



Emergency group records kept secret

Documents are being kept from public, locked in CAO/mayor boardroom, restricted access for councillors

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's emergency team is keeping the official records of its meetings secret from the public and restricting councillors' access to the documents, The Lake Report

has learned.

The reports are being kept in the CAO and lord mayor's boardroom, with strict guidelines that they're not to be removed or copied. It's a practice that some councillors are not happy about.

A memo from interim

CAO Sheldon Randall to councillors on May 21, while the town was still in Phase 1 of the COVID-19 recovery, said:

"Minutes of the emergency control group meetings have been made available for your review. Due to the confidential nature of the minutes,

they will remain in a binder in the CAO and lord mayor's boardroom and must not be removed or photocopied."

"We encourage you to come in and read through the details of each meeting and the reasoning behind each decision being made."

Since a state of emergency

was declared March 23, Niagara-on-the-Lake council has delegated many of its decision-making powers to Randall and Lord Mayor Betty Disero, who are part of the emergency operations control group.

The group, which includes several senior town officials,

has special powers and has met frequently — daily at the height of the pandemic — to make quick decisions that normally might be made by council.

The documents being withheld are the official

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Playing a tune of love



Trudy Enns plays the recorder for her mother Betty Enns at Pleasant Manor. See story page 18. JESSICA MAXWELL

Special meeting set to debate mandatory masks in NOTL

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake town council will hold a special meeting Thursday to discuss making wearing masks mandatory.

The decision to hold the 2 p.m. special session was unanimously approved during Monday's committee of the whole meeting.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero, who put the motion forward, expressed her disappointment in regional council not making a decision on the mask issue after a 4.5-hour meeting last week ended with a deferral.

"I would have preferred,

in all honesty, to have the region deal with this last week," Disero said.

"I was quite disappointed when regional council chose not to deal with it on Wednesday. I would have actually preferred a yes or a no."

She said she's been hearing from residents and business operators who are concerned about people not wearing masks while visiting stores. Businesses, she said, want to know they have the support of local government before mandating masks be worn.

She said making masks

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Council gets heated up on masks, street closure

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake town councillors have been somewhat at each other's throats of late, with bickering, sarcastic remarks and heated debate marking their virtual meetings.

During Monday's committee of the whole meeting, several issues sparked contentious debate among councillors, with Lord Mayor Betty Disero stopping early in the meeting

to address what she called "double standards."

The first heated issue was about motions put on the table by Disero, one of which was a request to hold a special meeting to vote on mandatory masks in town.

The motions were not included in the agenda, but were brought forward under the general update on COVID-19.

Coun. Gary Burroughs didn't agree with the procedure and questioned why the motions weren't on the

agenda for the meeting.

"Since (the mayor) knew she was coming forward with some motions ... I'm wondering why we couldn't have received advance notice of these, and why it didn't go through the normal notices of motion or other business," Burroughs asked.

Disero fired back, saying, "I don't know, councillor Burroughs ... you've got four pieces of new business — I have not seen the motions you're going to make."

Burroughs interrupted to clarify that he did not intend to make any motions, while Disero argued she didn't see any problem with the procedure, and that it has been done before by other councillors.

"I thought the process was, and is, that we go through the other business approach and not through a line item called COVID-19, where none of us know what is happening anyway and

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Monday's committee of the whole meeting saw councillors getting upset, and a pause by the lord mayor to address "double standards" at council. SOURCED



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Town looks at **options** to manage carriage protests

Possibilities include lease of town property to carriage owners, de-escalation training for operators, councillors

Richard Harley
The Lake Report



The town is considering a formal lease of the space used to operate horse carriages to help protect carriage operators. FILE

Town council is looking at ways to ensure horse carriage protests don't get overheated this summer.

During Monday's committee of the whole meeting, Lord Mayor Betty Disero said the town wants to ensure protesters don't get too close to the horse carriages.

"I'm supportive of the horse and carriage," Disero said. "But my biggest concern is my fear of a heated summer with yelling back and forth could escalate. And I want to try to also find some protection, so that the protesters don't get so close to the horses that in fact one gets spooked and who knows what could happen at that point," she told councillors.

One idea is for the town to make a formal encroachment or lease for the space where the carriages operate, "just so that there is a buffer between the horses and the protesters of some degree," said Disero.

"It may or may not be enough. But that would give the carriage operators an exclusive use. So, it would at least allow them some security and protection."

Other options were de-escalation training for councillors and carriage operators, specific to public protest, and the possibility of delegating an area of town where protest is allowed.

Disero said since a formal

agreement between protesters and carriage operators ended because one party wouldn't sign it, the confrontations have escalated.

The result is "major yelling and screaming and destruction of businesses on the Queen Street area," Disero said.

Disero asked if Couns. Clare Cameron and Wendy Cheropita would represent her on the issue.

Both declined, saying they didn't know enough about it.

However Coun. Erwin Wiens offered help, given that he has background in policing.

Coun. Gary Burroughs, who said he got into a conflict with protesters on Sunday, suggested using

the town's noise bylaw to charge protesters for unruly behaviour.

He said the de-escalation option might have been helpful for him.

"I kind of wished number two had been before yesterday, when I had a bit of a confrontation with the protesters. I could have used some de-escalation education," Burroughs said.

"It would be nice if they could cut down the noise on it. And they came back very quickly saying that the Charter of Rights circumvents or overpowers any noise bylaw that we might have. And I assumed they seem to know what they're doing, so I got legal advice after that and apparently that's not true."

He encouraged staff to check what the rules are regarding the Charter of Rights.

He said he was a bit embarrassed about getting into an argument with the protesters.

"First of all, I'm supportive of the horse and carriage, a little upset that I got dragged into an argument, and went and apologized to the horse and carriage people afterward," he said.

Coun. Norm Arsenault said he has looked at the Charter of Rights regarding the issue.

"It is quite a strong charter, and rightfully so. But it is not an absolute right of protest," he said.

He encouraged the town to look at other cases, such

as the Town of Fort Erie vs. activist Fred Bracken, to see what can be done.

"The protesters have become considerably more aggressive," Arsenault said, suggesting that the town look into options for a designated spot for protest.

"I believe it is within the jurisdiction of the municipality, that we can actually assign a specific area where (protest) can be had peacefully. Having said that, I would like staff to look at the legalities of actually assigning a specific spot, not necessarily on Queen Street — it could be anywhere in Niagara-on-the-Lake — with a specific spot protesters can legally protest, without interfering with the livelihood, and the peace and tranquillity of the residents."

Arsenault also suggested the town get expert legal advice on what it can do.

Cheropita agreed that the town should seek legal advice, and spoke out against the protesters, saying something needs to be done.

"I think this weekend sort of proved and showed another level of protests," she said.

"I, like councillor Burroughs, was there on Queen Street at the time when the protesters were going by. And although I know they have the right to do this, this is no longer peaceful protest — the protesters are aggressive, they're vulgar, and they are loud. And there's seems to be no

end in sight."

She said her biggest concern is that visitors and residents are being scared away.

"And what I'm very afraid of is that they're going to affect people who are going to stop coming here, because they're afraid of these protesters, because that's the stuff that I heard, people walking away saying, 'I will never come here again because of these rude, ignorant people. They're scaring my children, I'm afraid of them' — and that's also happening with locals."

She said council needs to find a solution, "because this is no longer acceptable."

Interim CAO Sheldon Randall said the town has been working closely with police.

"And the police are committed, that if anybody behaves unlawful, or does anything that would constitute as a crime, they will arrest them. They promised that. Everything that they've observed, all the police reports that have been filed to date, they have not been able to lay a charge," he said.

"So I just want everyone to understand that the police are very active, very involved, and they have committed to us, the town, that if there's anything that's a chargeable offence, on either side, with the protesters or the operators, that they are committed to the charges," Randall said.

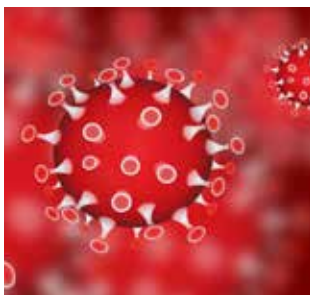
Town to look at **mandatory masks** after region defers decision

Continued from Front Page

mandatory would help businesses feel confident in having patrons wear one, while helping to ensure Niagara-on-the-Lake can move to Phase 3 of reopening with the rest of the province.

"This is probably one of the major ways we can assist businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake to move to Phase 3 — to make sure that we can control, as best as we can, the potential for spread."

Without a bylaw, it allows



PIXABAY PHOTO

people to potentially cause harm to others, Disero said.

"If this was something where people decided that they're not going to protect themselves, and the masks

are only being worn to protect themselves, maybe things would be different, maybe we would think differently," she said. "But if we don't put in a bylaw this allows people to affect others."

Disero said the mask bylaw should include various types of face coverings, including surgical masks, face shields, bandanas, scarves and even plexiglas for store workers.

"It would also mean that those cashiers that currently

have a plexiglass in front of them would also be able to use that as face covering, because their face is covered by this plexiglas."

Coun. Wendy Cheropita said she, too, was surprised the region didn't make a decision Wednesday and asked if there were any cases made at the region meeting as to why masks shouldn't be worn.

Disero pointed out there was a lot of back and forth during the regional meeting and recommended Chero-

pita read the reports sent to council.

Coun. Clare Cameron asked if there was already a draft bylaw for the masks. Disero said she hadn't instructed staff to make one yet, but that staff has been looking at what other municipalities have approved.

Cameron said she would be for participating in the special meeting if there were already a draft bylaw.

"I think it's very important for a draft bylaw to view, not only for council

but for the public to see in a timely manner before the meeting," Cameron said.

Disero had suggested the meeting be set for Wednesday, however Coun. Gary Burroughs questioned if that would be enough time for staff to draft the bylaw, while giving the public the legally required 24 hours notice for the meeting.

He suggested the meeting be scheduled for Thursday instead, to allow staff a bit more time to prepare the bylaw.



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Emergency group records being kept locked away in binder in boardroom

Continued from Front Page

records of those meetings.

The roles of various groups and individuals are detailed in the town's 78-page emergency response plan, dated January 2015.

Disero said she thinks the documents will be released when COVID-19 crisis is over.

"I suspect once the emergency is over, there'll be a full report and all the minutes will be put on it. For the moment they just stay confidential, but members of council can all come in. I saw Normand (Arsenault) there today looking through them. Clare (Cameron) was in the other day looking through them," she said.

"They'll be on a public agenda as soon as we can."

When asked why the documents are being kept confidential now, she didn't have an answer.

"On that particular question, you'd have to ask the head of the emergency group, which is (deputy fire chief) Jay Plato. He can explain to you what the process is."

Plato could not be reached before press time. However, NOTL fire chief Nick Ruller did respond to an email sent to Plato, Randall and Disero.

He said as far as he's aware, provincial, regional and municipal emergency group minutes are not being shared by any municipality.

"I am unaware of any jurisdiction that makes them public," Ruller said. "The reason is that discussions

often include detailed information about enforcement, specific businesses, personal information regarding individual staff (COVID testing, vulnerability, etc.), redeployment of staff, etc."

He pointed out that the decisions from those meetings are shared with council during COVID updates at regular committee of the whole and council meetings.

"In the interest of transparency, our (emergency group) recommended that the minutes be made available to council via the lord mayor/CAO office."

Regarding the email to councillors and why the documents could not be copied, Disero said she only remembers that town council was invited to look at them.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita is among those who isn't happy with the decision.

"I wasn't comfortable with the way it was handled," she said, adding some fellow councillors feel the same way.

"There's a number of us that do find that troubling. I think it doesn't feel right," she said.

She said it's also making it hard for elected councillors to access the documents during a pandemic.

"It's really important for me that the public have access to information and that council have access to all information, because you can't make proper decisions unless you can, and I just have not had the time or felt that comfortable about going into the office."

She said it's not the first time the town has asked

them to come in to the office to read a document.

"There was one other time when a similar situation was handled in the same way," she said. "And that was when we were recruiting for a supplier or vendor to do our strategic plan. And we had to go into the office and read through the binder ... because it could not be released electronically, we were told, because of the confidentiality of it. And maybe that one was correct. That one kind of felt like, 'OK, I can understand that because maybe the RFP process would not be part of the public record.' But this one should be."

