that “the alternative is no investment” is simply wrong.

To my mind the “alternative” is for the lord mayor and

council to ensure those hungry developers provide wise investments appropriate to the needs and longterm viability of the town. After all, that is what they were elected to do!

With respect to meetings and public participation, I think we are truly blessed in NOTL to have the local community engagement of citizenry committed to speaking up at public meetings, volunteering for the sometimes maligned heritage and urban design committees, and various community groups devoted to making life better for all of us. I was distressed on Tuesday watching the video of the committee of the whole meeting to hear our deputy lord mayor

suggest that democracy of majority rules is like a lynch mob, where the only person objecting to the lynching is the person being lynched. This would be the same individual who last spring threatened and ejected participants in a public meeting for applauding presentations of the brave souls who stood up in front of a very large crowd to make their views known.

It also seems to be a consistent warning that we’ll never win appeals at the planning tribunal, so we should simply acquiesce to the demands of the developers and settle with them on their terms to avoid spending the money to protect the town.

There is no doubt the town

faces a very challenging planning approval regime, given that our 2019 Official Plan is not yet congruent with the region and province; largely due to the province changing direction and ground rules a number of times in the past couple years.

Premier Doug Ford and his government has consistently pushed for more development regardless of the impact to the environment or local municipalities and to the benefit of the wealthy developers, as witnessed in the Greenbelt debacle.

Even today his Ministry of the Environment has four “streamlining” proposals which will eliminate critical government and public scrutiny from projects that could

have significant impacts on the environment and human health in the critical areas of hazardous waste transportation, groundwater taking and public input and oversight.

Citizen involvement and understanding of government and planning processes has never been more important, and everything the town can do to encourage engagement will only serve to better our governance and society.

No one has all of the answers to this dilemma, but I’m of the belief we should all be open to discussion in a transparent, open public dialogue.

Bob Bader  
NOTL

## Local LETTERS Altruism, and touch of listening, seem to mean nothing

I was deeply distressed to read of one local developer’s views in the NOTL Local of Oct. 18.

Rainer Hummel expressed his priorities and what he has planned for this town. His sad story and plans for the historic Philips Estate suggests that his

very lowest priority is the views of others, and of any concerns of many in the community — they don’t bother him “in the least.” His prime concerns are developing whatever will make the most money, and fighting as hard as necessary to get that done.

Also distressing is his argument that the province dictates what he can do in the town. An elected town council and its views and suggestions are irrelevant to him. Is there no recourse for this town to prevent developments that serve only the tastes, priorities and interests of

a single developer? Is there no recourse to prevent developments that the town and significant groups of citizens consider unwanted and even damaging to their welfare?

I am struck by comparing this mutually unhappy situation with the happy develop-

ment of Garrison village where a completely different, considerate, approach was undertaken by the developer. It seems that truly listening — that considering some accommodation — that adding even a dash of altruism, means nothing in this current unfortunate

development.

Of course such an alienating approach is not at all uncommon. But it is causing more distress in the world than I have seen in my lifetime.

Peter Rand  
NOTL

### These photos are unbe-leaf-able!



Dave Gilchrist took his camera on a walk through the Pillar & Post Monet Gardens on a beautiful fall morning.



# Region pushing province on two issues

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

Niagara Regional council is pushing the province on two matters after separate motions were brought forward at last week's regular meeting — one of them requiring a vote of Chair Jim Bradley to break a tie.

A motion brought forward by St. Catharines Regional Coun. Haley Bateman was called “redundant” several times by other members — the first from Welland Mayor Frank Campion who said he “wouldn't allow it” in his council.

Bateman authored the motion and gave notice to regional council before Premier Doug Ford decided to backtrack on plans to use the Greenbelt for housing development.

In a bombshell report released in early August, Ontario auditor-general Bonnie Lysyk found that Doug Ford's government gave “preferential treatment” to prominent developers during last year's controversial changes to the Greenbelt.

There were 15 recommendations given in that report, and at the time Ford said the government would follow 14 of them,

but changed his tune in late September and announced all of them will be followed and that the controversial \$8.2-million land swap would be cancelled.

Bateman's motion aims to urge the province to re-evaluate the 2022 decision to change the Greenbelt boundaries.

Campion said it was a “good motion when it was first brought forward,” but argued during last week's regional council meeting that it was no longer relevant.

On Oct. 16, Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Paul Calandra introduced legislation to reverse the provincial government's removal of land from the Greenbelt.

Bateman said that since Ford first announced his government would lay off the Greenbelt and its agricultural land for residential development, “no changes have been made,” and that regional council and Niagara politicians shouldn't just “trust” that the plan will be reversed.

“This is not how business should be done in politics,” she said.

Lincoln Regional Coun. Rob Foster said the regional government needs to “work with whatever stripe of government” is in power, and that there is “no benefit” to the region sending a resolution to the province on this matter.

“It's not in our wheelhouse and frankly, I think we should be staying out of it,” he said, adding that it's up to the official opposition at Queen's Park to call out the current government and “hold their feet to the fire.”

Niagara Falls Regional Coun. Joyce Morocco agreed the motion might be redundant, but supported it.

“Sometimes you have to poke the bear to get some action,” said Morocco.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said his municipality has received a letter from the housing minister on this matter and would be reviewing it with his council.

“That's the manner I'll be giving feedback,” said Zalepa. “I think the minister really is interested in getting the municipal perspective, which I think was missing in the past.”

Andrea Kaiser, regional councillor for NOTL, said there was “no reason” not to support Bateman's motion, citing the Greenbelt's importance to Niagara.

After a recorded vote, council was at a standstill — which was broken by Chair Jim Bradley, who supported the motion from Bateman.



Regional Chair Jim Bradley, who supported both motions. (Screenshot)

“I suppose this could be seen as an endorsement of what the government is doing, so I'll vote in favour,” Bradley used as his rationale for supporting Bateman's motion.

Another motion brought to the table by Pelham Regional Coun. Diana Huson has also sent Niagara politicians knocking on the door at Queen's Park, asking for answers about compensation the province previously said it would give to municipalities negatively impacted by Bill 23, part of the government's plans to see 1.5 million new homes built by 2032.

Huson's motion says Niagara's losses are an anticipated 20 per cent reduction in development charge rates, which adds up to \$35 million over the next five years.

That will cause a loss of \$60 million over 10 years from the capital plan, which is set aside to address social housing, she added.

Huson's calculations show losses from Bill 23 are 2.5 per cent of a potential nine-per-cent increase in regional property taxes.

The province said in late August that only communities with housing targets will have access to the \$1.2 billion Building Faster Fund, Huson included in her motion.

Upper-tier municipalities such as Niagara were not assigned housing targets, “even though we play a significant role in providing some of the necessary infrastructure to support those housing targets,” she said at last week's meeting.

Huson's motion was approved unanimously.



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# Welland Canal shut down by Unifor strike

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

Shipping along the Welland Canal came to an abrupt halt Sunday morning as St. Lawrence Seaway workers walked off the job.

Employee members of Unifor locals 4211, 4212 and 4323 in Ontario, as well as Quebec locals 4319 and 4320 are affected by the strike. These include engineering, operations, maintenance, supervisory and administrative units.

A 72-hour strike notice had been issued last Wednesday, and the seaway began a shut down then to allow vessels to clear the system. Ships were given 14 hours to travel through the Welland Canal's eight locks before midnight Saturday.

Though casual or regular drivers from Niagara-on-the-Lake into St. Catharines may enjoy uninterrupted trips across the canal due to the stoppage, the business community is worried about the effect a prolonged strike might have.

In a statement posted on the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's website, vice president and deputy leader of government relations Robin Guy urged the Government of Canada to intervene immediately to prevent

further disruption to the country's supply chain, and to limit the impact on Canadians.

"Particularly at this critical time," says Guy's statement, "Canadians need stability in our supply chains. The St. Lawrence Seaway supports more than 66,000 Canadian jobs and is responsible for \$34 million in economic activity per day. Any work stoppage will damage the Canadian economy, fanning inflation and increasing costs for Canadians."

Guy acknowledges Unifor's right to collective bargaining in his statement.

"Though we sincerely believe the best deals are reached at the table," continues the statement, "Canada's economy and our supply chains cannot afford another strike. The federal government must act immediately to end this latest disruption while continuing to work closely with all parties on a long-term agreement."

