



Farmers' Market opens up | Page 9

NOTL has had **21** cases of COVID-19 so far, region says

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

After repeated requests from residents and political representatives, Niagara

Region public health has released the total case numbers of COVID-19 by municipality. Niagara-on-the-Lake has had a total of 21 cases as

of Wednesday, three which were still active. The numbers show NOTL has done well, especially in its long-term care facilities, which across the country

have experienced thousands of infections and numerous deaths. The statistics show of

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Jadwiga Dabrowski, owner of The Butterfly Gallery, says businesses are focused on safety as they reopen. JESSICA MAXWELL

Busy Saturday sees **multiple** collisions Cyclist, 73, struck; car making U-turn hit by oncoming vehicle



A 73-year-old man was struck by a car on Saturday while cycling near Garrison Village Drive. JESSICA MAXWELL

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Two traffic mishaps occurred within about two hours of one another along the same stretch of Niagara Stone Road on Saturday.

In the first incident, a 73-year-old man was struck by a vehicle at about 10:45 a.m. Niagara Regional Police said the man was crossing Niagara Stone Road near Garrison Village Drive on a

bicycle when he was hit. He suffered "minor injuries" and was taken to hospital for "precautionary assessment," police said. The 95-year-old male driver of the vehicle was charged for making an

unsafe turn, police said in response to questions from The Lake Report. Police would not release the name of the driver, as he was "charged under the

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A stroll through Old Town: Chatting with businesses on Queen Street

Retailers roll with the punches, do what it takes to open safely

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake are opening up again after the provincial lockdown forced them to shut down. Along Queen Street, shops are setting up social distancing measures to try to open safely and avoid violating any emergency orders. The Lake Report chatted with some business owners and workers downtown on Monday afternoon to see how the reopening has been going and how this past weekend was compared to a normal year. Dan Holden, an employee at Oliv Tasting Room on Queen Street, said being safe is the top priority at the store. "It's nice that the owners have basically said, 'absolute safety first,'" he says, through a face mask. The store has a sign on the door that can be flipped around when customers are in the store, letting people know they're serving someone and asking people to wait patiently outside. "And as soon as people come in, that gets flipped, we spritz their hands, I

spritz mine. I'm the only one touching bottles, they're throwing out their tasting cups," Holden said. "Also, it's absolutely safety first as far as the staff goes, which I love. I've actually got a face shield back there that they left for me to wear if I wanted to." Holden said the border closure is affecting the store, though things are manageable. "We're doing OK. Unfortunately, we're a tourist town and with having the border closed, I mean, it's the best thing for everybody as far as safety goes, but it's going to take a lot of our business away. So we're basically living off of locals right now. And it's not a big town — there's not a lot of locals."

It's been tough, particularly for specialty shops, he said. "Especially someone like us, where it's kind of a specialty type of thing. You're only going to be buying so much olive oil and so much balsamic vinegar every year. So once we've filled all the local shelves and then pantries and whatever else, you know, then there's

Continued on Page 12

22,513 vehicles enter Old Town on weekend

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The number of cars coming into NOTL last weekend has more than doubled since the beginning of May, according to numbers recorded by the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. On Saturday and Sunday, 22,513 vehicles drove into the Queen Street area,

Interim chief administrator Sheldon Randall told council Monday night. "If you average two people per vehicle, that would be over 45,000 people that came to Niagara-on-the-Lake," he said. The numbers are more than double the 10,452 vehicles recorded entering

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Vehicles continue to line up on Queen Street on weekends. RICHARD HARLEY

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Town considers opening sidewalks for restaurant patios

So far no plans to close Queen Street to traffic, out of concern cars will flood residential areas

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is looking at ways restaurants and businesses might be able to expand onto municipal property to allow them to reopen and to help with social distancing.

Interim CAO Sheldon Randall said the process is “fairly involved” and would involve all communities in NOTL.

“We’ve looked at all the municipal spaces that we may be able to encroach into,” he said during Monday’s council meeting.