She added, "That's when, you know, under times where a few people are able to have control — and there's many levels of government where that is the case, so this is not so much focusing on our municipality — it is really easy to have a little bit of abuse, when you have a lot of power. And so, I think even moreso the reason for visibility and transparency — for all of us."

Coun. Gary Burroughs said it was councillors who asked to be able to view the records.

He said he's not sure which councillor made the request, but that he would "assume it was Stuart McCormack," who resigned from council on Canada Day.

Burroughs said he hasn't had a chance to view the documents, but he intends to.

As far as transparency goes, he has his own issues with the emergency control group.

"Well, I have a problem with the emergency group not consulting with council anyway," Burroughs said.

Coun. Clare Cameron said she's read "almost all" of the meeting minutes. "They're extensive," she said.

She said she's not sure why they're not public.

"From the beginning, I have struggled to understand why they couldn't be public," she said.

"But I also understand that the region has treated their (emergency committee) minutes also as confidential, so if members of the public wanted to see them, it's the kind of thing where an FOI (freedom of information) request I suppose might be appropriate."

She said after reviewing the records herself, she thinks "there could be value in making them public."

Coun. Allan Bisback said he hasn't read the documents either, but isn't concerned about them being released to the public.

"I don't have a concern on the documents being released to the public," he said.

"I must admit, I've not seen the documents. I feel that decisions that have been made, we as councillors have been briefed on a regular basis on those decisions."

He said as far as confidentiality from the public, he assumes discussions may have included specific businesses.

"I don't have a position on whether this should be made public," he said, noting he's more concerned about the outcome of the meetings.

Disero has no issues with being in Phase 2

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The Niagara region will remain in Phase 2 of reopening, while most of Ontario enters Phase 3, Premier Doug Ford announced Monday.

Phase 3 reopening allows for "nearly all" businesses to resume, including amusement parks and water parks, buffet-style food services, dancing

at restaurants and bars, other than by performers hired by the establishment following specific requirements, overnight stays at camps for children, private karaoke rooms, prolonged or deliberate contact while playing sports, saunas, steam rooms, bath houses and oxygen bars, and table games at casinos and gaming establishments.

It also means limits on indoor gatherings will

increase from 10 to a maximum of 50 people, outdoor gathering limits will increase to a maximum of 100 people.


Gathering limits for both indoor and outdoor events are still subject to physical distancing requirements, meaning people must be two metres apart.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Betty Disero said she is "good to wait for (the province) on this."

"We just started Phase 2 a couple of weeks ago, everything is starting to open up, people are starting to go out more. Let's see how this is going," she said.


"The province will let us know when they feel we are ready," she added.

The province reminds people that it's still important to follow public health advice on social distancing and wearing masks when that isn't an option.



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Contributed by Patty Garriock

"There is so much in the world for all of us if only we have the eyes to see it, and the heart to love it, and the hand to gather it to ourselves." – Lucy Maud Montgomery.



Contributed by Norm Arsenault:

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Editorial: Region fails on face masks

Richard Harley
Editor

The Niagara regional council meeting regarding masks last Wednesday was long-winded — to say the least.

During the four-and-a-half hour affair, councillors continued to repeat themselves, showboat to constituents who had likely tuned out long before, and wasted time trying to change the views of other councillors who seemed to have already made their minds up.

Viewers understood from minute one that the issue was polarizing.

But unless councillors are

living under a rock, there was nothing said that was new, nothing that councillors hadn't already considered, and nothing gained from the back and forth.

And after all that back and forth, the decision was deferred. Now, we'll have to see if there's another four hours of debate next time.

It wouldn't be a surprise. It will be frustrating. It will be tedious. It will be pointless. And people wonder why regional government is seen as unnecessary.

The real issue isn't the time spent, it's that council didn't exhibit leadership and make a decision — a decision in the interests of

public safety.

Wearing a mask should be mandatory for now, because not everyone is responsible about protecting others, especially people who embrace conspiracies and false information about the virus, or somehow see masks as a political issue.

We can't leave the health and safety of all in the hands of individuals. And that's what the mask debate boils down to.

It's not infringing on your rights nor is it an onerous demand. Very few people have conditions that preclude them from wearing one. And the science, while evolving like many things in

this pandemic, is clear that masks are helpful.

We must wear seatbelts or risk a fine. We must not operate vehicles or machinery while intoxicated, or risk punishment. Masks are no different.

Regional councillors, your show was dysfunctional, superfluous and pointless. And worse, it showed a lack of understanding and care for public safety.

Thankfully for NOTLers, it appears that town councillors on Thursday will act to make masks mandatory in town. We look forward to their show of leadership.

editor@niagaranow.com



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The Lake Report

Congrats on alienating constituents, council

Dear editor:

I am sure our town councillors are pleased with their recent initiative regarding closing Queen Street to traffic. Rarely can a governing body alienate all of their constituents with one action.

Merchants will see a

decline in business in an already difficult time. Tourists are complaining about the additional walking involved and the exacerbated parking problem.

Most still use the sidewalks (very few on the street) and some simply turn around and leave town at

the sight of the barricades.

Old Town residents are now seeing their residential streets (Prideaux and Johnson) converted into main thoroughfares. Weekends now treat us to main street traffic jams.

Individuals can come up with bad ideas and elected

groups are there to provide sober second thoughts.

Clearly the latter was lacking in this instance.

"There is nothing wrong with being wrong. There is with staying wrong."

Tom Caldwell
Chairman

Caldwell Financial Ltd.

Former hospital should be high-standard senior home

Dear editor:

When Niagara-on-the-Lake finally looks at options for repurposing the former hospital site, I hope council considers some of the issues that have arisen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In particular, the failure of several seniors' residences and long-term-care facilities in Ontario to keep the people who live in them safe and healthy, and the negative impacts of isola-

tion on these individuals.

Would it be possible to convert the former hospital into a seniors' facility that provides a combination of assisted-living accommodation and long-term care rooms, with a town-mandated service level, and town-hired management, to ensure the safety and well-being of facility residents?

To my mind that would be a much better option than seeing Niagara-on-

the-Lake residents in need of long-term care being placed in a hub facility in Fort Erie or St. Catharines.

Rather than being isolated due to distance from friends and potentially families, and living in an unfamiliar community, making walking and other outdoor activities much more challenging, facility residents would remain in a community they know surrounded by people they know.

To my mind, this would be a much better option for the site than converting it into a parking lot for tourists.

There are lots of other ways to address the traffic and parking issues in town, in particular creating parking lots outside of the Old Town core and providing a shuttle service to Queen Street.

Terry Davis
NOTL



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OPINION

Overtourism or under welcome?

Ross Robinson
Special to The Lake Report



Sunset worshippers at Ryerson Park. FILE

“Can’t we all just love each other?” These words were yelled from the Blue Team bench while a rare fight raged on during a Wallbangers hockey game last year. Early on a Sunday morning. No referees in sight.

Seems like a long time ago, pre-COVID-19.

We must all work together to ensure the safest environment possible during the current global pandemic. Many of us (me included?) are apparently elderly, so all practical safety protocols must be followed.

For the past few months, I have been disheartened by the negative, somewhat mean mood around our wonderful town where the Niagara River meets Lake Ontario. So many red diagonal lines through red circles. No Entry, No This, No That. And now, in our lovely parks, No BBQ and No Tents. This is all getting a bit too intense for me.

What a heartwarming sight last weekend in

Ryerson Park, to see 13 members of a Toronto family, spending most of the day enjoying the beauty, the water, the quiet and the sun. The peace. Children, parents and grandparents. They had immigrated to Canada from Iraq, to seek a better life. Just like my ancestors, and perhaps yours.

They don’t have a cottage north of Toronto, so they planned a weekend trip to Niagara, highlighted by their day in our neighbourhood jewel. There were 13 of them, so they were discreetly breaking the rule of gatherings of a maximum in tens. (Yes, a bit awkward. Get it?)

I spoke to the parents, Mostafa and Aliya. They offered me some of their delicious barbecue chicken.

My heart was so full of happiness and they agreed to stay for what turned out to be a fabulous sunset. Their two youngest children had sheltered from the sun in a 6-by-6-foot tent, and slept soundly for several hours before departing for the big city. Plenty of naps in the tent during the day for these fine, hard-working new Canadians. How canajan, eh?

The kids with Nike swoosh running shoes and the ladies in brightly coloured hijabs. I love my country. Some of the men swimming.

A short distance away was a group of picnicking Sikhs in brightly coloured turbans and saris. Next to them about a dozen Canadians from Cameroon, with their barbecue cook-

ing a great picnic dinner. Two of their kids were wearing Toronto Raptors basketball singlets, both with the name Siakam on the back. Pascal, what a great player and personality. What a world champion. We The North and all that.

Then, about a dozen folks from Mississauga, originally from Iran. They were enjoying a very elaborate hookah pipe, a water pipe that seemed to give them peace and happiness.

Let’s all love each other. Surely there is a way. It distresses me to hear that a few of the most welcoming Canadians, down east in Newfoundland and Cape Breton, are marking cars that bear license plates from outside of their Maritime “bubble.” Please...

Let us all pause, and take a look in the mirror. Canada is one of the greatest countries in the world. We somehow get along with each other. There is lots of room for everyone. Be welcoming. Say hello.

As my mom often said, “Laughter has no foreign accent.”

Op-ed: Trying to understand political stupidity

Bill Garriock
Special to The Lake Report

The forever question remains, “Why do supposedly intelligent people do such stupid things?” Yet, as we have recently seen, even our leaders manage to defy all logic and wander into decisions which are inconsistent with what we would expect of them.

We can understand why some teenagers often make bad decisions and do and say stupid things. The frontal cortex of their brains really doesn’t develop until between the ages of 18 and 25, some sooner, some later.

This is the areas of the brain that influences good judgment and understanding. So, if the area is not yet developed, poor judgment results...and it is not fully the teenager’s fault that some make life-changing and sometime life-threatening misjudg-

ments. But when our leaders make bad judgments, we should worry – and it is their fault.

One would think if The Justin has been found off-side on more than one occasion... ethics commissioner’s decisions regarding a personal visit to good friend Aga Khan’s Island, and his interference in the SNC-Lavalin affair...plus the earlier blackface incidents... he would not vote to give the WE Charity \$900 million to administer a fund for the government when he knew his mother, brother and wife have all received substantial funds from the charity.

We have to ask, “What was he thinking?” He may be good at memorizing and delivering scripted lines or talking points, but where is his understanding and judgment or even the effort to connect the dots between values, ethical behaviour

and the facts for the decisions to be made?

And he is not alone. The Donald is a Class A COVID-19 denier. It appears that he continues to believe the virus is just another common cold or flu. Meanwhile, over 60,000 people a day are now being diagnosed with the virus in the USA, over 3.2 million have been inflicted and over 138,000 Americans have died. One of his disciples, the president of Brazil, followed his lead with similar results. And he has now tested positive for the virus.

There are also individuals who demonstrate such stupidity. It has been widely reported that a 30-year-old man in Texas died after attending a “COVID-19 Party” thinking the virus was a “hoax.” Guess where that word came from ... The Donald! No doubt the person qualifies for the famous

Darwin Award, given in memory to those who die because of a stupid act, thereby removing themselves from the human gene pool.

What drives this stupidity with people we expect to be intelligent?

With The Justin and The Donald, it may be influenced by believing they are privileged and all-knowing and are entitled because of their affluent upbringing. One would hope they would listen to some advice. But often the hangers on are overly agreeable to what their leader does, being hesitant to offer a more rational perspective.

Maybe they just don’t think. Or maybe it is because the frontal cortex of their brains has not fully developed and they have yet to grow up. Some people never do.

Bill Garriock lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake.



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Town needs to **act now** to make masks mandatory

Dear editor:

Lake Report reader Samuel Young's letter ("Evidence shows masks effective, so please, let's all start wearing them," July 3) is dead on regarding the urgency of wearing masks during this pandemic. But then we hear that Niagara regional councillors are split on enacting a mandatory mask bylaw for the Niagara Region? Indeed, this poses the question: What is the region's priority? And, with no mask bylaw yet in Niagara-on-the-Lake, what is the town's priority?

Canada, and Niagara-on the Lake in particular, is fortunate in COVID-19 numbers only because our politicians at all levels took the situation seriously and acted decisively, as well

as early. This is hardly the time for any level of government to relax; COVID-19 is still very much out there and now astounding medical experts with its high rate of transference.

