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Council approves Hummel plan for **four-storey hotel**

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Councillors passed a controversial bylaw Tuesday night to make way for the creation of an 81-

room hotel in Old Town. The new bylaw permits land around 228 Queen St. to be rezoned to allow the hotel development.

Couns. Wendy Cheropita, Nick Ruller, Adriana Vizzari, Erwin

Wiens and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa cast votes in favour of the plan.

Couns. Tim Balasiuk, Gary Burroughs and Sandra O'Connor voted against it.

Burroughs shared several issues he found with the

proposal, including the absence of a required buffer strip.

"A five-foot 11-inch fence is in the bylaw. There's a four-storey building going right next to the residential area with

no buffer. I have a problem with that," he said.

Burroughs also pointed to the bylaw's requirement for two accessible parking spaces for the 81-room hotel and said two spaces doesn't meet the town's requirement

for accessible parking on such a site.

The hotel, proposed by developer Rainer Hummel, has upset some residents of Old Town, including

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Queenston residents call for **lower** speed limits in the village

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The Queenston Residents Association is speaking up about its desire for safer roads in the community — for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers alike.

During Tuesday night's council meeting, Adrian Schoot Uiterkamp, the association's director, made a presentation at the podium asking council to decrease speed limits in Queenston.

"The critical issue in Queenston is the speed and a mix of traffic on the streets, with only three of the 10 streets having a sidewalk," Schoot Uiterkamp said.

He added that the small, quiet village of Queenston attracts vehicles, cyclists and hikers with its scenic routes and attractions, complicating safety measures.

Traffic and speeding are not new issues in Queenston either, Schoot Uiterkamp said.

Concerns from the Queenston Residents Association grew after resident Louise Leyland was killed by a cyclist last April.

"The (association) has expressed concern to the town and council for many years," Schoot Uiterkamp said.

A survey was put out to residents of Queenston last

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Lake Report's Dave Van de Laar named **Photographer of Year**

Accolade is one of 27 awards to paper for journalism excellence



Photographer Dave Van de Laar earned the title of Photographer of the Year with this shot of a robin feeding its babies, and other photos.



Kevin MacLean | The Lake Report

The Lake Report continued its dominance of the provincial community newspaper industry awards with the unveiling of the winners in the annual Ontario Community Newspapers Association awards last week.

Niagara-on-the-Lake's newspaper and news website NiagaraNow.com took a total of 27 awards, far and away more than any other Ontario publication, large or small.

The industry contest was for news, features, photography and advertising published between Oct. 1, 2022, and Sept. 30, 2023.

In all, the paper won the most first-place awards with nine — including Photographer of the Year for NOTL's Dave Van de Laar — along with nine second-place prizes and eight third-place awards.

The paper also received one honourable mention.

Richard Harley, the founder and editor-in-chief of The Lake Report, credited the hard work and dedication of the newspaper's news and advertising staff and numerous community contributors for the latest awards.

"As well, we owe a debt of gratitude to everyone in the community for being avid readers of our little paper and for allowing us the privilege of telling their stories," he noted.

"But without the dozens of small and large businesses that support us every week to advertise their goods and services, none of this would be possible," Harley said.

Van de Laar, a retired City of Niagara Falls infrastructure and asset technologist, has lived in NOTL all his life.

He took up photography 15

years ago and has been shooting for The Lake Report for about three years.

He was a runner-up for the Photographer of the Year award last year. He also took first place this year in one of the feature photography categories.

Since 2020, The Lake Report has now won 96 provincial and national awards, more than any other publication in the country.

For more on the awards, see Page 10 and our special pullout section saluting the stories, photos and people who won, on Pages 11 to 13.

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The Lake Report

wins

27

more awards

Honoured by the Ontario Community Newspapers Association for **journalism and advertising excellence**

As the recipient of nearly 100 provincial and national awards over the past four years, the staff of The Lake Report and its many community contributors are justifiably proud of the work they produce every week to keep Niagara-on-the-Lake readers informed.

This year, in the annual Ontario Community Newspapers Association awards, The Lake Report took home a total of 27 awards, the most of any publication of any size.

The paper placed first in nine categories, earned nine second-place awards, eight third-place finishes and one honourable mention.

In the general excellence category, among papers with a circulation of 6,500 to 12,499, The Lake Report

ranked second, behind the Haliburton Highlander and one spot ahead of the now-defunct NOTL Local newspaper.