In 2022, nearly \$17 billion in cargo traversed through the route.

The Canadian Chamber was joined Tuesday by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), the Grain Farmers of Ontario, and Fertilizer Canada in urging the federal government to ensure critical shipments



Members of Unifor protest on Glendale Avenue near the Glendale Bridge, which isn't moving up or down these days. (Penny Coles)

of grains, oilseeds, fertilizer, and other products and resources like road salt continue to flow through the St. Lawrence Seaway.

"This is an absolutely crucial time for the grain harvest in Ontario and the closure of the St. Lawrence Seaway could not come at a worse time for farmers and the Canadian food supply chain," said farmer and OFA director Steve Brackenridge. "We can't overstate the urgency of this situation as the locks in the Welland Canal and the St. Lawrence River will close in late December/early January due to annual freeze and will remain

closed until late March."

The mayors of Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold and St. Catharines issued a joint call Tuesday, pushing for both sides of the labour disruption to get back to the bargaining table, and reiterating the need for the Seaway to maintain operations.

A communication from the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation went out early Sunday to inform all ships that travel along the waterway had been immediately suspended.

Seaway management has applied to Canada's Industrial Relations Board to seek approval under the Canada

Labour Code for ships engaged in the movement of grain to continue transiting the system during the work stoppage.

The issue for Unifor is wages. Negotiations began in June, and in a statement Sunday, Unifor national president Lena Payne expressed disappointment "in the failure of the employer to make serious movement in the past two days."

Unifor Quebec director Daniel Cloutier emphasized the negotiating committee's ongoing commitment to constructive dialogue and said, "We negotiated in good faith right up to the last mo-

ment, but we cannot allow workers' rights to be compromised. We remain open to discussion and hope that the employer will reconsider its position for the good of all."

There is some hope in sight for an end to the impasse, though.

According to a statement released by the St. Lawrence Seaway late Tuesday, talks are scheduled to resume with Unifor Friday morning as confirmed by the federal government's Mediation and Conciliation Services.

Attempts by The Local to reach both Unifor and the seaway for comment Tuesday were unsuccessful.

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# Libraries need more funding to evolve for the future

**Penny Coles**  
**The Local**

A recent report on public libraries across the country recognizes them as a national asset providing critical supports to their communities, “for knowledge distribution, culture, health, reconciliation, belonging, and our democracy.”

But for libraries to continue to supply those supports and become all they could be as community hubs of the future, they will need more than municipal financial support, says Canada’s Urban Institute.

Described as “a nation-

al platform where policy makers, urban professionals, civic and business leaders, community activists and academics learn, share and collaborate with one another from coast to coast,” it has produced and released a document called Overdue: The Case for Canada’s Public Libraries.

It focuses on libraries and how they operated “through one of the most extraordinary periods in human history — the arrival and containment of the COVID-19 virus,” and what needs to come next.

The report refers to libraries as social infrastruc-

ture, including 652 library systems and 3,350 branches across Canada, visited more than 100 million times a year — including for job-seeking, accessing free WiFi, and technology training classes, which are attended by nearly 16,000 people each month.

NOTL Public Library CEO Cathy Simpson has seen the role of the library expand over the years to the point where it is already a community hub offering learning and access to knowledge in a wide variety of programming for all ages, and fulfilling its role as social infrastructure.

She was pleased to read the report, she says in particular its reference to funding — it states that provincial and federal governments are going to have to step up with financial support, and outlines two scenarios for libraries of the future: one that is likely if funding continues to decrease, as it has across the country in recent years, and the other painting a picture of all libraries can and should be, with sufficient funding in place.

Libraries have evolved from providing the traditional quiet reading rooms to include areas for “collaboration and the interactive, hands-on acquisition of new skills,” the report says. And by doing so, they close gaps in education, “increasing the likelihood of employment and contributing to workforce development.”

They provide opportunities for visitors to access, and even create, culture: “to read and listen to diverse authors, enjoy free films, music and dance, and craft new cultural content through interactive activities.”

Libraries have become partners in healthcare, early childhood development, literacy, job-seeking, social inclusion and non-discrimination, the report

says, and have taken “a leading role in responding to the federal Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action.”

They can serve many needs, especially in urban areas, including refuge from domestic violence; as a voting or job search centre; a health clinic; a place to warm up or cool down; a language learning centre for newcomers; a place to attend free classes or concerts; and a space for babies, children, caregivers and youth to make friends and form a community.

Libraries also “embody the democratic principle,” are free to everyone, and uphold freedom of expression.

Canada’s public libraries, the report says, “are quietly fulfilling core mandates at every level of government.”

During the pandemic, libraries became a reliable, safe and essential service, serving their communities in new ways, adapting to help those who needed it the most.

Yet they remain “an underfunded asset that support governments in delivering on their obligations to individuals and their families, neighbourhoods, communities, and cities,” which include opportunities for youth, mental health support, connections for seniors struggling with

isolation, and for those at-risk and vulnerable.

More than 90 per cent of funding for libraries comes from municipal governments, it says — Simpson puts it at about 94 per cent in NOTL.

“Libraries are funded from a tax base that does not increase proportionally with population or economic growth, and municipal support for libraries remains flat or fallen in real dollars over several years, despite the addition of many essential new programs and services,” the report says.

Financial repercussions of the pandemic, and the gap between needed services and available revenue tools for Canada’s largest municipalities, “put libraries and the communities they serve at precarious and increasing risk. Greater demand and unmet social needs require greater support. Central to this problem is how libraries are funded in Canada.”

The disparity between the growing number of services being provided and the resources to do so is “staggering and growing.”

The two scenarios the report demonstrates that Simpson found interesting and helpful in visualizing the

Continued on page 11



The NOTL Public Library offered a reading club for kids this summer, as it did in pre-pandemic days. (Supplied)



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# All levels of government need to pool resources

Continued from page 10

possibilities — or fears — for the future, include one if library funding continues to decline. The second shows the “enhanced role” libraries, particularly in urban centres, could play with sufficient funding.

In the first scenario, without increased funding, libraries would no longer be able to provide space for everyone, yet would be busier than ever, due to growing demands for new programs and services, especially from newcomers and equity-seeking populations.

Provincial support would remain static — as it has been in Ontario for some time, says Simpson — and federal support would be “practically non-existent.”

In this scenario, libraries would be forced to reduce staffing, programs and hours of service, the report says. The physical and digital collections would be reduced. Social service programs would face budget cuts, and vulnerable populations would have fewer places to go. Community members with greater financial resources would stop visiting the local library as often.

With dwindling funding for library programs, children would start Kindergarten with less exposure to early literacy and less ready for learning, and “parents would feel more isolated and overwhelmed by the costs of educating and occupying their children through private programs,” the report says.

The gap in school performance between children of families who have financial means and those who do not would grow, political support for library investment would be eroded, and deferred library maintenance costs would continue to mount, “making a state of good repair seem impossible.”

Library systems would have to raise revenue by introducing fees for programs, computer use and even for borrowing and admission.

In the “aspirational scenario,” the report says, with increased funding and support from upper levels of government, libraries would be busy with growing demands of new programs and services, and become “thriving community centres.”

They would be “welcoming places” and would promote “respect, tolerance and a sense of belonging for everyone.”

And they would be “incentivized to innovate their sites and programs through a series of provincial and federal investment programs.”

Library leaders would be “invited to participate in integrated regional planning efforts that are linked to municipal, provincial and federal

investment.”

And library staff would “work closely and collaboratively with service providers from other public agencies,” hosting services on site, providing everything from newcomer settlement and passport services to tax clinics, employment workshops and cultural programming, even opening 365 days a year.

To reach the goals of the future, funding should recognize libraries’ expanding roles and provide the necessary resources “through a sustainable, blended funding pool, with contributions from municipal, provincial and federal governments.”

Simpson agrees that the costs of libraries have been downloaded on municipalities, with contributions from the province having been frozen for years, and the federal government only providing very limited funding for specific projects, not for operating costs.

And the library “can only generate so much revenue on its own, with fundraising difficult when people believe you’re government-funded.”

In stressing the value of libraries to their communities, Simpson says, the report “made us feel good about what we’re doing” regarding the services they offer, and being able to help those in the community who need it.