The science cannot be disputed regarding the effectiveness of wearing masks. Medical experts agree masks greatly reduce the lethal potential of silent spreaders killing others. And, yes, those who are asymptomatic and are refusing to wear masks, aren't just spreading harmless cold bugs, they are killing a percentage of their victims. Or, rendering them serious, life-altering health issues.

So, with no mask bylaw in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and seeming reluctance at the regional level to enact

a mandatory mask bylaw, what factors are involved here?

Likely the councillors are listening to business interests wanting to discourage anything negatively affecting profits, including forcing locals and tourists to wear masks. Certainly reasonable in normal times, however, unreasonable and even unconscionable in pandemic times.

A mask doesn't prevent opening. A mask doesn't prevent operations. A mask doesn't prevent people from making a living at work. And a mask keeps customers and staff safe. Unfortunately, one person wearing a mask only protects other people. Hence, for everyone to be protected legislation is required.

Those with solid business acumen will understand the advantages of enhanced safety protocols now delivering long-term business operations, versus the pitfalls of relaxed vigilance for the sake of short-term gain.

Smart business people will understand that applying political pressure to local authorities to prevent a mask bylaw is not in their long-term interests. We can't pretend everything is normal (unless your name is Donald Trump) because everything is not normal.

Another concern that has been voiced is the capability of enforcing such a bylaw. I dare anyone to crunch the numbers on hiring more enforcement officers (who may even pay a portion of their own salaries through fines)

versus the ramifications of spending tens of thousands of dollars on seriously ill COVID-19 patients, the economic consequences of a renewed shutdown, and, most importantly, the inevitable loss of lives. Granted the costs may come out of different pots, however, the pain will be spread across all citizens and be felt at all levels of government.

Consider, we are all pandemic weary. And seeing the COVID-19 cases to the south is enough to send a Disney character scrambling to the medicine cabinet for the Prozac. However, the reasons for their chaos is not a secret. They opened businesses too early, their people won't wear masks or follow other safety protocols, and too many

ascribe to the "John Wayne" syndrome that only sissies take precautions.

Let's not follow suit. If we adopt a mandatory mask bylaw for locals and tourists alike at the municipal and regional level, we will eventually bring this virus under control and return to a semblance of normalcy.

Failing to enact the mask by-law is a clear signal that our politicians are even more pandemic weary than we are and are failing to make the safety of citizens a priority. As for business interests, if they feel they have paid a steep price (and they have), trying to circumvent a necessary safety protocol at this time simply does not make good business sense.

J. Richard Wright
NOTL

Disgusted, **again**, by actions of carriage protesters

Dear editor:

On Sunday, myself and a few other carriage supporters took to the streets to film.

For the most part, we kept to ourselves, just capturing anything we could of the "main street protesters," as was recommended by the Niagara Regional Police in the past (for everyone's protection).

While there, I was hit by both an umbrella and a sign ... that should tell you what kind of social distancing was taking place. There was also a rather obnoxious woman who kept coughing and, of course, none of these people were wearing masks.

Is there no longer a pandemic? Did I miss the memo? Last I checked, the town was so concerned about COVID-19, it was closing streets to help with social distancing.

I am writing to you in absolute disgust. The fact that these yahoos were allowed to parade around our town in the manner that they did Sunday, using noise transmitting devices and shouting, while both bylaw officers and the Niagara Regional Police sat idle, just enjoying the show, is absolutely despicable.

It has been three years



Carriage supporters. FILE PHOTO

now that the carriages have been putting up with this and the fact that this is still happening is absolutely ridiculous.

Has no one looked into these people? Does no one know what they're actually here for?

The carriages are nothing more than an easy target and Niagara-on-the-Lake is nothing more than a soapbox to stand on and spin stories to make people buy into their propaganda.

I bet no one knows these are the same people who have protested Queen Street retailer Elle Du Monde, the same people who attacked the Scottish Loft's Facebook page, the same people who threatened to protest Caroline Cellars because of its annual Lobsterfest,

the same people who were against Southbrook Winery for having sheep, the same people who protested Gryphon Ridge Highlands, the same people who told everyone to boycott our wineries, the same people who protested the Royal Canadian Legion for hosting a pig roast, the same people who projected images on our town's cenotaph.

Their ultimate goal is not to have carriages banned. The carriages are just a means to an end. These people want to take away any and all partnership between human and animal.

They want all domestication abolished – no more "pet ownership," no more service animals, no more police animals, no more horseback riding, no more

non-vegans. They're not your friends unless you're an "anti-speciesist" vegan.

First, they'll come for the carriages, then they'll come for the stores that sell fur and leather, then they'll come for the grocery stores and the restaurants selling meat and dairy (ice cream), then they'll come for the farmers, and so on.

In fact, if you look into "Direct Action Everywhere," some of these things are already being targeted around the world. We can't allow this to happen in our town. It's time to get loud.

This group cares nothing for the tourism or reputation of the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has spent decades building. Their disgusting behaviour this weekend shows their lack of respect for anybody or any business in this town.

It's time to tell these people that when you cross the line drawn in the sand, you're no longer just peacefully protesting, you're infringing on other people's rights.

Our businesses are already struggling enough due to COVID without having to put up with this. Enough is enough.

Jennifer Jones-Butski
NOTL

MP Baldinelli needs to **stand up** for seniors

Dear editor:

The following is an open letter to Niagara Falls riding MP Tony Baldinelli.

I draw your attention to a letter to the editor headlined, "Seniors get forgotten, again," which appeared in the June 9, 2020, edition of The Lake Report newspaper.

The country's seniors have now received their COVID-19 aid package, a full two months after the announcement date. NOTL, which is part of your constituency, has a senior population of approximately 60 per cent. The letter is crystal clear with respect to the total lack of support in Ottawa to hold the Trudeau government accountable for:

* The commitment that a second COVID-19 aid package may be forthcoming.

* The Liberals' re-election promise to increase Old Age Security and CPP Survivor's Pension payments.

Accordingly, on behalf of all seniors in your riding, I am urging you draft a written response, via The Lake Report, which is published here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, as to your personal position to the two aforementioned bullets, plus your commitment to raising these concerns in the House of Commons.

Thus far the silence has been deafening and only reinforces the factual image that seniors, as with the care home fiasco, are expendable and a necessary evil during re-election times only.

I respectfully look forward to a timely and positive response.

Sincerely,

Samuel Young
NOTL



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to editor@niagaranow.com



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STEFAN REGIER
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Frustration with **overtourism** is growing

Dear editor:

In the May 21, 2020, issue of your newspaper I penned a letter, "NOTL needs to act fast to curb 'overtourism'." The letter was intended to foster and rekindle a spirited cross-sectional dialogue among residents and businesses. Numerous unresolved and highly contentious issues needed to be addressed with a future detailed plan for resolution.

My letter appears to have succeeded on steroids. A community backlash is rearing in numerous forums. For example, the letter in your July 9 edition from Frank Sissini ("Now is time to redefine NOTL's tourism experience") was excellent, outlining his thoughtful and measured vision for the future of Queen Street, etc.

Furthermore we have a new group formed by Bruce Gitelman and its website votersbeforetourists.com to formally continue the battle to take back our town from overtourism. The backlash from within the community is evident from the residents' contrarian



Tourists stroll Queen Street. FILE

and diverging comments already flowing into his newsletter, which can be viewed online.

NOTL has already reached a tourism saturation point. It may well be welcomed by our merchants, but not so much by the resident taxpayers who have been held captive and forced to be housebound during the peak tourist season.

We have been overrun by street and sidewalk overcrowding, plus heavy traffic. We are losing our

residential streets, little by little, to parking meters. Hundreds of rental cyclists have become a pedestrian and driver's nightmare, with more accidents to happen. I was almost T-boned exiting Hwy. 55 into Anderson Lane. There is no stop sign on the cycle path, which is supposed to end at Anderson Lane. They just cycle through without looking. This includes red lights and no crossing warning signs.

The current tourism trend is not sustainable without a

professional study involving all of the stakeholders, detailing future changes with an implementation plan and dates certain for execution.

The undisputed impact of overtourism, as recorded in cities and towns worldwide, is far too scary and staggering to ignore. We in NOTL are not immune to the same dire destiny and attendant catastrophic consequences. We will be rolling the dice without action.

Evidence of frustration is flowing in and the ball is in our elected officials' court. Your constituents are fed up. Without urgent action our tourism industry and the town will regress to an earlier time.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero and council take note. There has already been a call in letters to the votersbeforetourists.com newsletter for a petition on the tourist issues.

This topic will not go away, it will fester and could well evolve into the number 1 issue in the next mayoral and council elections.

Samuel Young
NOTL



There were numerous complaints about the town's signage to close Queen Street. JESSICA MAXWELL

Town's **poor signage** affects businesses

Dear editor:

The following letter was sent to Lord Mayor Betty Disero and members of Niagara-on-the-Lake town council.

Thanks a lot council, my business has been severely impacted by your negative signage and street closure!

As store owners in Old Town, located behind Queen Street on Market Street, and in these hard times where we are trying to survive, we have found that this approach was not executed positively to help everyone.

Signage has been changed, now for the second time and it still gives a negative impression for our guests approaching by car. Especially where we are located, no one is aware that they can enter Market Street for the parking lot and our business.

The Market Street parking lot has been emptier than usual due to the misleading "no exit" sign on Regent Street.

We know this contributes to a loss of revenue for our town, and for our business.

We agree and appreciate that closing Queen Street can allow more foot traffic and new patios that customers can enjoy in

NOTL without the noise and hassle of cars. Unfortunately, the approach you have taken conveys the wrong message. Communication is everything for humans and we need to relay the right message.

We would suggest that clear and welcoming signs be in place, instead of just "ROAD CLOSED" or "NO EXIT."

We suggest signs could clearly say, "Welcome to NOTL, Queen Street is open for business, road is closed to vehicles, businesses are open for your shopping convenience."

Many other city downtowns have closed their main roads and have indicated the purpose much more clearly — even St. Paul Street in St. Catharines has clearer signs.

Furthermore, we understand the town has strict bylaws on store's using portable signage, but since we pay the same high rent as other Queen Street stores, we would like to be allowed to have several signs indicating where we are located and that we are open for business.

Thank you for your time on these matters,

Annie & Xavier Allard
Owners of Cheese Secrets
NOTL

Rudeness, COVID and who **really** is local?

Dear Lady at Ryerson Park with the cute dog:

I saw you walking toward me. In fact I couldn't help but notice your cute dog.

My daughter and my niece were with me. We had just enjoyed a wonderful evening watching the sunset at Ryerson Park.

I was raised to respect my elders. I always move out of an elder's path first when I take my morning walks. And my daughter and niece are polite and courteous, especially when it comes to seniors.

We were being mindful of the distance between us. So when you yelled: "Keep your distance" I was shocked as I was already moving away from you, and there was already six feet of distance between us.

I could see in your face that you were uneasy. There were a lot of people at the park enjoying the sunset, perhaps too many for your liking.

I definitely could hear

your uneasiness in your voice, coupled with disdain.

Of course, one could argue that these are all assumptions I made based on how I experienced you. But something did not feel right.

It was obvious you were not happy that I was walking toward you, to my car, which separated us, or else you would not have yelled out, "Keep your distance."

I would like you to know that your comment felt jarring. It felt awkward being called out that way, shaming in fact, especially when I was being mindful and not breaking the six-foot rule.

For all I know you could be carrying the virus — right? I'm just as apprehensive as you are. I have a weakened immune system so I make sure I stand far away. I never expect others to keep distance, the onus on protecting myself is my responsibility.

I chose to share this incident on social media because when we were in

the car heading home we all had an eerie, uneasy feeling — awkward, we kept questioning why you would yell over to us, when we were not even close to you.

Isn't feeling awkward a weird response to what you did? Were we being discriminated against? It sure felt that way.

I hope one day I see you again and express to you in person how hurtful your comment was.

It's not in my character to stay silent especially when I sense discrimination — even when I've been warned by many caring neighbours who have recently moved here that it's best to not express one's opinion if you're coming from Toronto.

I looked at you with empathy. You are a senior, we are all under a lot of stress lately.

So I bit my tongue and proceeded to get into my car, while mumbling under my breath (what just hap-

pened, along with a few other words I'll keep to myself).

For me your comment exemplified the undercurrent that is present here in our town — newcomers are generally not welcomed — it's been my experience.

I'm tired of hearing that even after 24 years one is still not considered a local. Who decides when one is a local? And why is that even a conversation?