Among the first-place honours received were Best Editorial Page or Section, featuring an editorial by editor-in-chief Richard Harley on NOTL finally implementing a municipal accommodation tax, a column by Brian Marshall about the town's built heritage and reader letters on everything from development to health care and cycling safety.

Reporter Evan Loree's front-page feature on the first day back to school was judged the best in the Education class.

Former reporter Somer Slobodian earned two major writing awards for her three-part series on the lack of

affordable rental accommodation in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Her work took top honours for Best Investigative News Story and also won the award for Best Feature or News Series (circulation over 10,000). It was published between March 23 and April 6, 2023.

The judges noted, "This series addressed a crucial issue in Niagara-on-the-Lake and across Canada — the inability of so many people to find housing. The series looked at the problem from the perspective of many people and let the community know that much more needs to be done."

"It was easy to read from start to finish and very compelling. This is

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Awards include **nine first-place wins**

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exactly the kind of reporting a small community needs. Excellent work!"

Slobodian, Loree and managing editor Kevin MacLean shared the top prize for Diversity Coverage, for a series of news and feature stories and an editorial published between June and August 2023.

The series looked at the repeated vandalism of the town's new rainbow crosswalk along with resident and political responses to the issue.

The 2022 Remembrance Day ceremony in NOTL was one of the wettest in memory as torrential rain drenched the event.

Slobodian, Loree and Harley teamed up to capture the day in dynamic and emotional photos to produce "NOTL Remembers" and earn the Best Photo Layout award.

The judge said it was "by far the best" of the 26 entries in that category.

Dave Van de Laar, who was named Ontario's Photographer of the Year, also took top prize for the Most Creative Grip and Grin Photo.

In the news industry, cheque presentations and

static events like political announcements are nicknamed "grip and grins," because they usually just depict people standing around shaking hands or smiling for the camera.

Our photographer used his knack for good timing at the finale of the World Shark Championships in NOTL last August to snap a shot of the winning crew celebrating.

The candid camera caught regatta chair Rod Gardner with world champion sailors Chris Clarke, Alex Letchford and Josh Wiwcharyk whooping it up with their trophies in hand.

The Lake Report's 20-page 2022 municipal election section "Off To The Races" won a pair of awards: first place for Special Section and third place in the prestigious Community Service category.

One of the judges called it "the most powerful, reader-friendly election section I've seen."

The paper's nine second-place awards went to:

The entire paper for General Excellence, featuring the March 9 and Aug. 10 editions.

Loree for Feature Writing (over 10,000 circulation), for



Reporting in the paper's March 23, 2023 issue won three awards. A series by Somer Slobodian on high rental costs won first place for Best Investigative News Story and Best Feature News Series. A breaking news story about a cash donation from a developer to a town councillor won second place in the Best News Story category.

a front-page story on young Greta Sobol's quest to find a cure for juvenile diabetes.

Julia Sacco in the Health & Wellness category, for her on-going "Code Grey" series on health care issues. Her winning story documented the need for another nurse practitioner and more home care in NOTL.

Slobodian for Best Rural

Story about a project that set up traps around the area to limit the spread of the spotted lanternfly, an invasive species that can wipe out entire vineyards.

Slobodian for Sport & Recreation Story, a feature profile on St. Davids boxer Mckenzie Wright and her quest to earn a spot on the Canadian Olympic team.

Wright is competing this week in Bangkok in her final shot at the opportunity to represent Canada at this summer's Paris Games.

MacLean and Harley for Best Headline Writing.

Sacco for Best Police or Court Story about the aftermath of the tragic death of Louise Leyland, who was struck and killed by a cyclist while walking in Queenston last spring.

Contributor Frank Hayes of St. Davids for Best Guest or Freelance Column for an opinion piece urging drivers and cyclists to show more respect one another.

Hayes also took second in the Best Feature Photo category for his dynamic photo of a blue heron "walking on water" as it prepares to take flight.

The Lake Report's eight third-place awards went to:

Harley for Best News Story (over 10,000 circulation) for breaking the story about the town asking the OPP to investigate developer Benny Marotta giving Coun. Gary Burroughs an envelope with \$10,000 in cash in it.

MacLean for Best Editorial (over 10,000 circulation), for "Important questions for NOTL's councillors," in the wake of the \$10,000 in cash

handed over by Marotta.