They have tried to compensate for the library’s coverage of a large geographical area with pop-up libraries, limited services in Virgil, St. Davids and Glendale, and a home-bound delivery service, she says.

“Volunteers who deliver to the home-bound are not just delivering books, magazines and DVDs. They offer some social time, and do a bit of a wellness check while they’re there.”

Their programming is shifting somewhat — interest in technology training has increased, she says. “The pandemic really emphasized that need for people who didn’t grow up with technology, and were isolated. We’ve been trying to get them up to speed. We find that’s in line with what other libraries are seeing.”

The library provides that training with one-on-one tutoring, and also in classes, which some people prefer. “They like the social time, and also that they can help each other.”

Library programs “are based on books and learning, but also about connecting people. It’s one of the last places you can go free of charge, and see other people.”

Children’s programs have also been really well attended, “and it’s great to see the new youth programs at the community centre. It’s nice for the library to be co-located — having more choices means



The library offered pop-up sessions in other communities this summer, including a story time at the Outlet Collection in Niagara. (Supplied)

more reasons to come out”

For those who don’t like to read, she adds, there are other options available. “There is so much knowledge out there that’s written, but we know now there are other choices.”

She recalls the library’s start in 1848 as the Niagara Mechanics Institute, which offered hands-on learning. Janet Carnochan was its secretary before it became a book-lending library.

Pointing to a poster of the Mechanics Institute, Simpson says, “the library always, always offered programming, it’s just been expanded.”

During the pandemic, she says, when kids weren’t going to school and there was no programming, “we noticed a dip in literacy, and we looked at ways to overcome it. That ‘summer slide’ that students experience, became a longer slide during the pandemic. We’ve tried to get them up to where they should be,” with reading programs for all ages.

Parents love the social connections they can find at the library with pre-schoolers, she adds.

Without a high school, and teens going off to other schools, they are “a tough group to reach,” but the library has a core group of kids who come out for a teen book club.

Simpson also found the report timely with municipal budget discussions coming up. While there was some debate about library funding during last year’s budget review, coming right after an election with several first-time councillors elected, Simpson hopes there will be a better understanding of the library’s needs this year.

Coun. Adriana Vizzari is on the library board, “and she’s an excellent representative. She’s been really good at helping us understand what the council needs from us.”

With so much of the municipal budget spent on maintaining infrastructure, Simpson says, “it really

struck me as I read the report that libraries should be considered infrastructure.”

When she started at the NOTL library in 2012, there wasn’t a lot of collaboration with other Niagara libraries, she says.

That has changed over the years, with all 12 library CEOs meeting regularly, “and there is so much more cooperation, more sharing. We’re tapping into that network, and it’s great to see. It’s been a gradual process, and it’s having a big impact.”

Simpson goes through the closures and restrictions of the pandemic, then finally 2023, the year of no restrictions or closures, bringing people together after so much isolation.

“Staff have been very creative with programming,” she says, bringing back Wine and Words, offering the Learn and Live and InfoHealth, David Hemings’ popular genealogy sessions, a new Scrabble club, and planning for a Read and Eat series.

The town “has been good

to the library in NOTL. They appoint the board, and give us a council representative on the board. We’ve got a great board, very passionate about what we do. They bring a lot of different expertise to the table,” Simpson says.

For the best future scenario, she adds, “the federal government must recognize libraries as infrastructure, supporting them as such — and the pandemic helped to show us all just how important libraries can be to the community.”

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## Mary will be missed, by Royal LePage and NOTL community

Mary Sawatzky, “office manager and all-around ambassador” at the Queen Street Royal LePage office, as described by broker/manager Ryan Johnstone, has retired after more than 31 years. She was an ambassador not only for the real estate company but for the community — people loved to come in and talk to her. “She is very good with people,” Johnstone says, “and she was really committed to her job. She was there almost every day. Staff loved her, agents loved her —she will be missed by everybody.” Mary, in front in the white sweater, is surrounded by just some of those who will miss her. (Karen Skeoch)



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# Expert to provide social media safety tools for parents

Sharon Burns  
The Local

Social media safety educator Paul Davis will be giving a free presentation to parents and guardians at Bethany Mennonite Church, providing tools to keep kids safe.

The presentation, called Empowering Parents in the Digital Age, is Saturday, Nov. 4.

“Parents, grandparents and guardians need to hear about the potential harm that can come with internet usage, and learn strategies to keep their kids safe,” says Pastor Herb Sawatzky. Raising responsible kids with good manners and values used to be a parent’s major concern, he noted, yet today’s parents have lots more to contend with, such as online scams, sextortion, and artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT.

“We feel that parents are overwhelmed. They want their kids to be safe, and they’re deeply concerned for their kids,” he said.

Audrey Epp Neuhof, a parent of two young children, plans to attend the workshop. She has a strong network of parents who share tips for monitoring their children’s use of social media, but she hopes to get a preview of

what to expect as her kids enter their pre-teens.

“When you get to that older age group, I’d love to know more about security. I’d love to have tools and a heads-up so I don’t get in a bad situation where I’ve said, ‘you can have that app, no problem,’ and then realize, no, that was a bad choice.”

Even though she feels she and her husband, Marty Neuhof, have a good understanding of what their children are doing online, she admitted that “there’s probably so much that I don’t even know that I need to be aware of.”

“We started social media during COVID, to communicate when the kids wanted to chat,” said Epp Neuhof, whose nine-year-old daughter Holly uses Facebook’s Messenger Kids. “You can set certain boundaries within that app, such as turn off notifications at a certain time.” And from her own device, she monitors all the transactions happening between Holly and her friends.

Epp Neuhof noted that “the kids are actually pretty good on (the app). They’re just being silly and they’re just communicating.” She receives a weekly summary from Messenger Kids

showing her the interactions that happened, and “it’s literally just photo-bombs of each other and emojis.”

Her six-year-old son, Kenny, doesn’t use social media much, said Epp Neuhof. However, “the younger generation definitely communicates differently, and it’s just normal for them to be online,” she said, noting that her children have never had a landline.

Epp Neuhof cited other examples of positive internet use, such as Holly practising an instrument with a friend over FaceTime, and rehearsing a play over Skype. However, she noted that there are some tricky apps, such as Roblox. “There are a lot of people on there and that’s when you have to watch more.” She can disable the chat function on Roblox, and Holly uses Messenger Kids so she can talk to her in-person friends as they play the game.

“You also want them to have those real relationships in person as well, and not be addicted to their devices, and be able to set it down and go outside. At this point they don’t have a problem with putting it down when I ask,” said Epp

Neuhof.

“We definitely say no to a lot of things. We don’t have TikTok, Facebook or Snapchat. We stick with the kids’ YouTube where you can select different ages for content and you can block content as well.”

Attendees at the Nov. 4 workshop will receive practical advice on how to guide children to keep them safe. The presentation will cover a variety of social media issues including tips to reduce digital trails, online predators, cyberbullying, posting pictures safely, just to name a few. Parents of teens will go home with Davis’ ‘Social Media Contract for Teens.’

Davis has been educating parents on online and social media safety for 32 years. He has presented to over 750,000 students and 90,000 parents and has appeared on numerous Canadian television programs spreading his social media safety messages.

Children ages 12 and under are invited to a separate workshop to learn age-appropriate social media safety tips from church personnel. Young children can be signed up for child care. To register for free child care or the children’s workshop, call Bethany



Mom Audrey Epp Neuhof, shown with her daughter Molly, will be at Bethany Mennonite Church to hear Paul Davis speak. She has two youngsters and wants to learn how to keep them safe. (Supplied)

Mennonite Church at 905-736-2029.

Note that Paul Davis provides a separate workshop for teenagers, and that Empowering Parents in the Digital Age is intended for parents and guardians only. Attendees are encouraged to bring a non-perishable food item.

“It takes a village to raise a kid,” said Sawatzky, “and we want to support that village and be a part of that village. Kids want parents to be parents. Kids want boundaries. I want parents to feel like they have not only the responsibility, but the capacity to be the parents that their kids intuitively want them to be.”

The workshop starts at 6:30 p.m. and runs until 7:45 p.m. at Bethany Mennonite Church, 572 East/West Line in Niagara-on-the Lake on the corner of Four Mile Creek Road.