By the way, I consider myself and my family to be local. We live here and pay our taxes like everyone else.

We are all human beings living in a beautiful place — one which I totally respect and care for — one we waited over 30 years to get to.

So to y'all who are uncomfortable with newcomers moving here I make no apologies.

We are here to stay.

Warmly,

Filomena Pisano
NOTL

Not a friendly time at committee of the whole

Continued from Front Page

we're not informed about it. So I've made my point and the lord mayor has made hers," Burroughs said.

Disero pointed out the town clerk said the process was fine.

"People pull information items all the time and bring forward motions that are brand new on the floor. I had some concerns about that but we were told by the clerk that this was all in order."

Burroughs had also asked if there was a draft bylaw ready for the mandatory face masks that council could read before voting, to which Disero said she didn't want to have staff spend the effort to contact lawyers and draft a bylaw if there was no intention from council to pass it.

Coun. Allan Bisback, who chaired the meeting, allowed the unusual procedure regarding the motions, after being told it was OK by the town clerk.

"I'm gonna cut it off because I specifically asked the clerk whether we're following procedure. He explained that it's not typical process. I then said I will allow it. And I'm allowing it because of the importance. We have discussed masks in the past, so let's continue with the discussion."

On the same mask motion, Coun. Wendy Cheropita asked if there was information given at the regional meeting about why people shouldn't wear masks.

Disero replied that a report on the regional meeting was sent to council and that Cheropita should read it.

"So, I'm going to ask you please read the reports that I sent you," Disero said.

Coun. Clare Cameron also questioned the whole process of calling a special meeting.

"Regarding the process for calling a special meeting of council, the procedure bylaw says that the lord mayor shall summon a special meeting whenever requested by a majority of the other members. Did this motion constitute that request in the clerk's view?"

Town clerk Peter Todd



Council wasn't smiling for much of the committee of the whole meeting Monday. SOURCED

said, if approved, the motion to set the meeting would count as a majority approval by council.

Cameron also pointed out that a draft bylaw should be available to the public at least 24 hours before the meeting.

Disero said there would be one, as that's what the "whole meeting is about."

"Yeah, that's a requirement according to our procedural bylaw," Disero said. "If you don't believe me, then say that."

"Yes, I'm fully aware that it's a requirement," Cameron said.

Disero said if council preferred the meeting not to happen or thought it would be challenging to pass a mask bylaw, that she would prefer to hear that said.

Bisback stepped in to say that by his understanding, councillors just wanted to make sure town staff had time to prepare the draft bylaw.

"And no one is going to not allow that to happen," Disero said. "I'm not sure what conspiracy, Mr. Chair, there is going on out there. I assure you there is none."

Burroughs suggested the special meeting be moved to Thursday to give staff more time to prepare the draft bylaw, to which Disero was agreeable.

Bisback said sarcasti-

cally, "Just before we call the vote, Mr. Clerk, can you remind me how many more meetings I have to chair?"

Another contentious debate was the test closure of Queen Street and further changes to the program.

For the next two weekends, the town will change its plan and allow traffic to go through Queen Street in both directions, Disero told councillors. Instead of the street closure, parking spots will be cordoned off to allow more room for social distancing.

Disero specified that she did not have any part in the decision, indicating she thinks councillors believe she's pushing for the street to open back up.

"I did not open my mouth. I had no input at all, for those of you who think I'm trying to push one way or another," she said.

The decision to alter the closure, she said, was the result of a discussion between interim chief administrator Sheldon Randall, NOTL Chamber of Commerce president Eduardo Lafforgue and the town's heritage representative, Tim Jennings.

However, Randall later said the decision was made by the Chamber of Commerce.

Disero clarified in an interview Tuesday that Lafforgue does not have

delegated authority and that the final decision was made by the emergency control group, of which Randall and Disero are key players.

The mayor came under fire once again from Burroughs, who questioned how long the closure was going to last, pointing out that the emergency group changed the decision for the closure length to end after July 19.

On Wednesday, the town announced the Queen Street pilot project would continue until at least July 26.

Before returning to COVID-19 updates, Disero spoke out.

"Before we do that, I have to rise on a point of personal privilege," she said.

"I'll be very calm and I think I'm allowed to do that. I just want to make one comment. At our last committee of the whole meeting last week, there was a motion made by a member of council (that) wasn't on the agenda. It was in between delegations that had to not only be introduced, but also we had to waive the procedural bylaw to bring something forward, which wasn't even allowed in the procedural bylaw, and actually it was adopted by committee of the whole, it's never been to council and the clerk has already put it into practice."

"And I didn't know it was

coming, no one knew it was coming, but I realized this was important to that member of council. So I kept my mouth shut and I voted along with council, but I didn't know it was coming in, if people knew was coming it was a surprise to me, so I'm just, I'm a little bit upset when I have to take flak from my colleagues ... that I'm bringing forward things that they haven't had an opportunity to read. And yet, this happened, seven days ago. So, I just think it's a double standard, and I think that it should be the same rule for everybody."

"I think you know what I'm referring to and that was the motion on voting and the voting order. So, I'm just not sure why the clerk would have said, 'Yeah that was totally in order' — it was never introduced under new business even. It was just sort of thrown out there in the middle of a delegation. So, I feel a little bit like there's a double standard here. And for what reason, I don't know, but I honestly treat everyone the same. And I wish they would give me the same treatment as they would other people. Not one person stood up, or questioned the fact that this member of council brought that motion forward. And that's all I'm going to say. I think it's unfair."

Bisback said he understands and respects Disero's comments.

"I just want to say for the record, I don't support double standards. I'm not subscribing to a double standard. Perhaps the chair should have been on point on that one," Bisback said.

In an interview Tuesday, Disero said the meeting was "a lively debate."

"I think people are passionate about what they would like to see happen in different areas. And I think their passion is showing through," she said.

"The reason why I stood on a point of personal privilege is because what I was doing is no different than other members of council do all the time. So that's why I said, 'Certainly you can't tell me (there's) a double standard that other members of council can do it, make motions on things, and I can't.'"

Councillors were divided on a number of other issues, including frustration from Burroughs, Cameron and Norm Arsenault about the emergency group's delegated authority, and heated discussion over how to handle procedure with regards to motions about the horse and carriage protests.

But for now, this lively tale ends here.



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Council changes gears on Queen closure

Street will be open to traffic, parking spaces will be fenced off to create social distancing space

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The town is taking a new approach to its Queen Street pilot project starting this weekend, leaving the street open to traffic, while widening walkways and creating extra seating space for people on Regent Street.

The changes will be in effect this weekend and next, the town announced Wednesday – one week longer than when the pilot project was launched earlier this month.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero told councillors on Monday during a committee of the whole meeting that she did not make the decision and asked interim chief administrator Sheldon Randall to explain the changes. Randall said to alleviate congestion on some side streets, the town will close off some parking spaces to give pedestrians more space for physical distancing while allowing traffic to flow along Queen.

“We’re trying to find a way that we can balance the interruption for the residents and still achieve the goal of physical distancing for the community,” Randall told councillors.

The town will also close off the north side of Regent Street near the Stagecoach restaurant and Greaves



Cyclists ride down a closed Queen Street. FILE

Jams, he said.

The town will install fencing to barricade the parking spaces, Randall said, leaving access open for driveways that cross the sidewalk.

The barricades will go up Friday night and be taken down Monday morning, Randall said.

He said a big concern is public safety.

“My biggest fear right now is that we can’t get enough safety fencing to do that,” he said. “Hopefully, this doesn’t happen that we have a car or somebody driving and, you know, they’re on their phone and they weave off into the walking area. We need to make sure that we’re doing

something to protect the pedestrians as well.”

He said the town also wants fencing “that’s going to look nice.”

Randall said the town and emergency group consultants agreed the closure has so far accomplished its goal as far as physical distancing goes, but that the program is being refined to help with traffic congestion on residential streets.

“Basically, we agreed that closing down Queen Street did achieve the goal of creating more space for physical distancing, I think we hit a homerun on it,” he said.

“But the discussion we had was, are there other things that we should be

looking at trying that will still achieve that space to physical distance, but yet move traffic in a different way.”

A residents group formed last week and has been taking surveys of the road. A survey sent to The Lake Report by Ian Gibson said 203 cars were observed going past his Simcoe Street home on Sunday, in just 30 minutes.

Coun. Gary Burroughs asked Randall how long the tests would continue.

“I guess I wasn’t clear on how many weeks you were going to continue this program. I think it needs to come to an end. And I think we need to start making some decisions, not keep trying to tweak, week after week, as the businesses continue to suffer,” he said.

Originally, the town announced publicly that the closure would only last until July 19, Burroughs pointed out.

Randall didn’t say how long the testing would continue, but that if council didn’t want to continue with the closures, that councillors should say so.

“If council doesn’t want us to do that, you need to speak up now I think. So when we don’t do something else that’s going to upset this council,” he said.

He said staff still needs to collect more data.

“I think council needs to just wait and get our feedback over the next few weeks. And we need to continue to collect data, and then council can make a decision on how long or if they want to continue to test options,” he said.

So far “It seems from the businesses in the downtown core it’s more positive than negative. And for the residents in the surrounding area it’s more negative than positive,” he said.

“I’m hoping what we’re going to do over the next few weekends, is we’re going to find a compromise between the residents and the businesses that works. Where we’re able to achieve the goal of physical distancing, we’re not going to impact the residents largely, and we’re still going to keep the free flow of traffic up and down Queen Street.”

Randall added the new plan will mean significant savings for the town, as town staff won’t have to set things up on overtime.

Burroughs asked if there has been enough data to show whether the street should be closed or not.

Randall said the current surveys aren’t giving the town the information that it needs as far as who is filling out the surveys.

“The paper surveys, unfortunately, did not give us the data that we need. We

don’t know the orientation, or where they’re coming from, we don’t know if it was a business. We don’t know if it was a tourist or if it was a resident, so we want to be clear.”

The town has collected about 270 surveys so far, he said, adding that town staff will be out on the street to ask visitors to complete surveys.

Coun. John Wiens asked if the closure change, since it would be all weekend and not from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., would affect residents on Queen Street.

Randall said parking lots behind buildings and driveways that cross the sidewalks would be open.

He said that’s part of why he’s optimistic about the new plan, because it allows for “business as usual” for shops and residents.

“I look forward to the many comments we’re going to receive on Monday or Tuesday.”

Burroughs reiterated that he thinks the test closure needs to end, as it’s impacting businesses on the street.

Disero said if councillors want to see the program ended, they should make that motion at the July 20 meeting of council.

“Thank you, lord mayor, and I am aware and I will be in touch with the clerk. Thanks.” Burroughs replied.

Town retroactively validates emergency group decisions

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake town councillors, minus three, declared their support for decisions made so far by the town’s emergency group during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero asked council to consider ratifying the emergency group’s decisions during Monday’s committee of the whole meeting.

In other words, she asked members of council to retroactively give support and approval to decisions made without votes from councillors.

Council passed the motion, though it was not unanimous as Couns. Clare Cameron, Wendy Cheropita and Gary Burroughs voted against it.

“I don’t myself agree with every decision and action that’s been taken. I don’t feel that I’ve been adequately informed. And so I will not be supporting this,” Cameron told councillors.

Coun. Erwin Wiens said his experience has been the exact opposite. “I’ve been quite regularly informed and brought up to speed,” Wiens said.



Town hall. FILE

“With every decision that has been made I’ve been able to contact the people that are the directors that are in charge of that. And I received excellent information. I thought that the information that was coming, although fast, furious and sometimes overwhelming, was fulsome and complete. So I’ve had the exact opposite. And I will support it.”

Disero said she sent out a document outlining discussions of emergency group meetings for councillors to review.

Cheropita said she had not read the information and therefore couldn’t make a proper decision.

Coun. Norm Arsenault, who supported the ap-

proval of emergency group decisions, said he has no problems with the decisions made, but has concerns about continuing the delegated authority to the emergency control group, including the mayor and chief administrator.

“The issues that I have with the delegation of authority. It’s is now going on four months and I have some concern about continuing having two individuals make decisions on behalf of the town.”



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Real estate sales **booming** again

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

After one of the toughest springs in recent memory, the Niagara-on-the-Lake real estate market caught fire in June, as the number of sales and new listings all shot up.

After a lacklustre performance in April when only eight properties sold in NOTL amid the pandemic, the market showed signs of a rebound in May with 25 sales.

