



LETTER OF THE WEEK

What provincial housing target is NOTL so concerned about?

Dear editor:

There has been a lot of talk in various circles about the pressure on Niagara-on-the-Lake from the province to meet housing starts and increase density.

Consultants acting on behalf of various high-density developers have seemingly referred to their high-density developments as a tangible avenue to meet these targets.

It's a narrative that they are well-paid to advocate for. It is their job to do so.

The provincial government does track housing supply progress for each designated municipality.

Oddly, the Town of NOTL (a municipality) did not appear on Ontario's web page that tracks the municipalities that have been assigned housing targets.

Thinking that this was some administrative shortcoming, contact was made

with the market housing policy branch of the ministry of municipal affairs and housing. It generated these statistics.

The ministry was asked whether NOTL was in compliance with the housing start goals.

A ministry official responded that "The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has not been assigned a housing target," a stunning, gob-smacking statement.

There is no provincially mandated target for housing starts in NOTL.

So what is motivating town staff to recommend and town council to approve high-density developments helter skelter and to ignore the official plan?

In Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa's presentation to the Ontario government's Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy at the Holiday Inn in St. Catharines he stated that "NOTL

is on track to meet the growth and housing forecasts set by the region and province."

What provincial targets would he be referring to — because the ministry hasn't set any targets? As well, the region does not mandate housing targets to the town and set growth/housing targets.

As a result, it seems like all this talk, angst, pressure, urgency to build homes and the need for more housing and high-density developments in NOTL in order to meet the province's housing starts is a bunch of nonsense.

It really is perplexing why residents, town staff and councillors in NOTL are going through these costly, time-consuming, agonizing processes and deliberations when there doesn't appear to be a need for any of it.

Developers want to maximize profitability —

that's their business and modus operandi. The Town of NOTL needs to abide by its official plan and not continually gut it.

But then again, Lord Mayor Zalepa et al. can change the zoning for vacant pieces of land to make things work for high-density developments, can't they?

This is an issue that all residents of NOTL should be very concerned about, including how decisions are made. There are a lot of unhappy residents in NOTL.

Does council think that the aging retirees of NOTL will develop Alzheimer's or dementia during the time leading up to the next election, or maybe they think voter dementia already exists as a systemic condition of the residents of NOTL?

Maybe they don't care.

Gienek Ksiaskiewicz
St. Davids

What's not to like about trees?

Dear editor:

Reading Kip Voegel's letter, "Sometimes trees just need to be taken down," (The Lake Report, Feb. 1) was disheartening if not downright bewildering.

What an attitude. Trees sometimes do need to be cut when they are diseased or pose the threat of falling, endangering lives or causing problems with drainage, but the writer's misconception defies reason.

His disregard of the multiple benefits that trees provide shows a serious lack of understanding. Trees are our natural heritage. Why wouldn't we expect to see them along the Upper Canada Heritage Trail?

To quote from a recent publication of Stewards of Sustainability in Chautauqua: "Trees act as filters and are of critical importance in protecting us from the harmful effects of a wide range of pollutants and contaminants such as potassium, phosphorus and nitrogen."

"Trees protect our homes from floods by slowing down the flow of water and reduc-

ing erosion, which helps to hold on to land and soil."

"Trees help us breathe clean air by storing carbon and regulating the corrosive effects of extreme temperatures.

Trees block strong winds and in turn reduce our heating costs by as much as 25 per cent. Trees also offer shade to our houses and keep them cool in summer, thereby reducing hydro bills as well."

"Trees help hospital patients recover more quickly. Studies demonstrate that patients with a view of trees recover significantly more quickly and with fewer complications than those without a tree view."

"Trees help to create beautiful streetscapes."

"The sheer beauty of tree canopies and leafy greens stimulates our senses, reduces levels of stress and brings tranquility and more green spaces into our daily lives."

What's not to like about trees?

Mary Kilmer
Tree hugger
NOTL

Let's work together to support Royal George revitalization



Wayne Gates
MPP, Niagara Falls riding
Special to The Lake Report

On Feb. 13, I celebrated the 10th anniversary of my election to represent Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie as your Member of Provincial Parliament.

It has been the honour of a lifetime to represent this community for four terms — and one of the privileges of my time has been to be the provincial voice of a community as unique, historic and beautiful as Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Niagara-on-the-Lake has

so much to offer visitors and residents alike: dining in the "Culinary Capital of Canada," our wineries, breweries and cideries, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, historic attractions like Fort George, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club, the Apothecary and, of course, the Shaw Festival.

These unique elements of our community not only do so much to support our local economy and good jobs — they also form the basis of the unique character of this town and our people.

As your MPP, it is my role to work together with all stakeholders, from all levels of government, business owners, workers and residents alike, to ensure Niagara-on-the-Lake and all its features are supported in a culturally sensitive manner.

One example of how we have accomplished good things for our community

was the important win we got late last year on common-sense reforms for our wine industry.

The elimination of the basic 6.1 per cent tax on Ontario winery retail sales was a major win for winemakers, workers, and residents alike.

Niagara is the biggest wine-producing region in the country, and it contributes over \$1 billion to Canada's GDP.

The elimination of this basic tax will help Niagara's economy and create more jobs for residents.

I was proud to introduce legislation to eliminate this tax three times since 2018 — and by working together with winemakers, workers and industry experts, we got a major win that will support the tourism industry and job creation right here in Niagara.

Now, we have another opportunity to make smart

investments to support local industry and our cultural heritage.

We need to work together to ensure we protect the Shaw Festival's Royal George Theatre.

One of the Shaw's three main venues, the Royal George attracts more than 100,000 annual attendees, who bring over \$70 million annually in revenue to surrounding businesses.

However, it was built a century ago as a temporary building and its clay foundation has been dissolving for decades.

The Shaw has been mitigating this for years, but without a crucial investment from the provincial and federal governments, the Royal George will be forced to close at the end of 2024.

It's hard to overstate the importance of the Shaw and the Royal George to our community.

The Shaw Festival is the

second-largest theatre company in Canada and is one of the top 20 employers in the Niagara region, directly supporting over 2,500 jobs.

The Shaw is also the largest generator of economic impact of any arts and culture charity in Ontario, generating more than \$238 million in annual tourist spending.

The Shaw averages 800 to 900 performances a year, and 90 per cent of performance attendees cite the Shaw as their primary reason to visit.

They also attend many other activities during their multi-day stays, helping to support other crucial provincial industries, such as viticulture, restaurants and retail.

In fact, every \$1 spent at the Shaw generates about \$7 or more in additional spending in the local economy.

The Shaw has already made incredible fund-

raising efforts toward saving the Royal George — another example of the innovation and leadership shown by its executive director, Tim Jennings, and its senior leadership team, like how they kept 600 employees working full-time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But we need the provincial government to do its part to assist in revitalizing their Royal George.

And investing in the Royal George project will yield enormous benefits — including creating 850 new jobs in Niagara and an additional \$80 million in annual GDP.

Let's continue to work with all levels of government to make the right investment to protect the Royal George — supporting a key local industry in Niagara as well as an important element of our shared cultural heritage.



Free FEBRUARY For residents of the Niagara region
905-468-3912 | notlmuseum.ca | Hours: Daily from 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.