“We’ve taken prints, we’ve had discussions with store owners ... to get an understanding of what sort of space can we create that’s going to be a benefit.”

He said the town is focusing on areas from the sidewalk to the curb, considering eliminating parking along Queen Street and looking at how restaurants might be able to expand patios on their own properties, such as parking lots.

“There’s a lot of things we’re going to need to consider, and that’s creating a space that’s safe enough and so on,” Randall said.

He said more time is needed to check with the town’s legal counsel.

“Some of the challenges will be, if you want to expand on your property, you have to make sure you can accommodate the customers, get into the buildings and use the washrooms, and have the ability to wash

hands and things like that.”

Staff has also been out monitoring vehicle and pedestrian traffic and to see how it would impact these changes, he said.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said the town’s main concern is safety, and as of Tuesday does not want to close off Queen Street to all traffic.

“We don’t really want to — at this point — close Queen Street completely, because that will drive the traffic into the small residential streets,” she told The Lake Report in an interview.

“So, our staff and members of council have been working very closely with individual restaurants and pastry shops to find out how they can access space outside of their establishments, either on their own private property or on public property, with the least intrusion on the sidewalk and traffic,” she said.

When asked if businesses encroaching on sidewalks would force people to walk around on the road, she said, “Let’s see.”

“They’re coming up with a plan now, so let’s see how the plan looks and how people can be accommodated, and we’ll go from there,” she said.

“Again, the intrusion into the residential streets, to just say we’re just going to close it and not look at any other options, will be havoc.”

Coun. Wendy Cheropita, who is the council representative on the Chamber of Commerce’s board, said that

organization has been working on the same idea, and that she’d like to be involved in the town’s decisions, so the chamber and town are not working “simultaneously on the same projects.”

She was eager to put forward a motion that would “fast-track” the process.

“Let’s work on it now so that by the time the province OKs the restaurants to reopen, then at least we have a plan in place, and we have approvals that are already there,” Cheropita said.

She pointed out there are also many restaurants outside of Old Town that could benefit from expanding or creating patios.

“I was in touch with a number of restaurants ... like those in Virgil, like the Twisted Vine, the Pie Plate ... the Garrison House ... Backhouse, Willow,” she said.

Randall clarified that the town is already working on the process and would be giving consideration to all restaurants in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

“It’s baby steps right now. We want to make sure that we have a safe, fair, legal way to accommodate and we need to iron out a few more things with our legal counsel. And once we have we will continue to expand.”

He said the town has one full-time engineering staff member working on it.

Cheropita said it “pleases” her that the town is working on the same thing. During a debate on the issue, she said she wanted to create a



Town restaurants could be permitted to use sidewalks and some parking spaces for patios when the provincial government allows them to reopen. RICHARD HARLEY

notice of motion to fast-track things.

Disero said she was concerned making a formal motion would do the opposite and fill the process with red tape.

Randall agreed. “It will move forward,” he said. “But I agree with the lord mayor that I don’t think we want to tie ourselves to a process right now, until we have all of the information.”

Cheropita said she’s “not sure why (the town) would want to delay it.”

Randall clarified that in fact the town is already starting the process.

“We are starting the process right now,” Randall clarified. “That’s what we’re doing.”

However Randall was clear that there needs to be more legal advice and a consultation with the heritage committee before moving forward.

Still, Cheropita wanted to make her motion.

“The motion is to open a process that can be fast-tracked to allow restaurants and food service providers to be able to expand their outdoor space to adjacent properties, parking lots, to enable them to accommodate social distancing,” she told council.

In response, Randall provided some “clarity.”

“When we’re talking about restaurants that may be encroaching into the

municipal right of way, we already have a process mapped out for that. And we’ve consulted with our legal on it ... so that process is covered off. We know what we’re doing,” he said.

“So you’re asking for something that’s happening,” Disero told Cheropita. “Well, it seems like it’s sort of happening,” Cheropita argued.

“No,” Disero said. “The problem as I see it Wendy, is once you start a formal process, it’s going to create some red tape that we may not be able to act as quickly as we can.”

