

**HALLOWEEN
PHOTO
CONTEST**

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Harvest time

Behind the scenes bringing in the grapes



Partners in wine, high atop the harvester, Cassandra Weighaas-Barber, maintenance manager, and Amélie Boury, vice-president of winemaking and operations, at Chateau des Charmes. DON REYNOLDS

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

It was still dark when Amélie Boury crawled out of bed at 5:45 on a late September morning.

Boury is the vice-president for winemaking and operations at NOTL's

Chateau des Charmes Winery and she had big plans for that day.

Harvest season was in full swing and Boury had her crew set up to harvest 50 tons of premium Chardonnay grapes that day, starting at 7 a.m.

Skies were overcast and

rain had fallen overnight, more rain than the forecast had predicted.

"When I woke up and opened my curtains, I said, 'Oh my God!' because everything was so wet," she recalls.

"I had to tell the crew, 'OK guys, we are not start-

ing at 7 a.m. Come for a walk with me through the vineyard at 9 o'clock and we will see how things are."

Boury says it's important for the grapes to be dry when they are harvested, "because if they are wet, the

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Chautauqua residents want town to curb traffic

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

A group of Old Town residents concerned about traffic and overcrowding in their neighbourhood near Ryerson Park is asking the town to take some aggressive steps to control the problems.

Among the proposals outlined in an extensive nine-page report by the residents is making Shakespeare Avenue and Niagara Boulevard one-way from Lakeshore Road to the traffic triangle at Johnson Street.

That would reduce traffic and make it harder for visitors to get to the area, the residents say.

As well, the group



Ryerson Park does not have the facilities to serve the large numbers of visitors, say Brian Crow and John Scott. A residents group has proposed some solutions. KEVIN MACLEAN

proposes better signage, stepped-up enforcement, increased parking fines and only allowing parking on one side of Chautauqua's narrow streets.

Street parking would be restricted to Niagara-on-

the-Lake residents with a municipal parking sticker while Chautauqua residents would each get one guest parking permit.

John Scott and Brian Crow, spokespersons for the residents group, say they

are not anti-tourism, they simply feel the neighbourhood and the lakeside park can't handle the big influx of visitors to the small community.

"We want a positive solution that is good for everybody, one that can restore some balance," Scott said in an interview.

Residents just want to enjoy their neighbourhood and the park without being overrun. "This is about looking after the safety and well-being of this community," he said.

They note the roots of the problems are complex, including the surge in short-term rentals, the

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Region launches bi-weekly garbage pickup next week

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's new alternate-week garbage collection schedule starts Oct. 19.

The change, along with new collection contractor Miller Waste, means homes in NOTL will only be able to put two garbage bags out every two weeks. Recycling and green bin collection remains weekly.

Garbage will be picked up the week of Oct. 19 in NOTL, on the usual collection day, with the following week being the first week off. Leaf and yard waste collection remains the same.

Catherine Habermehl, director of waste management



FILE PHOTO

for the Region of Niagara, says the purpose of the schedule change is to divert more organic waste away from the landfill by encouraging Niagara residents to use more blue, grey and green bins.

Habermehl said half of

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Santa Claus parade cancelled in NOTL

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Santa Claus is not coming to town this year – Niagara-on-the-Lake's traditional Christmas parade has been cancelled.

Bob Cheriton, spokesperson for the parade committee, said it was a tough decision, but a necessary

one given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the number of people the parade usually attracts.

"The bottom line is it's off," Cheriton said in an interview Tuesday.

"It's an unfortunate kind of thing. But with a large gathering like that I think

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COVID Update

NRP officer tests positive, NOTL sees rise in cases

The Niagara Regional Police Service says a "frontline uniform member" has tested positive for COVID-19. It is the force's first case.

The department said it is working with public health to ensure proper contact tracing is being done while the member recov-

ers in self-isolation.

Niagara-on-the-Lake has seen an increase in COVID-19 cases, with Niagara Region statistics showing four active cases as of Wednesday. NOTL has had 47 cases in total. For about two weeks prior to the latest cases, NOTL had no COVID patients.



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Harvest time

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water will dilute the sugar level of the juice” – and that’s bad for the wine.

When she and her crew walked the vineyard at 9, the vines were still wet. “So I said, we’ll do it again in two hours. At 11 it still wasn’t dry enough, but finally, by noon, the grapes were dry, so we got started.”