## Stop means stop!



The town has installed all-way stop signs at Concession 2 and Line 3, with drivers travelling north- and southbound on Concession 2 now required to stop as well. “Drivers are urged to use extra caution at this intersection, as traffic adjusts to the new stop signs,” a town news release says. (Mike Balsom)

## Local HOME of the WEEK

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This larger-style townhome offers a very sophisticated level of living in the heart of Old Town Niagara on the Lake. You are greeted by an impressive staircase which leads to both the upper living area and the fully finished lower level. If you don’t feel like taking the stairs you can certainly use the private elevator which connects all three levels. On the upper level you will be taken aback by the grandness of the home’s principal rooms. The open concept kitchen, living, and dining area is truly a sight to behold. The custom millwork and granite countertops in the kitchen provide an excellent place to cook and entertain. Also on the upper level you will find two very well appointed bedrooms, two spa-like bathrooms, and a conveniently located laundry room. The lower level offers a spacious rec room with built in wet bar, and a large walk-out to the home’s private ground floor patio. A fantastic location allows the owner to enjoy the very best wineries, dining, shopping, and amenities that Niagara on the Lake has to offer.

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# Library volunteer organizes spooky Sideshow display

**Sarah Bowers  
Special to The Local**

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library has become the site of enchanting fright as it welcomes visitors of all ages to its latest display for the Halloween season.

The library has unveiled a Sideshow exhibit that has been spooking and delighting patrons in equal measure. The brainchild of the library's dedicated staff member Kenny Brittan, this exhibit showcases a collection of eerie and whimsical monsters — a werewolf, vampire and leprechaun — each with its own unique story and fun facts.

The exhibit is ready to receive local residents, both young and old, who are ea-

ger to celebrate the Halloween spirit. Brittan is a talented monster-maker who has been working as a page at the library for the last four years. He started his library journey initially through the Community Integration Co-Operative Education program at Niagara College and was hired as a permanent staff member at the end of his placement.

Brittan is a valued member of the library staff and a source of artistic talent and inspiration. He has been making his own life-sized Halloween props for a number of years. When asked for advice on making your own props at home, he suggested the following: "lay out your monster's costume on the floor, measure the size, place

PVC pipe fittings on top to measure how long they need to be. Cut pipe with a PVC pipe cutter and use PVC pipe glue (or a drill and screws) to keep pipes in place. Once you use the glue there are no second chances, you can't go back, so you need to be careful with glue, it dries very quickly!

"You can use purchased character masks to make the faces (which can be expensive, buy them on Amazon or Spirit Halloween)," he continues. "It can take up to two days of continuous work to put the character together."

If you're looking for a spooky adventure, the library will be hosting Brittan's display until Halloween, so please drop by and visit the Sideshow!



Dedicated library staff member Kenny Brittan loves Halloween, and is shown with some of the posters and spooky characters he has made for the library Sideshow exhibit he has organized. (Supplied)

# Take your ghosts and goblins trick-or-treating at Fort George

**Local Staff**

Little goblins and ghouls will enjoy trick or treating in the Fort George parking lot this Sunday, where volunteers will be handing out free Halloween treat bags.

The Friends of Fort George and Parks Canada's special table with treats and decorations

will be set up from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., to help local youth celebrate Halloween.

Oct. 28 and 29 will be the last weekend Fort George and the Friends of Fort George Gift Shop are open for the season, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with the last admission tickets sold at 4:15 p.m. Be sure to leave time to explore the grounds, tour through the

buildings, and witness a musket demonstration.

Halloween treats are thanks to Hendrik's Independent, Simpson's Pharmasave, Parks Canada, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, and the Friends of Fort George Gift Shop.

For more information, visit [friendsoffortgeorge.ca](http://friendsoffortgeorge.ca) or call 905-468-6621.



Fort George will welcome trick-or-treaters Sunday. (Supplied)

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**RLP TOP NOTL TEAM JAN-SEPT 2023**



# Niagara Foundation to honour Ward Simpson

## Local Staff

The Niagara Foundation has chosen Ward Simpson to be honoured with the 2023 title of Living

Landmark, and the dinner to recognize him is coming up soon.

“Ward has played a significant role in our community whether through founding and operating

Simpson’s Pharmacy or his positions with the Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, Arena Fundraising Committee, Community Centre Fundraising Committee, Red Roof Retreat

or the Christmas Parade Committee,” says Lyle Hall, Niagara Foundation chair.

The Living Landmark award has been given annually since 2006 to a person or group who has demonstrated an outstanding contribution to the quality of life in Niagara.

Steffanie Bjorgan, executive director of Red Roof Retreat, has been on the receiving end of Simpson’s contributions to the community, and will be at the dinner to help celebrate him.

“Ward is so deserving of this award. He represents everything that is good about people in general, but also what it means to be part of your community,” says Bjorgan.

“If you look around Niagara, there are so many important places that he was part of bringing to us to enjoy for years to come — the pharmacy, medical centre, arena, community centre and many, many other aspects of what makes our town a great place to live and play.”

“Personally, for me,” she adds, “his commitment as chair to Red Roof Retreat is something I will always be indebted and grateful for. His name gave us credibility when we were new, sustainability as we grew, and his name will stand behind its expansion and legacy in the future.”

He’s not only just a good and fun person,” says Bjorgan, “he is a true legend.”

This year’s Living Landmark dinner will be held at The Court House Nov. 18, at 6 p.m. To purchase tickets please contact Jane Dagg at [jdagg.notl@gmail.com](mailto:jdagg.notl@gmail.com).

The Niagara Foundation, established in 1962, is a charitable organization whose mission is to preserve the built and natural heritage of Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding communities, quietly and effectively advocating for preservation, undertaking innovative partnerships, fostering knowledge and appreciation, and securing and advancing the qualities that are now so strongly associated with historic Niagara-on-the-Lake.



Ward Simpson, found, not surprisingly, on a golf course. (Supplied)

## Virgil firefighters donate \$500 to Niagara Nursery School



Volunteer firefighters at the Virgil station have donated \$500 to the Niagara Nursery School and Child Care Centre, which director Candice Penny says will help fund an enhanced, naturalized outdoor playground. The firefighters raised the money at their annual car show. Firefighter Jason Disher says they like to spread the money they raise around the community, and since many volunteer firefighters, friends and family members have, or have had, kids who attend the nursery school, they decided to help out with the playground. In the photo are (from left) Laura Townsend with her son Arlo Evans, firefighter Jason Disher, Adriana Friesen, Axel Evans, Brynn McGuffin, Candice Penny, Caitlin Disher with Drake, and Maeve McGuffin with mom Tasia. (Alex Evans)



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# Explorer and author Adam Shoalts to speak at library event

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

From 90 days and nights alone in the wilderness to speaking to larger crowds hanging on his every word, author Adam Shoalts knows both extremes.

The Westaway Explorer-in-Residence at the Royal Canadian Geographical Society is known for his many journeys into the Canadian wilderness, often alone and through some of the most challenging extreme conditions. But he's also known for the bestselling books he writes about those adventures and the scintillating talks he gives between his journeys.

"It's a contrast to go from total solitude deep into the wilderness to doing book tours," laughs Shoalts on the line from his Pelham home on a day off between appearances two days apart, in Hamilton and Waterford, Ontario. "I enjoy both. You wouldn't want solitude all the time, and I wouldn't want to be in front of 100 people all the time either. I'm really lucky I get to enjoy both ends of the spectrum."

On the heels of the publication of his fifth book, *Where the Falcon Flies*, Shoalts appears Thursday, Oct. 26 at Caroline Cellars as part of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library's Wine and Words Series.

*Where the Falcon Flies* recounts Shoalts' 3,400 kilometre journey from Long Point on the shores of Lake Erie to Ungava Bay in Nunavik, the northern part of Quebec. The title is quite literal, as Shoalts' latest adventure follows the annual migration path of the peregrine falcon, a trip inspired when the 37-year-old spotted one of the majestic predators outside his porch window.

His itinerary that began in April 2022 took him from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario and along the St. Lawrence River before requiring an abrupt left turn where his trek continued toward the northern reaches of Quebec and Labrador.

"In the old days, peregrine

falcons were known as duck hawks," says Shoalts, who holds a PhD from McMaster University. "That's their favourite food. They will hunt just about any type of bird, but they love ducks and waterfowl. If you have lakes, falcons will be around."