Disero urged Cheropita to wait a few days and work with the town on the motion, before putting something in place that would create more “red tape.”

Cheropita agreed to wait and discuss it with the town’s emergency control group.

“If you think we still need (a motion), we’ll move it,” Disero said.

Gary Burroughs said retail shops should also be considered for expanding, as many of them also have limits on numbers of people that can be in the business.

“There’s a lot of businesses on Queen Street and they’re not all restaurants,” he said. “And certainly if the sidewalks are to become bigger, some of those shops could do, because they have limited space inside, and so they should be considered.”

He also requested again that council be informed and consulted on emergency group decisions.

“All I’m saying is that we have a vast amount of knowledge on this council and we’re never contacted about our ideas, about the restaurants, about other shops — about anything. And I think it’s important that we draw on that expertise, rather than the emergency group just moving ahead and saying, ‘OK, we’re going to do restaurants, we’ve got legal, we’ve got everything else,’” Burroughs said.

“There’s a lot of shops that need help and maybe that can work into your expanded plans for no parking and all of those things. So, all I’m asking is maybe we can ask council to participate at some point and get our opinions.”

Disero said the plan right now is to focus on preparing to open restaurants when the province makes that announcement.

“That is our top priority at the moment,” she said.

“Once we’ve done that plan, we will have at council probably a fullsome discussion on everything on Queen Street and what to do moving forward. But the emergency team wants to be prepared and ready should there be an announcement in the next two to three weeks about restaurants.”

Burroughs wants council more involved

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Coun. Gary Burroughs wants council kept in the loop on decisions made by the town’s emergency group.

“I think it’s important that we still keep council

aware of things that are going on,” he told council Monday.

He said he was unaware he was invited to go represent the town during a Saturday walk to talk to business owners.

“And I give another

example, the hanging basket program which Sheldon (Randall) announced yesterday is back on. About a month and a half ago I tried to send an email to you and to Sheldon, and Kevin (Turcotte) got back to me with a detailed list of why it would

not be happening this year.” “And so I’m telling all the people that have concerns with me that, ‘No, they’re not doing it and they don’t have the space,’” Burroughs said.

Read the full story at www.niagaranow.com/news.php/ml/3938

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Province is opening **too fast**: Disero

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Lord Mayor Betty Disero says she thinks the province is returning to normal too quickly.

“I am concerned they’re opening too fast,” she said. “For them to turn around and say all retail (can open) — like wow. That’s big.”

She said the town’s emergency team has been scrambling to figure out how to manage the situation in town, for example, picnic tables and benches.

“If you saw what happened in Toronto on the weekend and our own parks and that, people are not adhering to when the premier says we’re opening up (slowly). He can say it’s a slow reopening — and that’s what we’ve been trying to tell people — but it seems like it’s going awfully quickly.”

She said she worries people will become “complacent.”

“This transition time is going to be a real difficult time in terms of going from totally closed to open, and we have to be very careful about what we do. Our numbers were really good in terms of 21 with five (now three cases) left to resolve, but particularly since we have so many people coming back from being away in the winter, I’m really pleased that we were able to keep it down as low as we did,” she said.

“But now if people start to get complacent, that’s going to be difficult. And it’s



Lord Mayor Betty Disero. FILE PHOTO

not even residents that are complacent. They’ve been so cooperative, but sometimes when people visit, they get a little complacent.”

She said it also makes things difficult for trying to enforce distancing rules.

“Now what they say in the regulation is even if you use a picnic table or a bench, you have to still maintain social distancing and you cannot be sitting at a picnic table or a bench with anybody else unless they live in the same house as you do — how do you enforce that? It’s an impossible task.”

“So all we can do is put signs on the picnic tables and the benches saying ‘use at your own risk, social distance, only members of your family ... all that kind of stuff,’” she said.

Other problems include how to manage recreational facilities like tennis courts and soccer fields, she said. And opening up a large number of things can confuse people.