Paul Bosc, whose father Paul Bosc Sr. founded the winery in 1978, explains that these particular grapes are growing on the Paul Bosc Estate Vineyard and they are used to make their most premium Chardonnay, so it’s especially important to have the right conditions to pick them.

Walking through the estate vineyard, Bosc, president and CEO, points at the vines with obvious pride, saying, “These vines were planted in 1983 and 1984. Who would have thought they’d still be here today, producing high-quality grapes?”

That makes the vines 36 years old. “I see great beauty in that. Most commercial vines only last 20 to 25 years,” he says.

The delayed start of harvesting on this day means “now we’re racing against the clock. We’ll pick until dark, or they’re done, or it rains.”

The mammoth bright orange harvester lumbers through the vineyards at a distance, leaving a slight cloud of dust in its wake and vines stripped of their fruit.

Bosc bristles at the old debate over machine versus hand-picking, saying, “It’s incredible how sophisticated these machines have become. There may be stylistic reasons to hand-pick, for example for sparkling, but there’s no quality issue.”

Bosc bought his Gregoire Harvester from Bordeaux, France, in 2003 at a cost of \$350,000, and he says it’s very efficient. “There’s very little MOG (material other than grapes). The stems are left on the vines and just the grapes come in, ready for pressing.”



Top: Amélie Boury squeezes juice from the grapes to check the sugar level. Left: Fresh from the vines, into the bins and on to the winery. Right: Father and son, Paul Bosc Jr. and Sr., with mascot Luna as the grapes come in. Bottom: An iconic sight among the vines in Niagara during harvest. PHOTOS BY DON REYNOLDS

The harvester straddles the row of vines and gently shakes them, so the ripe grapes fall onto a conveyor belt and are delivered up into the bins.

Timing is everything at harvest time, so “speed is of the essence” and the machines are dramatically faster than hand-picking.

Boury is high up in the cab with maintenance manager Cassandra Weighaas-Barber at the steering wheel. Their enthusiasm is palpable.

For Boury, this harvest has special significance, for two reasons. “This is my 10th harvest at Chateau des Charmes and it’s my first year as vineyard manager, as well as winemaker, so the first time to do it from beginning to end. It’s really rewarding to see them grow all year, then come to this point. Plus, it’s been such a great growing season.”

Boury is from France, where she earned two master’s degrees, including an

M.Sc. in viticulture and oenology from the prestigious University of Montpellier.

Though her smile is wide and authentic, harvest time is not for the timid. “How do I describe harvest time? It’s mixed. I always say exciting first, then stress. I feel happy, but I also feel stressed and tired.”

There are a lot of variables to juggle. “We’re always looking to balance sugar and acid. In recent days we had several

hot days, and everything jumped so quickly, we had to make fast-paced decisions.”

“Last week we went 24/7, to pick grapes in their optimal condition. When you get that perfect window, you gotta go!” she exclaims, adding, “Everyone knows it’s hard, but we gotta get it done! This team is great.”

When the harvester bins are full, the grapes are tipped into big plastic bins

and hauled to the winery.

Bosc Sr. himself is in the yard when the grapes arrive.

Bosc Jr. says, “They were harvesting grapes from his personal vineyard, that’s not something he’d miss! My dad is 85 now. This is his favourite time of year. He seems to draw fresh energy during harvest time.”

Boury is hands-on at every step of the process, from the vineyard to the winery yard. Once the grapes arrive, she checks the sugar level of the juice before they head inside to be pressed, the grape juice flowing down to the cellar to be cooled and settled.

Also on hand for that process is associate winemaker Chris Robinson, Boury’s husband. The two met in 2012 at the Icewine Festival on Queen Street and married in 2016. Robinson has been at Chateau des Charmes for a year now.

Boury laments, “We both have harvest birthdays, one in September and one in November, so we never celebrate on our actual birthdays.”

She and her crew worked until 10 o’clock that night, when they had to stop harvesting because of rain. Twenty rows of Chardonnay grapes stayed on the vines that night, waiting for the next window of good conditions so they could be picked.

There’s a moment each harvest season, “when the last bin goes in to the yard and there are no more grapes out there. In that moment, I am so happy,” she says.

That moment, still some weeks away, will come once the red Bordeaux grapes have been brought in.

The roller coaster ride of harvest season will then be over for another year, though the work will continue in the cellar. Wine will be fermented, aged and tasted.

It will be months or years before the wine from the 2020 harvest is bottled and ready, but Boury is confident it will prove to be an exceptionally fine vintage.

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