Then came June, with 45 sales, 107 new property listings and a home price index showing the average price in NOTL was \$800,200, according to statistics compiled by the Niagara Association of Realtors.

While the COVID-19 pandemic ground the market to a near-standstill this spring, some of the lessons learned from the lockdown are fuelling the resurgence, realtors say. Many buyers are looking to move to smaller centres and many are content to work from home a lot more.

"Sales activity during the month of June and these first two weeks of July has cer-



For sale sign on Shakespeare Avenue. JESSICA MAXWELL

tainly made up for time and sales lost during the COVID-19 spring closure," said Sally Miller, a realtor with the Miller Group and Royal LePage NRC Realty in NOTL.

"There is an absolute desire to get the heck out of big city centres and to move to a less dense area, preferably with a property that affords a large lot for vegetable gardens and a home that can accommodate office space," she said.

"Many executives have been given the green light from their corporations to transition for future and perhaps permanent telecommuting from their homes," Miller said. "Many inns and large estate prop-

erties throughout Niagara are seeing serious demand because of this new trend."

Nancy Bailey, a broker with Engel & Voelkers, sees similar trends. "I have sold several homes in the past three weeks in less than a few days. People are looking at relocating to NOTL because 'space is the new luxury' and we have beautiful homes in NOTL that offer space, pools and a short walk to Lake Ontario."

"My association with the Engel & Voelkers Oakville office while selling only Niagara has been amazing. It is one of our largest feeder markets to NOTL. Companies now see that their employees are more productive by working at

home and not experiencing the traffic of commuting, so this opens up a whole new world for buyers."

As well, there has been a huge upswing in the luxury market in NOTL with strong demand for properties over \$1 million, said Michelle Reynolds, of Reynolds Regier Homes and a broker with Royal LePage NRC.

"In the last 60 days, we had 27 homes that sold over the \$1 million mark, with the average detached home sale being around \$1.2 million. We are noticing that lifestyle and the change in what was the traditional office working environment have been the biggest drivers of this luxury market," she told The Lake Report.

"With technology advancements, people are working more from home and no longer need to be in the city full-time, therefore for the first time people are looking to establish themselves in places they have dreamed of perhaps retiring to in the future," she said.

"Niagara-On-The-Lake has never been so vibrant with families and active retirement."

Restaurants **denied** flower bed patios

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

While some Niagara-on-the-Lake businesses have opened patios on the street, owners that don't have access to parking spaces in front of their buildings are wondering if they can make patios on flower beds.

During Monday's committee of the whole meeting, Coun. Clare Cameron asked if the beds could be used to construct patios.

"If a business does not have parking spots available in front of their location, but there are flower beds at their location, is there any opportunity to construct a patio overtop of beds, if the beds will be completely replaced exactly as they are today?" she asked.

The town does not support that, said interim CAO Sheldon Randall.

"We did meet with one or two business owners that didn't have the ability to go onto the road. It was too close to the intersection. But the request was to remove the flower beds, the

walls for the flowers, and take it right down to the earth. We did not support that. I think that was over and above what we're trying to do," Randall said.

"Our staff would have a lot of concerns about the flower beds being removed. And also, it starts to get into removing sprinkler systems, and it could be a challenge for utilities in those areas, so unfortunately at this point, we weren't able to support that request."

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said any business that would like to do something like that should apply for the patio program and email her, so she can make sure it's discussed at council.

Randall said the town would look at options if council so desires.

"If this is something council would like us to look into further, allowing those types of flower bed removals, we're more than happy if that's the direction this council would like to give staff, we will move forward with that direction."

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I'm precious. Furthermore, I'm half Fear and two thirds ironic. What am I?

Answer: Iron

Answered first by: Kieran Jones

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Dante Bell, Howard Jones, Gary Davis, Katie Reimer, Pam Dowling, Heather Lowen, Britney Turasz, Courtney Gamble, Margie Enns, Wade Durling

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A faint cry for help and rescue from Lake Ontario

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Above the sound of the wind and crashing waves of Lake Ontario, somehow Joe Interisano heard a faint cry for help.

As two couples were standing near the seventh tee at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club on Friday afternoon, alongside the choppy lake, only Interisano heard the yells from three stranded canoeists a few hundred metres offshore.

The trio were in the water, their red canoe flipped over.

The golfers, Interisano, his wife Victoria, and their neighbours Jeff Brookhouser and his wife Lucy, at first only saw two people in the water. They had lifejackets on and were staying with the overturned watercraft. Later the golfers spotted a third person.

There were some sailboats and other craft nearby and everything seemed under control. "They were in the water but staying with the boat, so it looked like they were going to be OK."

But, a few minutes later, as the foursome



Jeff and Lucy Brookhouser, left, and Joe and Victoria Interisano helped emergency responders on Friday come to the aid of stranded canoeists in Lake Ontario near the NOTL Golf Club. KEVIN MACLEAN

moved along to the seventh green, beside Fort Mississauga, the situation changed.

The canoeists had left their overturned craft and one of them was moving safely toward the shore – but "the other two were trying to swim upstream, against the current, toward the Niagara River."

One of them was thrashing a bit and, despite wearing a lifejacket, seemed

to be a non-swimmer, Interisano said. They were too far from shore to see clearly with the naked eye, but Brookhouser was able to use a golf rangefinder to zoom in a bit.

"We didn't know how cold the water is and if they're going to get hypothermia," Interisano said. Having grown up in Port Colborne where he swam in Lake Erie, he knew things could go bad quickly and

that it's really tough to swim against the current.

At the seventh green, Interisano and his wife clambered down the steep embankment, across the gravel lakeside roadway and onto the boulders of the breakwater.

"We were yelling and trying to get the attention of the boats," but with the wind, rough water and distance, no one seemed to hear them. "You're helpless on the shore. We're trying to scream and trying to get other boaters' attention."

Meantime, up near the green, Brookhouser was trying to use his cellphone to call 911, to no avail.

That area can be an intermittent dead zone for cellular service, but after a few minutes of moving around near the green, trying for reception, Brookhouser was able to get through to associate golf pro Ricky Watson in the pro shop.

The group's phones never did connect to 911, Interisano said, which he worries could be a concern in future emergencies.

Watson alerted the Canadian Coast Guard and someone else had already called

911. When Watson arrived on the scene, "I climbed down on the rocks to give them a visual and encourage them to keep swimming. Myself and the members, plus another group, all tried waving down the coast guard and fire boats."

Amid all this, another problem reared its head: NOTL fire chief Nick Ruller said his crew and water rescue specialists from the St. Catharines Fire Department went to King and De-later streets after the 911 caller said the emergency was between Fort Niagara (which is on the U.S. side of the river) and Fort George. Actually, the incident was about 1.5 kilometres to the west, near Fort Mississauga.

The misdirection only delayed the NOTL crew by a few minutes and the St. Catharines rescuers had intended to launch their two rescue boats from near the NOTL Sailing Club anyway, Ruller said in an interview.

Acting quickly, the fire dispatchers were able to reconnect with the 911 caller and using GPS coordinates they were able to pinpoint the location more accurately, he said.

"Canadian and U.S. Coast Guard boats were also in the water, and Niagara EMS and police had resources assisting from land," Ruller told The Lake Report.

Once safely ashore, the three canoeists were assessed by Niagara EMS and fire crews cleared the scene about 45 minutes after it all began, he said.

The incident is "a timely reminder of the importance of wearing a properly-fitted (lifejacket), knowing your vessel and its limitations and ensuring you are aware of the weather and water conditions prior to heading out on the water," he said.

"Both St. Catharines and NOTL firefighters did a fantastic job given the circumstances," Ruller added.

"For the past several years Niagara-on-the-Lake has utilized an automatic aid agreement with St. Catharines to deliver ice and water rescue services in Niagara-on-the-Lake, in order to increase the level of service. Friday's incident demonstrates the value of these types of agreements for our residents and visitors."

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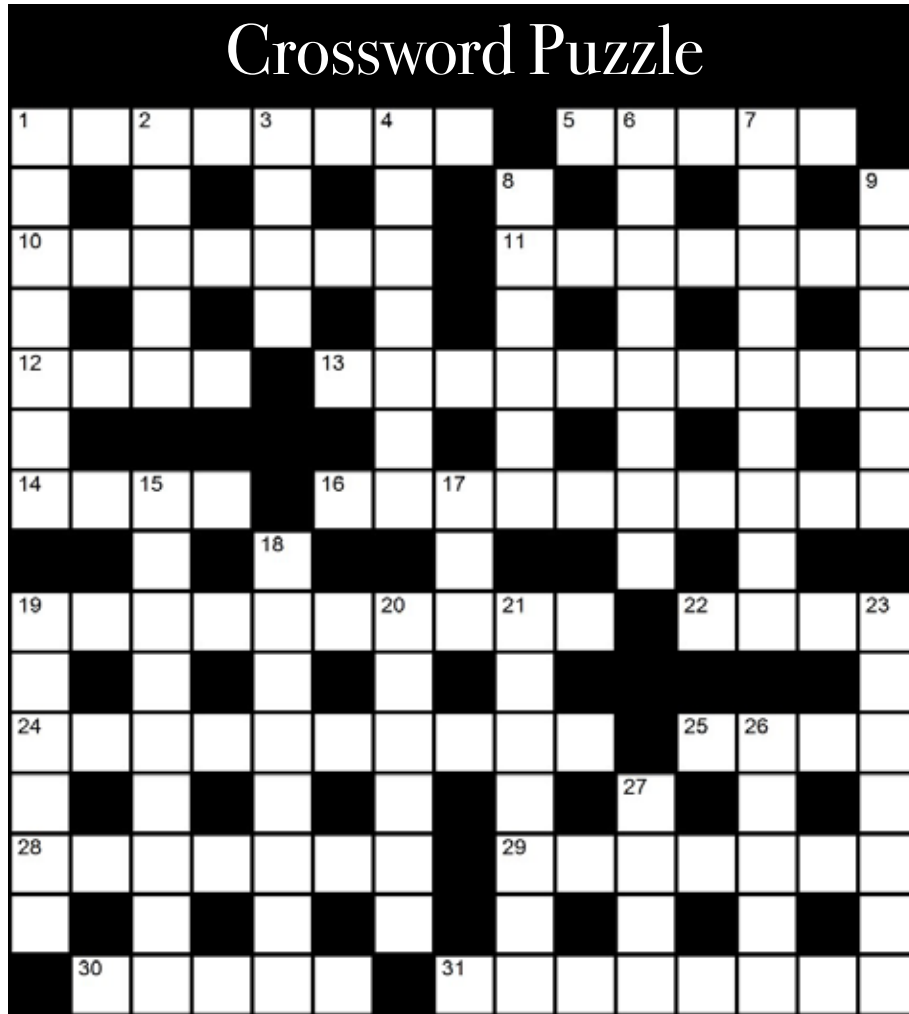


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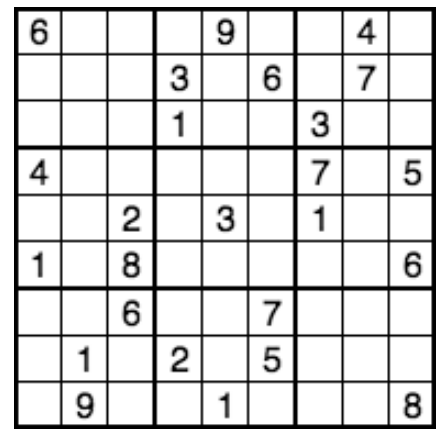
The Lake Report is looking for puzzle makers who would like to help develop this page. We are seeking both standard and cryptic crossword writers. editor@niagaranow.com

Across

- 1. Beautiful (8)
 - 5. Moves through water (5)
 - 10. Unconventional (7)
 - 11. Pilot (7)
 - 12. Pollen gatherers (4)
 - 13. When the living is easy (10)
 - 14. Otherwise (4)
 - 16. Artificial sparkler (10)
 - 19. Corridor (10)
 - 22. Yorkshireman (4)
 - 24. Preceding wedlock (10)
 - 25. Precious stones (4)
 - 28. Shining (7)
 - 29. Hollowed inward (7)
 - 30. Bovine mammary gland (5)
 - 31. Austrian Alpine resident (8)
- Down**
- 1. Farewell (7)
 - 2. Plunder (5)
 - 3. Paradise (4)
 - 4. Lie (7)
 - 6. Restaurant worker (8)
 - 7. Marriage (9)
 - 8. Opera by Bizet (6)
 - 9. Current of air (6)
 - 15. Pendent (9)
 - 17. Large island in the Channel (1,1,1)
 - 18. Computer information store (8)
 - 19. Thin and translucent (6)
 - 20. Expels (6)
 - 21. Disorder (7)
 - 23. Oriental (7)
 - 26. Fill with high spirits (5)
 - 27. Untie (4)



Last issue's answers



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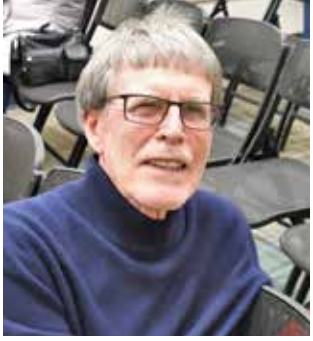
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Dr. Brown: The birth, death, rebirth of stars



Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the Infohealth series held at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.