“And I’m reading these regulations,” she said. “Can you imagine people that aren’t? They’re going to be totally confused. And if

people are confused, they’re going to make mistakes. So maybe they’re going to go into a place where maybe they’re not supposed to be there but they thought maybe it was open ... because there’s so much that opened so quickly.”

She said her biggest concern, aside from management, is the risk of a second wave of the virus reaching Niagara-on-the-Lake.

“That scares me more than anything else,” she said. “That there could be a second wave, and if we are a part of it, I’m really worried about that. I just want to run to every person in Niagara-on-the-Lake and say ‘Stay six feet away from everybody!’ I just want to protect them all and I’m so concerned that people may end up sick.”

She added, “So I keep repeating myself — stay at home, keep your distance. Wash your hands, don’t touch your face unless you wash your hands. And hopefully people will — at least people here living in Niagara-on-the-Lake — that they will take heed of that, and really, when we

have a day full of visitors and guests, I’m hoping that they won’t go for a walk on Queen Street, or they’ll wait for a day that’s not as busy. I’m really worried. I don’t want anybody sick.”

As of now, the province has “kind of let the genie out of the bottle.”

She is happy the province said kids won’t be going back to school until September.

“That’s one less thing to have to worry about for now, although it creates its own issues with respect to day care and people that are having to go back to work, what they’re going to do with their children who are not at school. But it’s safer for the children.”

She said Niagara-on-the-Lake has been fortunate to avoid a first wave of the virus.

“Knock on wood,” she said.

Right now the town doesn’t have any plans to close things down further independent of the province, she said, as it’s too hard to manage with retail shops and restaurants open for curbside pickup.

“There wasn’t enough parking on Queen Street alone to handle the store owners, their employees, the residential tenants upstairs and customers. So we had to open up the area.”

She said the town is “still interested” in assessing the amount of traffic coming into town, as well as keeping “ambassadors” in the parks to keep people moving.

Town **reverses course** on portable toilets

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The town’s plans to install portable toilets to keep up with the number of visitors to Old Town, rather than open the Simcoe Park bathrooms, changed last week when Niagara-on-the-Lake’s emergency group decided to open the park washrooms and forget the portable ones after all.

After a Tuesday interview with Lord Mayor Betty Disero, The Lake Report reported last week that the portable washrooms would

be installed. When the mayor was asked specifically if the portable washrooms “were for sure,” she said they were.

However, last Wednesday, after the paper went to press, Disero messaged to say the town was no longer certain about using portable washrooms.

“Last night the answer was for sure, but today we hit a road bump,” she said in a message.

See page 5 for a letter from Disero acknowledging the change.



People lined up around the block to wait for public washrooms May 19. FILE PHOTO/RICHARD HARLEY

Niagara-on-the-Lake



A Message from Interim CAO Sheldon Randall

We were thrilled to announce this week that the Town is reviving the 2020 hanging basket program. I am confident that this will not only help to stimulate our local economy, which is gradually reopening in accordance with Provincial recovery measures, but it will also positively impact the mental wellbeing of residents and visitors.

The success of our local business community is a priority for the Town, as it is a large contributing factor to our overall prosperity. The Town is committed to partnering with the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce to support businesses as many reopen, including assisting them in understanding Provincial regulations.

I’d like to take this opportunity to thank the Emergency Control Group and all Town Staff for their consistency and dedication throughout this pandemic. In fact, it is largely thanks to the efforts of Town Staff, who were able to find savings at the outset of this pandemic, that we are now able to see the revival of our hanging baskets.

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has proven itself highly adaptable and resilient in even the most extraordinary of circumstances, and I am prouder than ever of our team.

We will continue to adapt to this rapidly changing situation to ensure we emerge strong and united.

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

"I don't think of myself as a poor deprived ghetto girl who made good. I think of myself as somebody who from an early age knew I was responsible for myself, and I had to make good." - Oprah Winfrey.



Contributed by Norm Arsenaault:

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Editorial: Transparency and COVID-19

Kevin MacLean
 Managing Editor

We are thankful to see that after two months of opaque refusals to tell Niagara residents how many people in each community have been infected with COVID-19, Niagara Region public health is now, reluctantly, releasing some of that information.