High school student Alperen Albayrak for Best Editorial Cartoon, about the controversial King Street condos possibly being used as short-term rentals.

Harley for the Best Use of Colour, for a full-page ad featuring a portrait of his newborn son, Levi.

The Lake Report team in the Community Service category for our 20-page municipal election special section, Off To The Races.

The Lake Report team in the Best Vertical Product category, for our 80-page glossy magazine, "NOTL: A Guide for Distinguished Explorers," summer 2023 edition. The summer 2024 edition will be out next month.

The Lake Report team and contributor Rene Bertsch for Best Online Experience, for a video documenting the production of our March 2023 celebration of International Women's Day.

The Lake Report team for Best Community Website (over 10,000 circulation), for niaganow.com.

Harley also earned an honourable mention in the Best Creative Ad category, for the announcement of the birth of Levi.

The Lake Report
Hyper-local news for Niagara-on-the-Lake
Vol. 6, Issue 10
Canada's most-decorated community newspaper
March 9, 2023

Non-profits want old hospital to be community hub
Evan Loree
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report
After the town decided in September to do nothing with the old Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital, a non-profit group has offered to assume the operating costs of the building so community groups can continue using it as a communal space. Members of the Niagara Creative Cultural Community Hub, a collaborative group of non-profit organizations, pitched council on Feb. 28 about the benefits of using the space as a shared facility for community groups. They also asked the town to renew the leases of the existing renters in the building. Council made no decision on the proposal but directed town staff to prepare a report on the operating costs of the old building. However, councillors did agree to explore a short-term solution to keep the building open.

Celebrating the women of NOTL
More than 100 women fill Queen Street for mass photo to mark International Women's Day
Jula Sacco
The Lake Report
Queen Street was closed Monday morning in the name of celebrating the women of Niagara-on-the-Lake. The Lake Report invited women from all walks of life and from all corners of town to a photoshoot in front of the clock tower courtyard in recognition of International Women's Day, which was Wednesday, March 8 this year. The gathering included a mass photo of more than 100 women who flocked to the historic town's Main Street on a cloudy, windless morning. As well, separate group pictures were taken of the women in the groups with which they are associated, including the agriculture, farming and wine industries, the arts, business, church, community organizations, sports, the town's leadership and the women of The Lake Report. Pulled together quickly over the past two weeks, the consensus among the women was that the celebration was a big success - and many participants said they hope it can become a yearly happening. Doing it annually wasn't the plan initially, said Lake Report managing editor Kevin MacLean. The mass photo was taken on Monday, March 6. *Continued on Page 2*

A 12-page special section, starting on Page 13, is the Lake Report's salute to the women of NOTL.

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The Lake Report received second-place honours in the prestigious General Excellence category.

Dave Van de Laar won Photographer of the Year for his work, including these photos. A candid shot of a service at the Wayside Chapel on the Niagara Parkway, a tight close-up tennis action shot, and a photo of a fire truck splashing through a flooded street after heavy rains left the town "in the lake" instead of "on" it.



Clockwise from top left: Managing Editor Kevin MacLean, Editor-In-Chief Richard Harley, Photographer Dave Van de Laar, Reporter Julia Sacco, Former reporter Somer Slobodian, Reporter Evan Loree, guest columnist Frank Hayes and regular Arch-i-text columnist Brian Marshall. Together they make up the winning team of 2022-23.

Ontario's award-winning team of 2022-23



That's a total of

96

awards since 2020

More than any other publication in Canada

A photo essay by Richard Harley, Evan Loree and Somer Slobodian on Remembrance Day won first place for Best Photo Layout. The paper was awarded Best Editorial Page or Section for its opinion section. A third-place award was given to Alperen Albayrak for Best Editorial Cartoon.

“We owe a debt of gratitude to everyone in the community for being avid readers of our little paper and for allowing us the privilege of telling their stories. Without the dozens of small and large businesses that support us every week to advertise their goods and services, none of this would be possible.”

RICHARD HARLEY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
THE LAKE REPORT
NIAGARANOW.COM

Somer Slobodian won Best Diversity Coverage for coverage of vandalism of the town's rainbow crosswalk. Dave Van de Laar won Most Creative Grip and Grin Photo for a shot of sailors celebrating a race victory. The paper's election issue won third-place for Best Community Service.