Dr. William Brown
Special to The Lake Report

As stars go, our sun is a middling-sized affair, fated to end its days as a source of energy for life on our planet sometime in the next several billion years.

A gloomy prospect perhaps for those who worry about such catastrophic events in the far distant future, well beyond any prospect of life as we know it and certainly the existence of our species, homo.

But that's what happens when stars run out of hydrogen – their chief source of energy. For it is through the fusion of hydrogen to form a helium and in the process, the conversion of a tiny bit of hydrogen's mass into an enormous amount of energy, that our sun creates all the energy neces-

sary for life.

The reason for which is obvious from Einstein's most iconic equation, $E = mc^2$, where E stands for energy, m for mass and c² for the speed of light squared. It is the last factor – the speed of light squared – that explains the conversion of even the tiniest bit of matter into such an enormous amount of energy and why nuclear bombs are so powerful.

The earliest stars that formed a million or so years following the Big Bang, were often simple giants, composed mostly of hydrogen and some helium but as yet, none of the elements we associate with life – oxygen, carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus from which billions of years later, first RNA, then DNA would be composed.

Because of their huge masses and therefore enormous gravitational forces, those giants burned fiercely and quickly through their supply of hydrogen over hundreds of thousands of years – not the billions of years, more typical of smaller stars such as our sun.

Most giants collapsed into themselves and exploded in supernovas, generating yet higher temperatures and through a series of nuclear fusions, created heavier elements scattered by

the explosion about the former star's neighborhood, where they were picked up by newly forming stars.

The latter incorporated those elements and through later generations of stars and repeated nuclear fusions, including those produced by the collisions of neutron stars, eventually created all the natural elements of the periodic table. Evidence suggests that our sun is the third in a series of stars in our neighbourhood of the Milky Way.

The sun is slated to lose much of its hydrogen and therefore mass and gravitational force, over the next few billion years. In the wake of those changes, the sun will likely expand to engulf the inner planets as far out as Earth and possibly Mars – and along the way, burn off Earth's atmosphere and water and put an end to whatever life exists on our planet at that time, before finally, over a few more billion years, collapsing into a cooling, dense white dwarf of a star. Based on good evidence, that's our fate.

Other stars may – if their remaining mass is large and dense enough – collapse the nearby surrounding space (and time) about themselves to become a black hole or perhaps, as was observed

recently, create a hybrid of a black hole and what was left of a nearby star.

And sometimes giant black holes gobble up nearby stars – a form of cosmic feast or even murder, if you're inclined to be theatrical about such matters. Personally, I think the universe is mute on such matters, except for gravitational waves picked up on Earth as faint chirps – all that's left – of signals generated billions of years ago far, far away by gigantic collisions between pairs of black holes or neutron stars or other cosmic events on a grand scale.

Recently a radio telescope in Penticton, B.C., detected a "huge radio flash" generated by a magnetar – a "dense, spinning ember wrapped in intense magnetic fields" left behind after a supernova explosion, yet another example that the more astronomers look, the more surprising and stunning the universe becomes.

* The NOTL library's upcoming six-week series on physics in September and October comes courtesy of Zoom and reminds us that not so long ago, in 1900, little was known about the universe writ large and nothing about the quantum world, except for the electron. You might want to tune in.

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Kelly Turner
Owner of The Olde Angel Inn

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NOTL business sells **masks** to benefit United Way

Jessica Maxwell
The Lake Report

Business owners in Niagara-on-the-Lake are selling reusable masks and donating all proceeds back into the community through United Way Niagara.

Co-founders of Locomotive Marketing Domenic and Patrizia Trapasso have coordinated reusable masks for sale at various locations in the region during the week of July 13 to 17.

The reusable masks are \$10 each or two for \$15 by credit card or cash (exact change only).

Masks are available to purchase from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on July 15 at Simpsons Pharmasave on Niagara Stone Road and on July 15 at Locomotive Marketing (242 Mary Street, Suite 8).



Patrizia and Domenic Trapasso sell masks with United Way volunteers on Wednesday at Simpsons Pharmasave. JESSICA MAXWELL

Once COVID-19 hit, the Trapasso's began to think of how their business operations could benefit the community, Patrizia said during an interview Monday.

"We always come from a standpoint of, you know, how can we serve, how can we help and what can we do

to make our community sort of a better place," she said.

The couple are long-time supporters of the United Way and other charitable organizations within the community, which had them brainstorming what they could do to give back to the community amidst the pandemic.

Because her business deals with various manufacturers, they were able to source masks and thought to make them accessible to the community, she added.

"We manufacture and distribute products to casino resorts across the country and into the U.S.," she said.

Masks are a crucial part of staying safe amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Patrizia said.

"I think masks are something that's really important, especially now, to keep ourselves and others safe when we're out in public spaces."

She said the masks are a bit different than a typical handmade mask, being made with silver ion technology.

"These are reusable, so they're not your disposable ones — a little bit different than your everyday handmade masks that are made out of cotton ... especially now in this weather, cotton is hot and not as breathable."

An important part of the mask sales was making sure the money was supporting the community, Patrizia said.

"I just think it's really important, now more than ever to support our communities and those in need," she said.

"We thought, you know what, aside from just covering the cost of the masks and shipping and that sort of thing, we want all of the proceeds after that to go back to United Way."

They chose to send the proceeds to United Way, which supports different food banks, women shelters, families and after school kid's programs, Patrizia said.

Other mask sales for United Way are at the following locations:

July 14 – Boggio Pharmacy Ltd., 200 Catharine St., Port Colborne

July 16 – Brock University (Parking lot A), 1812 Sir Isaac Brock Way, St. Catharines

Couple suspects 'sobbing' late-night visitor was an attempt at **home invasion**

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

A Niagara-on-the-Lake couple received a literal rude awakening from a stranger early Sunday and they want to warn other residents to be wary of people pounding on their door in the middle of the night.

The couple, who live in Old Town, suspect the incident was an attempted home invasion or other type of scam.

They were jarred from their sleep at about 3:30 a.m. by the sound of someone trying to open their front door. When the husband got up, he heard a young woman "crying and sobbing," seemingly in distress.

Alarmed and worried, the couple, retirees who asked to remain anonymous due to security concerns, did not open the door but told the young woman they were calling the police to get help.

Shortly after that, the woman, who said her name was "Julie," vanished.

Niagara Regional Police arrived quickly but didn't find anyone. They didn't search the couple's prop-



FILE PHOTO

erty, but looked around the neighbourhood.

Police spokesperson Stephanie Sabourin told The Lake Report that investigators have not determined what the late-night visitor's intention was.

"Detectives would advise anyone with concerns to contact police for a proper investigation and to be cautious opening their door to unknown persons," Sabourin said.

The couple said they have heard nothing more from police since early Sunday and have been unable to track down investigators.

While there could be other explanations for the incident, they strongly suspect it was an attempt to gain entry to their home, located on a quiet cul de

sac.

That suspicion was amplified on Monday morning when they noticed at the side of their garage that "it appears someone had been standing on the irises to get really close to the wall so he wouldn't be seen because they were all trampled," the wife said.

The couple shared news of the incident via email with friends and neighbours to warn them to be careful. The message, sent Sunday, quickly went viral as it was spread all around town by email and social media.

"I think what's really important is if you get this strange knock in the middle of the night, someone pretends to be in distress and your first instinct is to help a person and you open the

door, and the next thing you know strangers rush in," the wife said in an interview.

"So it's important not to open the door to strangers, to talk to them through the door and if they need assistance. 911 is easy to call and they were here very quickly the police."

Her husband noted, "This is documented that this happens, especially where there are seniors, where somebody's seen a lady in distress and we all want to help. It sounded like a young girl, maybe 18 or 20, a teenage girl and she's whimpering and bawling, crying her eyes out. All phony, of course."

That's when he told her he was notifying police and she subsequently fled.

He wants NOTL residents to be aware of what happened so that if it was indeed an attempted home invasion, people will be wise to the scam.

"I think the most important lesson that I would gather from this is never, ever open the door to anybody, unless you know them, of course. Don't open it to any stranger, especially at 3:30 a.m. And call the police right away."

Virtual **paranormal** evening Friday with Friends of Fort George

Jessica Maxwell
The Lake Report

Fort George tours are back with a virtual paranormal evening.

The virtual paranormal evening is set for Friday, July 17, and to be hosted by tour guide Kyle Upton, who has been conducting regular ghost tours at Fort George for the past 27 years.

The scheduling of the event was chosen to be close to July 19, anniversary of the death of Sarah Ann, a prominent ghost at the fort.

Tickets for the event can be purchased on the Friends of Fort George website.

Attendees can expect, "a flavour of the atmosphere of Fort George, as well as a dose of story telling, a dose of history and an opportunity to delve a little bit deeper into the specific history and stories of Sarah Ann," Upton said.

"We want people to get a bit of the flavour of the fort, in terms of imaging, video, slideshow, narrated slideshow, that sort of thing, just so that we can take people out of their living rooms and put them into the sol-



An old postcard of Fort George. SUPPLIED

dier's barracks so they can better imagine. Yeah and then this person saw a little girl standing on the stairs here," he said.

Upton added, "No, we're not having a seance or anything like that."

"The topic is to celebrate this one aspect of storytelling. But we're not going to be calling up the spirits or anything like that."



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Call 905-468-7815 to arrange a purchase, or stop by our store located at 1634 Four Mile Creek Rd.



Delilah Colvin, 2, plays at the Virgil Splash Pad on Saturday.
JESSICA MAXWELL

Virgil splash pad **open** seven days a week

Jessica Maxwell
The Lake Report

The Virgil Splash Pad is open for Niagara-on-the-Lake kids to enjoy some fun in the sun.

The Colvin family, from Virgil, has been coming to the splash pad regularly since last year said mother Amanda Colvin.

The splash pad is open between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. seven days a week, located in the Centennial Sports Park in Virgil.

"We're probably here

every two to three days," Colvin said.

Colvin was at the splash pad with her two girls on July 11, Eleanor (4) and Delilah (2) and she said they love it.

"It's a great way for them to get some appropriate playtime with other kids in close proximity," she said.

"They see old friends they haven't seen at school for a while and they get to, you know, burn off some energy and get some sunshine and change of scenery."

Music Niagara starts **virtual** season

The Lake Report

Unable to stage concerts due to the COVID-19 lockdown and social distancing rules, the Music Niagara Festival is launching a free, new At Home series.

For 22 years, the festival has brought world-class, diverse music experiences to intimate settings in Niagara-on-the-Lake each summer.

The innovative virtual At Home Concert Series and creative At Home virtual Performance Academy have been created to "entertain, educate and inspire," said festival spokesperson Karen Lade.

The series starts July 26 and full details are on the Music Niagara website, www.musicniagara.org. While all performances are free, the festival welcomes donations.

"Our At Home series provides the essence of what we planned for 2020 before the pandemic," Lade said in a news release.

"We were set to announce more than 30 concerts, new venues and exciting new programming ideas. The 2020 festival planned a new Music



Music Niagara director Atis Bankas. SUPPLIED

and Laughter series including Quartetto Gelato with Joe Pillitteri and a program to celebrate Beethoven's 250th birthday including inspirational performances by our own artistic director Atis Bankas with one of Russia's significant pianists, Victoria Kogan."

Now, "Music Niagara will still bring these performances, along with the spirit of our 2020 season, through our new virtual At Home series," Lade said.