Transparency is one of the great buzzwords of modern society and government. But walking the talk about being transparent when it comes to information is not always an easy journey for those who govern us, the agencies that operate to serve the public or the bureaucracy that supports those institutions.

Niagara public health cited "privacy concerns" about releasing the anonymous data when leaders like Lord Mayor Betty Disero argued that, in at-risk communities like NOTL, it was essential

to know how widespread the virus is and how it is spreading.

Public health has seen the light. Sort of. But not really.

If you go to the agency's website, trying to find the actual numbers can be confounding. Instead, you can readily see the number of cases per 10,000 population. In NOTL's case, that is 11.1. If you hover your cursor on the orange bar, a pop-up will tell you that equals 21 total patients.

Now, that is really not a very "customer-friendly" method.

Then click on the "Active" bar to find out how many people here still have COVID-19 and all you will know is it's 1.6 per 10,000. And despite repeatedly asking public health to confirm that translates to three people (down from five a few days ago), they won't.

When asked several times to explain public health's philosophy and how such

simple statistics could possibly create privacy problems, a spokesperson's answer was not very encouraging:

"Public health is always trying to balance providing transparency of the local situation with protecting privacy, which is a concern when dealing with small numbers. With active cases, the numbers are small in almost all municipalities, so we've opted not to provide the raw case count. The case per 10,000 population metrics, we believe, is a reasonable compromise to provide some transparency to this metric of public interest."

"Privacy can be infringed with small numbers because we have provided several ways to filter and cross-tabulate data on our website, so it is possible for someone to learn many details about an individual case. In small, close-knit communities, that can be enough to identify a person."

Seriously? The fear that

someone might eagerly cross-check various numbers and data points to try to figure out if Sam or Sally down the street has COVID is a real stretch. The local grapevine is far more likely to tell us who has the virus than anonymized, non-specific numbers.

By all means, individuals' health information must remain private unless they choose to release it. But too often with our agencies in Niagara – notably government and police – the default Big Brother position in releasing public information appears to be "how can we find a way to invoke privacy so we don't have to release data?"

There always will be cases where privacy is a legitimate concern. But please: our democracy is founded on openness and transparency. Let's stop trying to find specious ways to keep public information private.

editor@niagaranow.com



Heritage tax rebate **must** be a town priority

The following is an edited version of a letter to Lord Mayor Betty Disero and members of town council ahead of this past Monday's council meeting:

We are writing to you on behalf of a group of Heritage District merchants. Recently, we formed a group comprising 30 merchants (and growing) to discuss issues we share. We feel that if we do not promote ourselves, the Heritage District will not survive this economic situation.

The town has not consulted or shared any plan with us on how we will recover as we have entered the first phase of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rather, we had a very harsh shutdown, which from a business owner standpoint, was an overreaction and has made our battle for recovery much more difficult and still we have had no assistance from our municipality nor the Region of Niagara.

Our costs to maintain our businesses are significantly higher than the rest of the town. Our businesses survive because of tourism in six months of the year. Without this revenue, some will not survive. This is scary for all businesses on Queen Street. We are all dependent on each other and our unique offerings that draw tourists to our town.

Empty storefronts will not benefit anyone and will devalue the town. The town and region need to support us if we want Queen Street to remain a vibrant street, the centre of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The following needs to be put into motion:

1. Heritage tax rebate: We need this put to motion immediately. The next council meeting is Monday, May 25. Can this be put in a motion or at minimum addressed? This rebate program was designed if not for Niagara-on-the-Lake, then for town's exactly like us. The town's contribution is nominal compared to the rebate

opportunity. It needs to be a straight credit to taxes so that it can filter down to merchants. We are perplexed as to why this is not already in place.