He adds that in the 1950s and 1960s, when the peregrine falcon was declared an endangered species, there were successful efforts to attract the birds of prey to urban spaces, where skyscrapers would substitute for the high cliffs that they prefer to swoop from to hunt for their dinner.

That meant that unlike the journeys recounted in his previous books, this particular three-month trek brought Shoalts, with his canoe and backpack, through some urban landscapes.

A long portage down the Niagara River Parkway between the Chippewa River and the village of Queenston is recounted in the new book. Onlookers who had never seen a man pushing a canoe on a makeshift two-wheel cart in front of the Sir Adam Beck Generating Station gawked and asked curious questions.

And following the route of Falco peregrinus took him to some interesting locales.

"Through the whole journey I ended up sleeping in all sorts of strange places," Shoalts tells The Local. "Underneath the Burlington Skyway, on Toronto Island, under the Cartier Bridge in Montreal, and occasionally in people's backyards when they gave me permission."

That led to some stunning revelations for the man the Toronto Star called "Canada's Indiana Jones."

"No matter where you go in Canada, even in our biggest cities like Toronto and Montreal, you never fail to find wild places," Shoalts says. "It was one of the most rewarding aspects of my journey to find all of these urban greenspaces that I wouldn't have experienced otherwise, all interconnected by the flight of the per-

egrine falcon and other birds that migrate."

And though Shoalts is known for taking readers through areas of the country most will never themselves experience first-hand, it's these urban greenspaces that have been capturing the attention of his followers on social media and attendees at his book talks, 34 of which are scheduled for the months of October and November.

"People are thrilled that I went through their backyards," Shoalts laughs. "I heard from someone who lives in Brockville who loved that I paddled where he kayaks. I've heard that everywhere from Lake Erie, through the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. People have been expressing their local pride."

Of course, fans of Shoalts will still hear about the explorer lining his canoe through rapids while walking over slippery rocks, paddling and portaging for up to 17 hours a day through arctic conditions, and dealing with painful blisters on his feet from constant hiking through wet marshes and rivers.

And at the NOTL stop on Line Two, they'll have a chance to see some of the amazing photos taken with his GoPro camera along the way.

"I will be showing a slideshow in Niagara-on-the-Lake," Shoalts promises. "I'll share photos from the journey, satellite images, some maps, anything that helps to bring the story to life. Audiences seem to enjoy that."

The Local's own explorer-in-residence, Owen Bjorgan, can attest to that fact.

"I've been to see Adam a number of times," Bjorgan says. "He is amazing. You don't want to miss this event."

Debbie Krause, the library's community engagement co-ordinator, adds that Shoalts first appeared at a library event in 2019, and this week's will be his fourth talk in town.

"He reached out to me this summer," Krause tells The Local. "His incredible and unique adventures and his ability to



Adam Shoalts clears brush on his latest trek tracing the migratory path of the peregrine falcon. (Photos supplied)

tell his stories give him a standing invitation with us every time he releases a new book. His books are popular here, especially when there's an event coming."

Shoalts is enjoying meeting his fans and readers on his current book tour. Even more, he is elated to be back at the home abutting Short Hills Provincial Park that he shares with his wife Alexandria and their two sons, two-year-old Thomas, and Adrian, four months old.

He has, however, already begun planning his next adventure. He's hoping to dig into the mystery of the disappearance of the little-known arctic explorer Hubert Darrell. The experienced explorer and special constable with the Royal Northwest Mounted Police went missing in September of 1910 in the Anderson River region off the Northwest Territories.

No doubt he will be back for a fifth appearance at the

NOTL Public Library once that journey has made it to print.

Thursday's event at Caroline Cellars is nearly sold out. Tickets are \$40 and include a glass of wine and food pairing, with proceeds going to library programs. Visit [notlpubliclibrary.org](http://notlpubliclibrary.org) for information.

And if you can't make this week's event, Shoalts will be speaking in Port Colborne on Nov. 12 and at Old Fort Erie on Nov. 15.



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Explorer Adam Shoalts during a 2021 expedition.



# Juno winner Dominique Fils-Aime opens Bravo Niagara!

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

The new album from Montreal-based singer Dominique Fils-Aime is a work of inestimably exquisite beauty.

*Our Roots Run Deep* revolves around Fils-Aime's unparalleled vocal talents. The Juno Award winner (2020 Vocal Jazz Album of the Year) provides much of the rhythm through layer upon layer of her own singing. A great deal of the time the listener is so captivated by the a cappella sound of the Haitian-Canadian's voice that it's easy to miss the fact that there are actual instruments backing her up as well.

As a reference point, think of the opening of Paul Simon's *Diamonds on the Souls of Her Shoes*, but with all of those sounds coming from one voice.

"It's my voice hundreds of times," confirms Fils-Aime on the line from her hairstylist's chair in Quebec. "Some of the backtracks will have three of each, so it can very quickly add up to 100 or 200 tracks of vocals per song. It's me having fun, giving every voice that comes to mind a space to exist."

Fils-Aime brings those incredible talents to a Bravo Niagara! Festival show this Saturday, Oct. 28 at the First-

Ontario Performing Arts Centre's Recital Hall.

She'll have a full band with her that evening — David Osei-Afrifa on keyboard, guitarist Etienne Miousse, Danny Trudeau on bass and drummer Salin Cheewapansri. Live, her bandmates replicate the sound and feel of *Our Roots Run Deep* with their vocals, and Fils-Aime occasionally uses a looping machine to add her own accompaniment.

"I love allowing my musicians to transform my melodic lines in their own way," she says. "We love to allow our live show to have its own personality, its own sound. Having five voices will never be the same as hundreds of me. But I think their energy and creativity just adds to the show."

The two-time Polaris Award nominee gives credit to sound engineer and producer Jacques Roy for the magic he worked on her fourth record.

"He's kind of a genius, and he's really well-organized," she says. "I leave him with hundreds of tracks, and he's able to make this clean mix and not overwhelm the listener with too many things happening at once. He places them in space and makes them relevant."

The songs on *Our Roots Run Deep* follow a loose nar-

rative that centres on the human condition and Fils-Aime's own personal growth.

"It's the start of a new journey, the feeling of resetting in a more contemporary and freeing form," she says, contrasting the new record with her first three, a trilogy that focused on her interpretation of the jazz, soul and blues musical forms. "Now that I've absorbed these notions, I'm so comfortable letting all that has fed me come out in new ways so I can grow with the project."

The multiple layers of Fils-Aime's catchy, wordless vocal lines on the album often feel like mantras, chants or prayers. They create a joyful sound, even on more sombre numbers such as *Hide From The Drama* and *To Walk Away*.

"We can be sad and happy at the same time," she explains. "We are a multitude of people, and we have multiple emotions. Those emotions can exist at the same time. There is joy in being able to connect with our sadness."

If some of what Fils-Aime says sounds like what you might hear from your therapist, that's not surprising.

Before releasing her first EP *The Red* in 2015, Fils-Aime provided psychological support for employees and also worked with autistic children up to six years old.

She felt herself experiencing burnout, and turned to music as a form of therapy.

"I fell in love with it," says the self-taught singer and songwriter. "I realized the love and good energies that I wanted to share, the helping people to feel better under their skin, I could do that through music. It felt right."

A bit of a renaissance woman, she also spent time before that in fashion design, photography and public relations. Fils-Aime studied philosophy in university and swears that her parents always thought her talents in the visual arts would lead to her being a successful painter.

"All of that built me into the person I am," she says. "They were giving me the message I wanted to share. Once I found a way to share it, through music, the message was already clear in my mind."

And that message, she



Dominique Fils-Aime will perform at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre Saturday. (Supplied)

says, is about empathy.

"If we want to create a better society where everyone has space to feel, and also has the mental bandwidth to hear each other out," says Fils-Aime, "we need to start by helping people feel better in their skin and have some

peace of mind. This is a lot of what I put into this album."

She promises to dazzle those lucky enough to feel her positive vibe on Saturday, Oct. 28 when she takes the stage at the PAC's Recital Hall. Tickets are available at [bravoniagara.org](http://bravoniagara.org).

## 100th anniversary of Catholic Women 'caring and sharing'

**Sabina Knight**  
Special to The Local

The St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Women's League celebrated its 100th anniversary last week, with Bishop Gerard Bergie celebrating Mass, guests enjoying a lunch and special presentations at the Church Hall.