Several performances will be filmed by Niagara College's broadcasting team at Château des Charmes, PondView Estate Winery, the museum and Queen's

Landing.

Among the special performances are Emma Meinrenken (violin) performing with members of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, clarinetist James Campbell's production of "From Beethoven to Brazil: A Joyous Musical Journey" and the production of the Last Night of the Proms performed by members of the Niagara Proms Orchestra, conducted by Sabatino Vacca and hosted by British comedian David Green.

The festival also will celebrate Beethoven's milestone birthday with Tom Allen's production of the The Missing Pages — the story of the

only Canadian who met Ludwig van Beethoven — and also Bankas' musical performance of Beethoven's Hair. That musical performance is an homage to the book of the same name, an astonishing tale of one lock of hair and its amazing travels from 19th-century Vienna to 21st-century America.

The At Home lineup will also include virtual performances by international festival musicians from New York, Amsterdam and Lithuania who were scheduled to perform this summer.

The At Home Performance Academy features a new online curriculum designed to "broaden and enhance each student's personal musical journey, turning young musicians into polished performers with a lifelong appreciation of the arts," Lade said. Behind-the-scenes performances and footage from the Young Virtuoso (ages 8-18) program also will be available.

If you miss the show, recordings of all shows except The Missing Pages will be available on the Music Niagara website and YouTube channel afterward.



Residents For Sustainable Tourism

Dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism post-COVID that adds to Niagara-on-the-Lake's economic well-being and improving the safety and quality of life for both visitors and residents

NOTL Town council decided to experiment until the weekend of July 19 closing Queen Street to traffic. It has resulted in NOTL's only Commercial street crossing Old Town being closed and as many as 22,000 cars per weekend having to use only narrow residential streets, some without sidewalks, endangering the quality of life and safety of residents and visitors.



Say **no** to the experiment.



Send an email to council@notl.com, subject: **NO to Queen Street closure experiment**
Keep informed at votersbeforetourists.com and sign up for our newsletter.

Driverseat Niagara provides local transportation

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

The need for safe and reliable transportation for local seniors prompted one woman to launch a franchise of Driverseat Inc., a dual chauffeur and shuttle service.

Debbie Reed, owner of Driverseat Niagara, purchased the franchise in March but was forced to stall the official launch due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Manager Lynn Howell says the company is back on track now, with a “soft launch” of services on Canada Day.

The company specializes in providing shuttle services to airports, transportation for winery and brewery tours, and just “nights out,” Howell said. It also provides professional chauffeur ser-



Debbie Reed stands with Driverseat Niagara shuttle. SUPPLIED

vices, with four employed chauffeurs to drive a client’s own car to and from their destination.

“We’re not a taxi or Uber service, and we’re not the Greyhound buses – we’re the middle guy that provides a really unique white

glove service,” she said. “We offer water, we’ll offer some snacks in the vehicle and we’ll make sure that they’re comfortable.”

Howell said she and Reed decided to look into a reliable transportation service after living in Niagara-on-

the-Lake and struggling to find acceptable transportation for their parents while working full-time.

“We had some senior parents, one was on dialysis three days a week, one had Alzheimer’s and my mother was in a home with a physical disability. We realized there was a real need for some kind of loyal, dedicated, professional transportation for our folks to get back and forth to where they needed to go,” she said.

Now, with Driverseat Niagara up and running, she said families can turn to the company to help get seniors where they need to go while still being able to work full-time.

“Usually if it’s a consistent client we’ll have the same chauffeur every time. We will help the seniors into the doctor’s offices, if

they so need. We will stay with them if they do need that as well. For any taking notes or anything like that, so we’re helping families be able to still work and still take care of their seniors,” she said.

While the initial inspiration stemmed from the need to help transport seniors and vulnerable citizens “efficiently, effectively and safely,” Howell said the plan evolved into providing more services to “fill the gap” between a basic taxi and large buses.

And though COVID-19 halted the initial launch, the company rose to meet the needs of the community to offer a free Shop and Drop program to help seniors and vulnerable citizens pick up groceries and medication.

“We were doing that for free, where we pick up gro-

ceries, and we deliver them right to their door for them. So, we did that for a long time until just recently. We still offer it, but we offer a very minimal charge now,” she said.

Howell and Reed worked in the transportation logistics industry “forever” and Howell said the new venture was a natural step for the two women.

The company is “strictly” following regulations to keep clients safe during the pandemic, she said. Each vehicle has a plexiglass barrier installed, temperatures are taken before clients are allowed in and masks must be worn during transportation, she said.

Pricing and specific services offered can be found online at driverseatinc.com/locations/driverseat-niagara/.

Shaw Guild makes COVID videos

Jessica Maxwell
The Lake Report

It’s lights, camera, action for the Shaw Guild while creating instructional videos about how to safely enjoy the reopening of Niagara-on-the-Lake businesses.

The videos aim to inform community members on “how to behave, how to prepare and how to handle new realities,” said Brenda Weafer, activities chair of the guild executive.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero reached out to the Shaw Guild about preparing the instructional videos.

“Betty is a member of the Shaw Guild,” Weafer said. “She had seen how some of the people in the guild did some role play and she thought, rather than doing her own videos, and she had done a few before, she thought well maybe you could do something a little more dramatic, a little more interesting and maybe the Shaw Guild could help.”

“So, she approached us,” Weafer said, “our president, Laurie Harley, our communications director, Cheryl Morris, and myself, and we talked about what



Shaw Guild members John and Marg Mather. SOURCED

that could look like.”

“I have a background in theatre as well as education,” she said. “I’ve done some amateur theatre directing and some acting and I decided, you know, OK I think I could script this out.”

This is when she said the Shaw Guild began to pull together some of its resources, to think about a timeline for production and determine what the message would be.

“We decided to use some guild people as our actors and we knew Rene (Bertschi) who does the videographer role very well could do that.”

“The Shaw Guild is a volunteer organization that really is strongly committed to the relationship between the Shaw and the town of

Niagara-on-the-Lake,” she said, “that wonderful sort of symbiotic relationship.”

“There’s a very close relationship between the town and the guild, and when they call upon us we say, sure.”

Weafer said the plan so far is to release three videos over the course of three months. The first one is already online.

The next two will be released over the next two months as it becomes appropriate to do so.

The first video is a live action role play of a couple deciding to go out and dine at a local restaurant. Clips of the role play demonstration are accompanied by a voiceover with explanation and informative banners on screen. See the video at [https://youtu.be/fJI-](https://youtu.be/fJI-UkXHPJws)

UkXHPJws.

Two future videos with this project will cover the topics of entertaining guests and retail shopping.

“We are going to do a second one, entertaining with guests not in your immediate social bubble but in your sort of secondary, in your friend group, up to 10 people,” she said.

“We’re going to do a barbecue in somebody’s backyard with a number of tips on how you can do that safely,” Weafer said.

“And some suggestions as to how you can manage some of the trickier bits of how to prepare for that properly.”

Weafer said the second video will not be released until “the state of emergency gets lifted and we’ll see if any guidelines change.”

“We want to make sure we stay current and relevant to whatever guidelines are posted.”

The focus of these videos is education, she said.

“The theme of our three videos is, what’s different out there,” she noted. “So, just helping people negotiate that and in a sort of visual way, if we can be of help, then why not. Let’s do it.”



Andrea Douglas managed to beat the pro. KEVIN MACLEAN

Golf: Four NOTL women ‘Beat the Pro’ in shootout

With one shot at glory and bragging rights, four members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club came away winners when they took on pro Billy Simkin Tuesday.

Andrea Douglas, Sue Gagne, Yolanda Henry and Donna Lailey all managed to get their tee shots closer to the hole than the pro did in a shootout competition.

Simkin was on form, putting most of his tee shots on the short, 105-yard fourth hole to within about 10 feet of the pin. A few ended up inside three feet.

After only one person beat him last year, Simkin said he spent 12 months preparing. In 2019, only Barbara Ahluwalia got it closer. This year the 87-year-old phenom almost matched that but came up a little short.

MEN’S ACTION: The ageless Ross Smith scored a net eagle on the seventh hole, good for four points and a much-coveted \$720 net skin in NOTL Golf Club men’s league action last Thursday.

While Smith was busy collecting his winnings, Mark Derbyshire and Jim McMacken won the low gross prize with rounds of even-par 36.

Ken Hunter, with 23 points under the modified Stableford scoring system, took first overall, followed by Martin Vagners (22), and Lou Puglisi and Gerry Shelly (21). Gross skins, worth \$20 each, went to Paul Dickson (#2 and #5), McMacken (#4) and Harry Huizer (#7).


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EXPLORING PHOTOS

WITH NOTL MUSEUM

Editor's note: With sadness, but also appreciation, we announce the retirement of our first Exploring Photos columnist Jim Smith. A lifelong Niagara-on-the-Lake resident, Smith was an advocate for local history, preserving many of the town's memories in photographs he's collected throughout his life. We are fortunate to have been able to share some of those memories with the growing and changing NOTL community. He will be missed by The Lake Report, and we wish him a relaxing and fun-filled retirement from Exploring Photos. We would also like to welcome and thank the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, which has stepped up to continue the column.



Grazing on the golf course

For those enjoying a round of golf this summer at the NOTL Golf Club, here's an image of the same grounds circa 1850, with Fort Mississauga in the background. These cows are enjoying a snack on the once quiet lands of the Mississauga Commons. It was not uncommon for farmers to let their herds graze on the military reserve lands at that time. Golfing started there in 1877.

Jim Smith has a wealth of local history knowledge and an amazing photographic collection. Since he has decided to retire from the column, the NOTL Museum will do its best to continue his enthusiasm for local history.



Living life with COVID

Brian Marshall
Columnist

Much to my delight, a few days ago I received an email from the editor of the Lake Report asking me to resume writing this column. Not only do I enjoy penning the Arch-i-text (something I hope you find pleasure in reading), but the resumption of a "full" Lake Report is a sign that our society has left the confusion of March and April behind and is gradually finding a new workable normal for a world that has COVID in it.

Although the past few months have been fluid and rife with unknowns as governments, businesses and individuals negotiated the uncharted territory of a pandemic on Canadian soil, we



Brian Marshall. SUPPLIED

have risen to the challenge, faced our "dark night," and emerged with the seeds of a new, and I hope, clearer vision of the legacy we will leave our children.

Consider this simple example... When the COVID lockdown occurred I had just submitted the background/supporting documentation for a Heritage permit to restore the facade of a 1909 English Arts & Crafts house in the Yates Heritage District of St. Catharines. When I received notification that the City had postponed all Committee meetings until

further notice, I could not help but respond. I posited to the Heritage Planner that while I understood the action, my concern for the financial health and well-being of the many small companies and their employees which depend on the smooth functioning of government could very well cause a disaster in the local economy.

I suggested that a shift to virtual meetings across the City was not only feasible, it was imperative. To my delight, not only did the Planner escalate this suggestion to her Director, that worthy engaged their I.T. folks to develop a solution. The net result? The following month Committees met via Zoom, permits were granted and business resumed. Here, I think, is the perfect illustration of what can be accomplished when cooperative effort is focussed on solutions that benefit all.

So, while there were (and still are) challenges in both my design/consulting and real estate practices, in each case we found, and

are finding, work-arounds. Work continued on the restoration plans for an 1823 Regency home, a portico was designed for an 1819 Georgian, due diligence was successfully completed on a heritage property a client wished to acquire, amongst other things. And, I found that spending more time at home allowed me not only to complete the Historical Colour Chart for English Arts & Crafts that I'd had on the backburner for a year, but also (much to my wife's delight) build the 28' long pergola entrance to her garden.

I guess for me, living with COVID has not been too tough (though I still hate line-ups!). As the old saying goes, when you're faced with lemons, make lemonade.

That said, over the next few weeks Arch-i-text will feature survivors of a different kind as we highlight some of Niagara's heritage homes that predate the War of 1812. I hope you'll enjoy discovering these venerable homes with me!

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Wine Tastings are available daily from 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Friday & Saturday until 8 p.m.

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Open Wednesday - Sunday 11:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. Friday & Saturday until 8 p.m.

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Sean Simpson holds his Anita Robertson Legacy award presented to him July 15 outside Simpson's Pharmasave. JESSICA MAXWELL

Anita Robertson Legacy Award given to **Sean Simpson** for outstanding community service

Jessica Maxwell
The Lake Report

A NOTL business owner and supporter of many Niagara community programs was honoured with an award this week.

