

Standing up for Canada

NOTL women vow 'elbows up'



A large crowd of Niagara-on-the-Lake women gathered at Simcoe Park on Monday morning as part of The Lake Report's annual tradition to celebrate International Women's Day. This year, women posed with elbows up and some handmade signs, sending a clear message that Canadian women are united. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Women send patriotic message

Read about some of the women who attended our mass photo in Simcoe Park this year, and how they celebrated International Women's Day. **Page 6**

'Resurrecting' Laura Secord

Caroline McCormick, a descendent of Laura Secord, plans to revitalize her name amid U.S. threats to Canadian sovereignty. **Page 6**

Town's new climate co-ordinator

Read about Kassie Burns, the town's new climate co-ordinator, and her short and long-term plans to protect and preserve our climate. **Page 7**

Shaw Festival sees \$768K surplus

Julia Sacco
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

In one year, the Shaw Festival has managed to turn a record loss into an unprecedented achievement for the theatre company.

During Friday's annual meeting, treasurer Greg Price announced the 2024 season's operating revenue, sitting at \$39 million — the Shaw's largest operating

revenue to date.

The season achieved an operating surplus of \$768,000.

The announcement, made to an audience of company members, patrons and donors, comes after the Shaw passed a tough fiscal year in 2023.

Just last year, the festival announced a loss of \$5.7 million.

Price credited the turnaround to not only ticket

sales but an all-time-high amount raised from private funding, at almost \$12 million.

"We also had expenses that were significantly contained," Price said.

"A pivot had to happen from an artistic perspective and I think management really pulled off this plan."

Targets of delivering an increase in traffic at lower

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Tariffs could destroy small business

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Dean Sanders has spent the past three years looking to take his business to the next level — but now, after securing a new building permit on March 6 for a 2,000-square-foot expansion of his sheet metal business, he's unsure if moving forward still makes sense.

Sanders fears U.S. tariffs could hit his business hard, especially considering three of his top five customers export south of the border.

"I don't know if I'm going to carry on — I don't know if I want to," he said. "Because if I'm working two days a week, what's the point?"

With demand from U.S.-bound clients expected to drop, Sanders anticipates less work and fewer hours

for staff.

On Feb. 1, U.S. President Donald Trump threatened 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian goods, initially set for Feb. 4. After a month-long delay, tariffs took effect March 4, which prompted Canada to impose retaliatory tariffs.

On Thursday, the U.S. announced it would pause tariffs on some Canadian

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Metal cutter fears impact of U.S. tariffs could cripple his thriving small business

Continued from Front Page

goods until April 2, but only goods “compliant” with the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement.

Sanders, self-employed for 38 years, opened Budget Sheetmetal Inc. in St. Catharines in 2009 after he moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2007.

Tariffs are now all his customers talk about and uncertainty looms for everyone — including Sanders.

In 2015, he expanded his facility by 3,000 square feet to a total of 8,000. He spent \$60,000 and three years working to secure this latest expansion to make his facility 10,000 square feet large.

Sanders said the circumstances are unfortunate, especially after overcoming high interest rates early on and then COVID-19. The business turned a corner and was thriving — until tariffs hit.

In 2023, 79 businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake exported to the U.S., which supported about 1,667 jobs, according to Niagara Re-



Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Dean Sanders of Budget Sheetmetal Inc. faces an uncertain future as tariffs threaten his business. PAIGE SEBURN

gion’s employment survey.

While exact numbers for the town aren’t available, regional trade data suggests about 72 per cent of those businesses’ exports went to the U.S.

With so much of their business depending on U.S. sales, these 79 companies are at high risk from tariffs.

With the U.S. considering an additional 25 per cent tariff on top of the 25 per cent on steel and aluminum, Sanders fears an even greater impact — but he said he’s unsure just how bad it could get.

All five employees at the shop will see reduced hours no matter what, he said.

“I can’t have them sweeping the floor, so if we’ve got no work they’re gonna have to go on shorter time,” Sanders said.

Despite this, he has no plans for layoffs.

“They’re skilled and I need them,” he said.

Sanders hopes a drop in U.S. exports will help the business pivot to Canadian customers and avoid tariffs, but Canada’s smaller market poses a challenge to profitability.

“The U.S. is 10 times bigger than us,” he said.

He said it’s frustrating to face potential closure after decades of hard work, because of elements out of his control.

“I wouldn’t be a very happy person,” if he had to close, he said.

But if he doesn’t have to close the doors, he’ll feel a sense of Canadian pride.

“You’ve got to stay positive,” he said. “But at the moment, there’s a lot of dark clouds in the sky.”

“We need a silver lining and there’s no silver lining at the moment.”

The impact goes beyond directly affected businesses, says Mishka Balsom, CEO of the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce. Higher costs and affordability challenges will ripple through the economy.

Manufacturers will feel it first, but any business tied to U.S. trade — whether importing or exporting — will face new costs and operational challenges, said Balsom.

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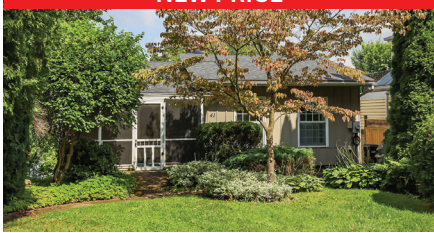
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