Throughout the last 99 years, the Council has been visible and actively promoting our mission statement, which calls for members to grow in faith and to witness the love of God through ministry and service.

The first group of 36 members organized church suppers, quilt sales and other events and in their first three years raised enough

money to pay off a \$4,000 mortgage on the church, not a small amount in those days. The yearly membership fee was 25 cents. During the war years, the women became involved in the war effort, running the Knights of Columbus Hut, a recreation centre for soldiers in training on the Niagara-on-the-Lake Common. Diverse projects have been undertaken, which included involvement in church ministries and assistance to the poor, the youth, the elderly and the school and community.

The CWL has supported many foster children in impoverished countries and sent food and warm clothing to those in need.

The CWL parish league continues to support faith,

family and community and works to advance the cause of justice and charity that our first members helped foster 99 years ago.

As we researched the history of our CWL we discovered that many records (from 1937 to 1975) have been lost due to a flood in a storage area. We do have one small notebook which somehow survived, with some records from 1923 to 1937.

We are interested in finding more information about the work of the CWL in the 1940s and 1950s. Are there any pictures out there of the Knights of Columbus Hut during the war years? Any photos or stories from that period?

If so please contact me at 905-468-7763.



Ten past-presidents attended the 100th anniversary celebrations of the Catholic Women's League of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, including (front) Marion Frendo, Anna O'Brien, Lina Pillitteri, and (behind) Sabina Knight, Diane de Groot, Rita Van Noort, Betty Ann Asher, Maryann Larivee, Marion Battersby and Sally Harmer. (Janice White)

## YOUTH & FAMILY PROGRAMMING

The Town is excited to launch enhanced programming opportunities for youth and families!

To provide input about this programming, you can:

**Attend the Youth & Family Open House**  
October 30 | 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. | NOTL Community Centre

The Open House will include:

- Child-friendly activities
- Youth exercise and play equipment
- Face painting
- Light refreshments & snacks
- Opportunities to provide feedback

**Complete the survey before November 6**  
[www.jointheconversationnotl.org/youth-family-programming](http://www.jointheconversationnotl.org/youth-family-programming)

**LET'S PLAY, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE!**



# Daniel Brown died suddenly on a Simcoe potato farm

## He had transferred from a NOTL farm

**Jane Andres**  
The Local

There was a sense of anticipation as the emcee of the concert paced the stage, punctuating the air with his fists, arms swinging and legs kicking. The drums or keyboard would add an exclamation at the end of each sentence and the audience was ready to “raise a lively chorus” as they say in the Caribbean.

It was June 25, the last Caribbean Workers Outreach Project church service of the season, as well as their annual concert, where farmworkers could share their favourite gospel songs from home.

It was an enthusiastic and affirming audience. The men in the front row were laughing and applauding the musicians and were soon on their feet clapping and dancing along.

If anyone needed an evening of joy and the comforting sounds of home, it was those men, who were grieving the unexpected death of Kemar Campbell, a young coworker at P.G. Enns farm.

That included Daniel Brown, who had returned for his third year in Niagara, and was one of the front row enthusiasts at the concert on June 25. He would not survive the season to return, however, also dying suddenly, after moving to a Simcoe farm about three months after that concert.

Brown grew up close to the little town of Mavis Bank, perched high atop the Blue Mountains in Jamaica. It's the premier coffee growing region, with Jamaican Blue Mountain Coffee bringing close to \$100 a pound.

Due to pricing structures of the controlling coffee cartels, the coffee farmers themselves are paid less per box of unroasted fresh beans than it costs for them to produce it.

Ironically, many of the coffee farmers rely on employment with the farm work programs in the United States and Canada so they can afford the fertilizer and costs to keep the family farm going in the Blue Mountains.

As in most small towns in Jamaica, the social life in the Mavis Bank area revolves around local churches. With so many men away on overseas work programs, churches provide the necessary social and practical support, especially during hurricane season and other crises.

Daniel and his family were very active at the Pilgrim Church of God, a lively gospel hall church built on a rocky outcrop overlooking

the lush mountainside and the coastal city of Kingston far to the south.

Singing, playing keyboards and drums at church, and performing at youth conferences across the island allowed him to develop his gifts in a way that brought joy to many.

His motto was “Why worry when you can pray?”

Among his friends he was known as ‘Lucky’, but his coworkers at P.G. Enns farm and Van Berlo potato farms in Simcoe — where he transferred to finish his season in September — also described him as a man of strong faith who stuck to his convictions.

He was proud of his family and could not wait to meet his one-month old baby daughter when he returned home at the end of October.

But tragedy struck on the morning of Sunday, Oct. 8. Safeana, Brown's wife, phoned him but received no response, which was highly unusual. She quickly phoned his coworkers who checked on him and found him unresponsive in his bed.

It is impossible to imagine the impact of this tragedy on his wife, children and family.

Brown's close-knit siblings Dane, Dale, DeAndre and Jenive, and father Martell Brown are struggling with the painful new reality that he is not returning home.

His sister Jenive had this to share: “Daniel was a very God-fearing man. We all grew up in church and were taught to put God at the centre of everything we do. He was a family man, he loved wholeheartedly. He found humour in everything and tried to make the best out of every difficult situation. He was loved by all who came in contact with him, mainly because of his sense of humour and his down-to-earth personality. We were blessed to be born in a family of singers, and that was one of his best talents. He could sing away any trouble. The happiest I have ever seen him was the day his first daughter was born. She brought even more light and joy to his life and it pushed him to work even harder and to become an even better person.”

His four-year-old daughter, Skaila, who has been so anxiously awaiting her daddy's return, will never again feel his strong embrace. His one-month-old daughter, Akalia, will grow up never knowing how deeply her father loved her, even before he had a chance to hold her in his arms.

On Sunday night, Oct. 15, coworkers at Van Berlo farm gathered together for an outdoor service, where they had set up candles and photos outside the door of Daniel's bunkhouse.

The following night, they watched the livestream video of the community prayer meeting held at the Brown home, where for two and a half hours the tributes and stories poured in. It was a small source of comfort for his coworkers, who are struggling to cope emotionally after the death of another close friend and team member within the past few months.

There are many questions from the families regarding Daniel and Kemar's deaths that remain unanswered.

The Jamaican Ministry of Labour has provided little to no support for the families or the coworkers who have been traumatized by the experience. The Canadian government has never held an inquest into the death of a farmworker.

Despite these added challenges, families and friends are holding on to hope that this will change.

Listening to the stories of Daniel's influence and the joy he brought to so many was a moving experience that will continue to touch the lives of others.

May his life continue to inspire us to be lifted up by love.



Daniel Brown with Dr. Kay Morris and coworkers at a recent church service.



Daniel Brown with his wife Safeana and daughter Skaila, who will never feel his arms around her again. (Photos supplied)



# Pickleball players flock to new location

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

Niagara-on-the-Lake Pickleball Club president John Hindle stood by the stage at Central Community Centre, surveying the six brand new courts full of players both new and experienced, and the hundreds of others waiting for their turn to play.

“This is amazing,” he said of the turnout for Sunday’s open house. “This is the best pickleball location in the region. It’s exciting to see this big turnout.”

In terms of membership, currently at 449 members and growing as of Sunday afternoon, the NOTL club is the biggest in Niagara. With the new courts now open, Hindle expects that number to climb to 500 by the end of the year.

And with six courts at Central and another three at the NOTL Community Centre, the club now has enough space to accommodate everyone happily.

“This has been in the works for three years,” Hindle said of the move to Central. “Even before it opened. And it’s spectacular. The high ceilings are great for lobbing, there are no windows on the back wall so there’s no glare, and the lines are painted the perfect colour.”

Those lines were just laid down last Friday. The choice of blue paint on the floor was deliberate, as Hindle explained that the red and green chosen in other locations around the region can be difficult to see, especially for about 12 per cent of men.

Central’s Grant McArthur said about 50 members of the Central Community Church congregation returned after Sunday’s service to check out the action.

“I was just talking to someone who came to see what it was all about,” McArthur told The Local. “They ended up playing with somebody from the club, who in turn asked them what this building was all about, and they told them about the

church. So they made a connection both ways.”

Hindle also saw the benefits of the two communities coming together in one space.