Sean Simpson was chosen as the 2020 recipient of the Anita Robertson Legacy Award.

He is the second recipient of the award named in honour of Anita Robertson, an active member and supporter of the United Way, who died almost two years ago.

The award is presented annually to someone who embodies Robertson's kind heart, community spirit and who share their passion and drive to make positive change in Niagara, the United Way said in a news release.

The 2019 recipients, Karen MacKay and Heidi Burgess, presented Simpson with the award on July 15 at Simpson's Pharmasave.

"It's a great privilege and honour to receive this award," Simpson said afterward. "Always brings back great memories of

our dear friend Anita and her contributions. "

"I'm sure she'd be very proud to see all of us here, together today and some of the great work that's going on behind us to raise more money for United Way," he said, referring to a mask sales fundraiser that was happening outside of the pharmacy.

"United Way is such a dear cause to me and we've seen, especially during this past few months, how much impact we have in this community across Niagara and I think we're really pleased to see the connectedness across Niagara and that was something that Anita worked so very hard for and I'm very proud."

Simpson is also a past board member of United Way Niagara who helped raise over \$12 million during his time with the organization.

He continues to support United Way and projects to help people in the Niagara Region.

In May, Simpson's Pharmacy offered 10 per

cent off of online sales (to encourage people to stay home due to the onset of COVID-19) and then matched the discounted amount and donated it to United Way and Red Roof Retreat.

In April, Simpson helped obtain nearly 16,000 protein bars for long-term care homes in NOTL and other Niagara agencies through the United Way.

In March, Simpson's Pharmacies in town supported a campaign to provide free menstrual products to Niagara residents in need.

"Sean has been a long time supporter of United Way in a number of ways," said Frances Hallworth, executive director of United Way Niagara.

"He's always trying to find ways to incorporate United Way into the community. He knew Anita quite well, they worked together during the merger of the United Ways and Anita would be so incredibly proud that Sean is getting it. She would have picked Sean herself."

Playing a tune **for mum**

Jessica Maxwell
The Lake Report

Almost every day, Trudy Enns stands outside her mother Betty's window at Pleasant Manor and plays music for the 92-year-old.

"Music has been an important part of our family growing up and if that can remain until the end, we'll just carry on," Trudy Enns says.

She started going to play the recorder for her mother in April after being off of work due to COVID-19 shutdowns in March.

"I try to get there every day because I only work part-time," Enns said.

"I had time to pick up this instrument that I had laying around at home and start learning it," she said.

Betty Enns' mother has Alzheimer's and lives on the



Trudy Enns plays the recorder for her mother Betty Enns at Pleasant Manor outside of her window. JESSICA MAXWELL

ground floor of the Virgil facility. Throughout the pandemic visits have been restricted.

"I play it at her window and sometimes I've been lucky her window has been open and she can hear it and other times they've closed the windows, which is to do with COVID as well."

"The sound carries, as I hear that other people in the neighbourhood are hearing it, too," she said.

"So you're trying to bring some joy, through music, into this sad time in people's lives right now," she said. She is happy if others get to hear it. "Enjoy it then and listen. It's not just for my mom."

Van Noort Florists fundraising for **Epilepsy Toronto** over summer

Jessica Maxwell
The Lake Report

A Niagara-on-the-Lake florist is selling cactus gardens to support a cause that hits close to home.

Cactus gardens are for sale at Van Noort Florists throughout July and August, with all of the proceeds being donated to Epilepsy Toronto.

The cacti cost \$20 to \$40 and those looking to purchase one can contact the studio at 905-468-7815.

"Our goal is \$10,000 by September first," said

Sharon Van Noort, owner of Van Noort Florists.

Proceeds will go toward research on epilepsy through Epilepsy Toronto. Her son, Eric, had his first seizure on July 4, 2016, and she said it has been life-changing for her family.

"They do a lot, they support so much," she said. "We want our (donation) to go into research."

"There is so much unknown about epilepsy."

She said all of the doctors at Toronto Western Hospital and support groups for people living with epilepsy

are amazing, which is why the fundraiser aims to support the organization.

Van Noort Florists was also selling "Big Smiles Lip-reading" masks, donated by Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Amy Post, in support of the fundraiser. <https://tinyurl.com/yclr9otm>

As of July 14, the campaign had raised \$600 for Epilepsy Toronto.

Van Noort said the florist shop will also be holding sales in coming weeks in support of the fundraiser, with the first on the weekend of July 25 and 26.

NOTL clinic launches online **nutrition and lifestyle** workshops

Jessica Maxwell
The Lake Report

The Niagara North Family Health Team is launching a four-week online group nutrition program July 24.

Each Friday the workshops, which are open to anyone, will take place from 9 to 11 a.m.

"Eat well, live better" will be facilitated by registered dietitian Nicole McDougall and mental health nurse Joan Graham, who are both a part of the health team.

Different topics will be the focus each week, ranging from leaving diets and learning about lifestyle, to nutrition 101, "what's in your pantry?" label reading

and rest and relaxation.

You do not need to be a patient of the health team to participate. To register, call 905-468-2177 ext. 130.

The only requirements include having access to a working laptop, computer, smartphone or tablet, and a stable internet connection on the days of the workshop.

The **Lake Report**

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Niagara-on-the-Lake Summer Snaps



Tina Sharfi hangs out with Skittles the parrot at Queen's Royal Park. RICHARD HARLEY



Sam Quinn with her daughter River. RICHARD HARLEY



Ty Sherlock rides down an open Queen Street. RICHARD HARLEY



A doe was spotted on the second hole at the NOTL Golf Club. SUPPLIED/EARL SHORE

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New documentary series highlights Historical Niagara

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

The Niagara region is captivating for more than its world-renowned water-fall, says award-winning documentary filmmaker Peter Sacco.

His passion for “keeping the history of Niagara alive” is showcased through the documentary series Historical Niagara, which aired on YourTV Niagara and can be found on YouTube. Currently there are eight half-hour episodes in its first season. He says a second, 12-episode season is scheduled to be released in September.

In 2012, Sacco created and hosted another series called Niagara’s Most Haunted, which also aired on YourTV, as a way to commemorate the 200-year anniversary of the War of 1812. The show ran for three years and was viewed by tourists from around the world in local hotel rooms. His Niagara’s Most Haunted fame brought him to several Canadian and American Comic Cons to speak about the paranormal in Niagara, he says.

But he was looking to veer away from Niagara’s haunted backstory to showcase the historic importance of the area. About two years ago with a few friends, he says he decided to begin the short documentary series based on local history. The Historical Niagara series came to life with no budget and a skeleton crew.

Sacco says he planned to simply stream the videos online, when Jack Custers, manager of programming and community relations at YourTV Niagara, suggested airing the segments on the local station as well.

“Working with the Niagara community, we try to have a wide variety of programming on our channel, but our main requirement is that it have a local (Niagara) focus. Historical Niagara



Peter Sacco films Historical Niagara episodes across the region. SUPPLIED PHOTOS

certainly fits the bill – with each episode, the viewer learns something new about the history of an area of our region,” Custers said in an email response.

Sacco is part of what makes the series so “entertaining,” Custers adds.

“I know the passion and commitment he puts into all his productions, and as host of the series, that comes across on-camera,” he says.

Sacco says the documentaries were produced with “absolutely zero budget,” with much of the shooting and editing done on his own, with help from his team, which includes Daniel Rodrique, Peter Dychtiar, Amanda Walton, Ernie Reinhart and Michael Clarkson.

“It’s basically a legacy thing. It’s a way of giving back to the community.

There’s so much to this area that has more than the touristy stuff.”

He says he wanted to include the local history and, more important, he wanted the people of the area to be “shown off” in his videos.

Born and raised in Niagara, Sacco says he aims to provide an honest and relaxed experience of the area through the series.

As an online teacher of criminal psychology with a PhD in psychology, an author of more than 30 fiction and non-fiction books, and director of many award-winning documentaries and music videos, the 54-year-old Sacco says he knows where his strengths lie.

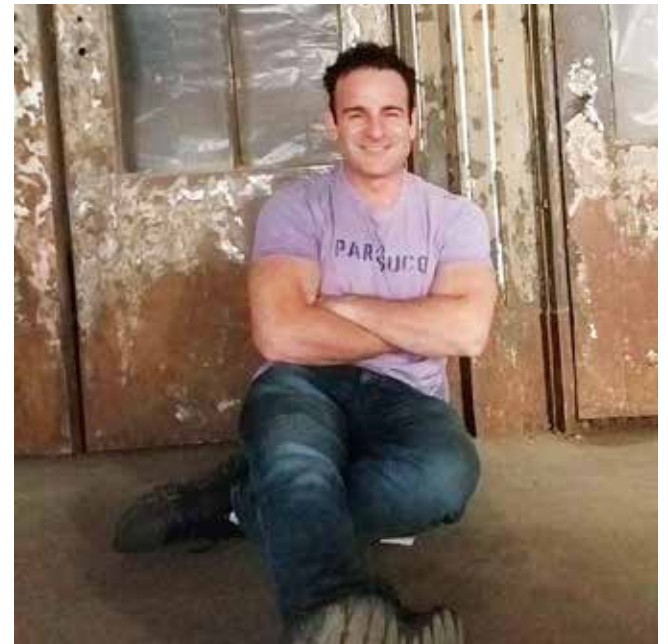
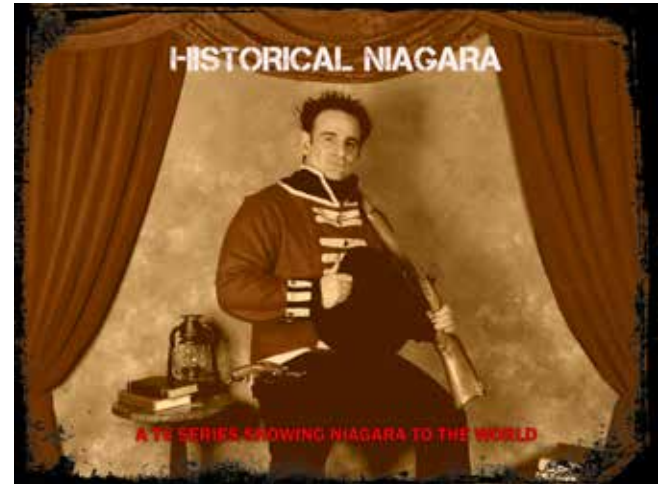
“I’m not an expert in history, but I know who to go to for the information,” he says.

He says he frequently connects with Donald

Combe of St. Mark’s Anglican Church, and Clarkson, an award-winning Niagara author, among many others. He says it’s that connection to the knowledgeable and experienced people in the region that can make his series special. Intensive research goes into the show because “accuracy is a must.”

“These stories are told by the people of Niagara, spanning many generations and life spans. It’s a way of linking the past to the future,” he says.

One of his favourite Historical Niagara episodes is titled “Cheers Niagara.” The 30-minute documentary takes viewers on an in-depth ride through Niagara’s wine country. He showcases a cross-section of the history of the wine industry, with stops at Niagara College’s teaching



winery, Pillitteri Estates Winery, Grape Escape Winery Tours, among others. He also showcases events such as the Icewine Festival and Grape and Wine Festival.

His biggest setback in producing the documentaries may hit home for many right now; the COVID-19 pandemic halted further production of Historical Niagara, causing the series to end two episodes short of the originally planned 10.

With the state of emergency in effect, being cut off from various locations and not being able to connect in person, Sacco says it’s been “extremely challenging” to move forward. But he says as establishments are slowly opening up again, he expects to be able to resume filming soon.

And his series has been

serving as a way for people to virtually visit some of the alluring places in the region without endangering themselves.

Sacco says he hopes his show will inspire locals and visitors to visit these areas on their own when it’s safe to do so.

“I want people to go out and see these places, to support local businesses,” he says.

The tourism industry is going to be nonexistent this year, he says, so supporting these local businesses is one way to bring the community together.

Sacco’s list of accreditations for his various documentaries and music videos are extensive and can be found on his website at Peterandrewsacco.com.

Check out Historical Niagara on YouTube and keep an eye out for next season.



Pauline Reimer Gibson
Audiologist

Pauline Reimer Gibson is an Audiologist with over 20 years of experience who loves helping people of all ages in the community. Julia Dick is the Front Office Coordinator and a longtime resident of Virgil. Call Julia today to book a complimentary hearing test.

Book a complimentary hearing test today at 905.468.9176

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