“We have two audiences here today,” he said. “The club members are eager to check out the new location, and we have a big turnout from Central. They’re here to see what’s going on at their building. So many new members are trying the game out for the first time. It’s the perfect joining of two exemplary organizations.”

The state-of-the-art flooring is another bonus of the new courts at Central. The contrast between the concrete floor at Virgil’s Centennial Arena, where the club members played this past spring and summer, is clearly evident.

“You can really feel the difference,” said Dr. Francois Viviers, a club member. “This is so much easier on your knees. It’s very forgiving.”

Vika Goodale and Maria Mangiacasale were playing a game with Greg and Joanne

Marandin. The Marandins were first-timers from St. Davids.

“This is really close to home,” Greg said Sunday. “We were on a waitlist, so it’s great that they opened this place up. This is a great facility, and the game is a lot of fun. It’s easy on the old knees.”

Judy Falardeau of St. Catharines was invited by a friend who is a member of the club. She usually plays pickleball at various locations in the Garden City.

“I’m impressed with this facility,” she told The Local. “It’s really nice.”

At 21 years old, Zane Clausen, the Junior A Niagara Predators’ number one goalie, was one of the younger players checking out the new courts at Central.

“It’s a growing sport,” said Clausen. “It’s fun to be out here hanging out with all sorts of different people of all ages. When I’m not training I can swing over here, get a little sweat on and have some fun. Hopefully I can convince some of the guys to come over and play some pickleball

with me.”

Though the club has not yet decided if the NOTL Pickleball Classic, which was held this past spring at both arenas in Virgil, will return for 2024, Hindle said if it does, they will consider using the new venue for some of the games.

“We have other events that we’re planning,” added Hindle. “We have two of our pros who play in the professional league. This would be an ideal venue for another specialty session like the one we had to start last year’s tournament. We can put 300 fans up top to see the professional players.”

And Hindle is clearly pleased that the new nets and barriers the club purchased for the tournament can now be put to great use daily at the new courts.

From McArthur’s perspective, it’s gratifying to add another user group to the slate of activities taking place at Central Community Centre.

“We have basketball, volleyball, dance, and now pick-

leball,” McArthur said. “And we have functions here in the evenings, too. This is what this building is for. You can’t have empty buildings. We’re really focusing on making sure this place is used as much as possible.”

Meanwhile, the club holds onto hope they will soon have an outdoor facility to use. The two-year court-imposed ban on the open-air courts in Virgil lapses on June 20.

“We continue to talk to the town,” Hindle said. “We don’t know what the legal repercussions would be of us going back on there. The good news is they haven’t given the facility to anyone else yet. And we continue to wait to see what is happening with Parks Canada and the renovations to the Queenston Heights courts.”

The new courts at Central Community Centre are open 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Monday to Friday. Visit the club’s website at [sites.google.com/view/notlpickleball-ca/](https://sites.google.com/view/notlpickleball-ca/) for information on membership and court bookings.



All six courts were busy Sunday at the Central Community Centre while others mulled about watching the action and waiting to play. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Club members Dr. Francois Viviers and Enzo Mancuso check out the new courts.



Judy Falardeau of St. Catharines came out to see the new courts, and liked what she saw.



# New players spark Preds' scoring barrage

Mike Balsom  
The Local

Niagara Predators coach Kevin Taylor may just have found what he was looking for.

After losing their third straight game last week, Taylor told The Local he was still searching for "that guy who can put the team on his back and find a way to win." This week, the Preds signed East Aurora, New York, native Gehrig Lindberg. The defenceman tallied three goals and two assists Saturday night in Niagara's 11-8 win against the Tottenham Railers.

"We had our eye on this guy for a while," Taylor says. "He's phenomenal. He had to go down to a Federal Prospects Hockey League camp first. When he became available, Rob (owner and president Turnbull) brought him on."

Taylor says Lindberg, who was the captain of the Niagara Falls Canucks of the Greater Ontario Junior B Hockey League last year, made an immediate impact in practice last week.

"You could just tell there's something special there," says Taylor. "His presence on the ice just changed the entire practice. I think he is that guy we're looking for, and there's still more in the player, more pieces of his puzzle, that remain for us to see."

Lindberg only had one practice with the team before going on his scoring run in his debut Saturday night.

"This is a good opportunity to further my skills and to further my career," Lindberg says. "I'm happy to be here, happy to help the team. They're a great group of guys."

Lindberg was paired up on the blueline for most of

the game with Aidan Jones, but played a few shifts at forward as well.

"I played a few games last year in Niagara Falls at forward," he tells The Local. "I know all the roles and can help out where I'm needed."

Gehrig hopes this stint with the Predators will lead to an opportunity to catch on with a professional team either in Europe or in the East Coast Hockey League. He is also working toward becoming a pilot, flying out of Buffalo International and Akron, NY Airport.

Lindberg scored the Preds' first goal early in the first period Saturday at Newmarket's Ray Twinney Rec Centre. The Railers tied it up before the period ended, then a wild second period ensued. Ten goals were scored in that frame, six by Niagara, to take a 7-5 lead after 40 minutes.

The third period was almost as wild, with the Predators outscoring Tottenham 4-3 in the final 20 minutes.

"Our team defence was lacking," Taylor admits. "There were a lot of rebounds in our end, and our guys weren't taking the man in front of our net. Tottenham got a lot of rebound goals. We didn't help (goal-tender Mike) Mankowski as well as we should have."

Besides Lindberg's hat trick, eight other Predators found the back of the Railers' net. NOTL native Josh Frena, Rhys Jones, Isaac Locker, Dylan Denning, Luca Fernandez, Nick Savoie and Yakov Shevchenko all scored, as did Cameron Savoie in his first game back with the team since last season, when he notched 18 goals and 25 assists in only 25 games.

"It's great to have Cam back in the lineup," says Taylor of the 21-year-old from

St. Catharines who had been dealing with a shoulder injury since the end of the 2022-2023 season. "He adds a huge presence and brings leadership to the team."

Savoie, in his final year of Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League eligibility, has been serving as the team's equipment manager since week two of the young season.

"I think Cam has the ambition to coach," Taylor says. "He sees we have a young team and he wants to mentor some of the younger guys. He knows the game and he's learning about what it takes to coach, too. We're going to find a way to have him keep his role with the equipment and play at the same time."

The 3-4-0 Preds have a busy weekend coming up, with three games on slate. They host the Northumberland Stars Friday night, visit Tottenham again on Saturday, then have a rare Sunday afternoon home game against the currently 10-0-0 North York Renegades.

"It'll be nice to have our first three-game weekend," says Taylor. "We've been playing one game a week, and I think attention spans are pretty short these days. It'll be great to have back-to-back-to-back games. There won't be that memory lapse. I'm a firm believer that to do something right there has to be repetition."

Game time Friday at Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena is 7:30 p.m.



Preds' Cameron Savoie goes to the corner. (File photo)



Gehrig Lindberg comes to the Preds from the Niagara Falls Canucks. (Supplied)



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# Local

## HAPPENINGS

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St. Davids Lions Hall, 1462 York Rd.

### Harvest Breakfast

**October 29, 2023  
8 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

### Buffet Style

Side Bacon – Back Bacon – Sausage  
Home Fries – Pancakes – Tea Biscuits  
Sausage Gravy – Scrambled Eggs  
Fruit – Tea – Coffee – Juices

**All ages - \$12.00**  
Children Under 5 years – FREE

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**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31st**

**EVERYONE WELCOME**

**ST. DAVIDS FIREHALL**  
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**7:00 PM**

### Costume Judging

starts at **7:15 sharp!**

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## Remembrance Dinner

### November 4, 2023

**All Veterans  
(members & non-members)  
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**In the Edward Boldt Memorial Hall  
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# LocalSPORTS

## Glendale resident a ‘billet mom’ to two Predators goalies

Mike Balsom  
The Local

Being a long-time hockey mom herself, Glendale resident Shari Gidney knows how lonely it can feel for a young athlete to leave home to play the game in another city.

So when Gidney’s daughter, Stephanie Isherwood, left home to take a firefighter’s position in Northern Canada, Gidney decided to help out the Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League’s Niagara Predators by offering to billet goaltenders Zane Clausen and Georgii Kodzaev.

“I’ve done this before,” she tells The Local. “My son Nicholas (Gidney) played for the Thorold Blackhawks in 2017-2018 and we took in one of his teammates, Spencer Blackwell (from Erin, Ontario). It worked out really well, so I decided to give it a try again.”

She adds that Nicholas had a great billet family himself when he played for the Miramichi Timberwolves in New Brunswick in 2020-2021.

With Nicholas now studying and playing hockey at Portage College in Lac La Biche, Alberta, Gidney, who calls herself a natural caregiver, decided the time was right to help out once again.

Originally she planned to take in only North Dakota native Clausen, but after speaking to Predators’ owner and president Robert Turnbull, she realized she had the space to take in Kodzaev, who arrived from Russia, as well.

“It’s been good so far,” she says. “It’s pretty much like having your kids in the house. Because they are older (Clausen is 21, Kodzaev is 18), I’m not having to get them to the rink and back. Zane does that. And they help around the house, too. My kids didn’t always do that.”

Turnbull says billet families are expected to provide room and board, and WiFi of course, for Predators players. Each player is supposed to have his own private room unless there is a request to share a room, as he has seen in the past.



Predators goalies Zane Clausen (left) and Georgii Kodzaev relax with their Glendale ‘billet mom’ Shari Gidney. (Mike Balsom)

Only one other Predator, Russian forward Georgii Kholmovsky, is currently billeting. He is staying with Paula Aitken Puglisi.

“Billets are the backbone of our program,” says Turnbull. “We have numerous skilled players who want to come and play for our team. Sometimes we have to turn them down because we can’t find billets for them.”

In the past, the Predators and other teams in the league have opted to rent an apartment or home for a number of players to stay together unsupervised.

“That’s not ideal all the time,” he says. “A couple of times I did that and I had to have the place monitored regularly. It’s much better for them to live in a family home, where they become part of the family.”

In return for her efforts, the Predators pay Gidney \$600 a month per player to cover food costs. She and her family are also provided with passes to all Predators home games in both the regular season and the playoffs.

“I recommend you don’t take your players to Costco with you,” laughs Gidney. “I did that once and the bill was so high. I don’t cook for them

every single day, because they are older, but I always cook for them on game days.”

“They’re very different in what they like,” adds the director of sales and marketing at Crystal Head Vodka. She points first to Kodzaev and then to Clausen. “He’s a sugar-holic, and he drinks only water. They don’t eat as much as I expected, and neither one of them seems to gain a pound.”

Sitting in her living room the banter back and forth between the three is just what you would expect from a family dynamic. The one thing they can’t agree on is the temperature in the house; Gidney likes it cool, and the boys like it a bit warmer.

Gidney says both have been very helpful around the house. They have mowed her lawn, cleaned up the yard and taken out the garbage for her every week. The boys do their own laundry as well.

Clausen drove his Toyota SUV up from his North Dakota home, so he squired Kodzaev around, back and forth to the gym at the community centre and to the arenas in Vigil.

Kodzaev had a longer journey to get to Niagara, flying first from Russia to Dubai, then to Montreal and finally to Toronto. With his parents and older sister still back in his hometown of Vladikavkaz in the foothills of the Caucasus on the Terek River, he admits it helps to have a mother figure like Gidney helping him out.

“I know that if we all lived in a house together,” says Kodzaev of the alternative of sharing a house with his teammates, “the dishes would never be cleaned and the place would be a mess. I lived like that in Sochi when I was 16. I didn’t like that.”

“When he first got here I helped him out with a bunch of things,” Gidney says. “We needed to open a bank account

here, and he needed to get a new SIM card for his phone, and a couple of other important details.”

For Clausen, who billeted with fellow Predator Jaroslav Dohnal in Fort Erie when he came to play in Niagara late last season, Gidney’s Glendale location is much more convenient.

“I was so far away,” he says. “It took me so long to get to the arena. I really didn’t get to do much with the team outside of the practices and games last year.”

Though they are both goalies, they say they don’t talk much about their position when they are together. They’ve had some board game nights, and the team often heads to Bricks and Barley on Four Mile Creek Road following home games.

Gidney has shown the boys a little bit of Niagara, as well. She introduced them to Hydro Hill as a great place to run, and also took them to use the track facility at Canada Games Park in Thorold.

Over the holiday season in December, Clausen will drive back to North Dakota, while Kodzaev will stay in Niagara at Gidney’s home. She plans to include the young goalie in any family activities that take place over the season, and even offered to celebrate Orthodox Christmas with the Russian native, who says he does not recognize that celebration.

And of course there is no commitment for Gidney beyond the end of the league season, which usually wraps up in April.

As an empty-nester, Gidney insists she gets a benefit from the billet situation as much as the boys do.

“A bonus is that it’s so nice to get to know people,” she says. “These are two really great kids. I think I have a big heart, and I love to help out. I love to pay it forward.”

# LocalWORSHIP

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- Across:**

1 The Beehive State

5 PIN points?

9 Bring aboard

13 Beget

14 Entreaty

15 Nonchalantly unconcerned

16 Bewitches

18 American Idol winner --- Studdard

19 Block

20 Conjectures

22 --- Dalglish, P.D. James protagonist

24 Pole

25 Biological duplicate

28 Shun

31 "A very high price to pay for maturity" (Tom Stoppard)

34 Acquire through merit

35 Bank link

36 Strain

37 Tote

38 Speaking point?

39 Little devil

40 Pitcher's stat.

41 Requested in exchange for a kingdom (Shakespeare)

42 Locale of the Viminal Hill

43 Prohibition

44 Colombian cash

45 Artificial waterway
- 46 Matinee favorite

48 "Chop-chop!"

50 Magic

54 Pickle

58 Chemically inactive

59 Obsolete

61 Rocky debris at the base of a hill

62 Fail to mention

63 Bean capital of S America?

64 Decline to bid

65 Charts

66 Everyone, down South
- shoe surfeit

25 Tabloid target

26 Spanish saint martyred in boiling pitch

27 Arrangers

29 Synthetic meat can be created in this

30 The Pearl of the Black Sea

32 Third letter of the Greek alphabet

33 Eject

35 Gazed upon

38 The door in Dordogne, or in Texas

42 With celerity

45 Found behind the shin

47 Ventures

49 Lends

50 Small tuft

51 Machu Picchu builder

52 Chamber

53 Where the 3:10 went

55 Mother of Uranus

56 Web code

57 Small dabbling duck

60 Apex
- Down:**
- 1 Employs
- 2 Hue
- 3 Heavy ordnance, briefly
- 4 Author --- Hesse
- 5 Sleeping problem
- 6 Careful attention
- 7 Encounter
- 8 Obi, for example
- 9 Insulting remarks
- 10 Crookedly obtain Thai dwelling
- 11 Now it makes sense!
- 12 Pigs' digs?
- 15 Diversify
- 17 Trusted assistant
- 21 Homeland leaver
- 23 Imelda ---, who had a

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from Oct. 18, 2023

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

**Across:** 1 Utah, 5 A T Ms, 9 Ship, 13 Sire, 14 Plea, 15 Blase, 16 Entrances, 18 Ruben, 19 Stymlie, 20 Theories, 22 Adam, 24 Mast, 25 Clone, 28 Avoid, 31 Age, 34 Earn, 35 Bridge, 36 Tax, 37 Lug, 38 Lectern, 39 Imp, 40 E R A, 41 A horse, 42 Rome, 43 Ban, 44 Pesos, 45 Canal, 46 Idol, 48 A s a p, 50 Wizardry, 54 Plight, 58 Inert, 59 Out of date, 61 Score, 62 Omit, 63 Lima, 64 Pass, 65 Maps, 66 Y'all.

**Down:** 1 Uses, 2 Tint, 3 Art, 4 Hermann, 5 Aprnea, 6 T L C, 7 Meet, 8 Sash, 9 Slurs, 10 Habitation, 11 I see, 12 Pens, 15 Broaden, 17 Aide, 21 Emigre, 23 Marcos, 25 Celeb, 26 Laura, 27 Organizers, 29 Vitro, 30 Odessa, 32 Gamma, 33 Expel, 35 Beheld, 38 La Porte, 42 Rapidly, 45 Calif, 47 Dares, 49 Spots, 50 Wisp, 51 Inca, 52 Room, 53 Yuma, 55 Gaia, 56 H T M L, 57 Teal, 60 Tip.

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