2. Property tax forgiveness: This is an interim measure until the heritage tax rebate is in effect.


We pay taxes based on our assessments, which are heavily weighted by the lure of the destination that is Niagara-on-the-Lake ... That product has not been delivered to us (a destination for tourists) for at least two months and thus we need a 50 per cent if not 100 per cent (both regional and municipal) forgiveness. The metric that is used to arrive at our assessment is flawed when the town is officially closed.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. We need to make progress working with the town as part of a rescue process.

Sincerely,

Sunset Grill (Kim & Scott), Pieza (Maurizio & Larissa), Bistro Six One (Jay & Harry), Ara (Patricia), Halley's Fashion for Men (Peter), Corks & Orzo (Maria), Irish Design (Paul & Maureen), Serendipity & ArtSpace 106 (Ruth), The Scottish Loft (Simon), Balzac's (Steve), Great Things Ltd. (Sharon and Darren), Budapest Bakeshop (Todd & Anette), 124 on Queen Hotel & Spa (David), Epicurean & Grill on King (Giorgini), Leone's (Rob), Nina Gelateria & Pastries (Klaudia), Niagara Home Bakery (Voula), Taylor's Bakery & Ice Cream (Peter), Il Gelato di Carlotta (Carlotta), The Irish Harp (Jovie), The Angel Inn (Keith & Kelly), Beau Chapeau (Kevin), Fournos (Jimmy & Dave), Versions (Peter), Spade and Sparrow (Emily), One Earth (Terri-Lynn), Viking (Peter), Nikolas (Tolis), The Shiny Company (Stuart).

*The Heritage District Merchant Group
 NOTL*



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OPINION



Drivers gone wild



A motorist decides to use the walking path on the Niagara Parkway to make a U-turn. RICHARD HARLEY

Full support for mayor and town staff

Dear editor:

I have to say that I was truly disappointed in the tone of some of the letters to the editor this past week.

One writer criticized town council and Lord Mayor Betty Disero for a lack of communication with business owners when in fact the town has been putting out daily public news releases and communiques as well as having behind-the-scenes discussions with the Chamber of Commerce and businesses.

Another writer chastised town bylaw officers based on what they read on social media. And another writer raised the issue of "overtourism" at a time when tourism has been shut down.

I think in these extraordinary times, we, as residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake, need to get behind our civic leaders and town staff and support them.

It is easy to sit on the sidelines and criticize. Theirs is a very tough job. I know I support them 100 per cent.

*Steve Hardaker
Glendale*



Wear a mask, protect others

Dear editor:

There is now conclusive evidence that wearing a mask contributes to flattening the curve by protecting others from you potentially infecting them.

The question then is simple: "I wear a mask to protect you. Why do you refuse to wear a mask to protect me?"

And to those not wearing a mask. "How would you feel about surgeons and nurses not wearing masks in the operating room?"

*Samuel Young
NOTL.*



Apology for washroom statement that changed

Dear editor:

I wanted to apologize for any inconvenience to you and the paper I may have caused.

When we spoke last Tuesday night, we talked about the long line ups at the two washrooms that the town had opened up.

The decision of the emergency control team up to that day was to supplement the two washroom locations (Courthouse and Queen's Royal Park) with portable

toilets. I think you went to print immediately after that.

In fact the next day, with more research the team decided it was more cost effective and would allow for better physical distancing if we just opened a third washroom at Simcoe Park. I was actually glad we were able to save money in that regard but I apologize if there was any confusion.

*Betty Disero
Lord Mayor*



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Niagara-on-the-Lake

Hydro execs pitch plan for **widespread** COVID testing, lab in NOTL

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

The prime minister wants more people tested for COVID-19. The premier says anyone who fears they might have been exposed to the virus should get tested immediately. Medical and science experts say more testing and tracking of the disease is crucial.

One big question is whether there is enough lab capacity to speedily handle the volume of testing the province requires – and the answer is, not yet.

Jim Ryan and Tim Curtis, two executives with Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro, have an idea that they think can help solve that problem.

They have proposed converting part of the old NOTL hospital into a not-for-profit, state-of-the-art testing facility to process test results for thousands of people in Niagara – and ultimately – from around Ontario.

Test locations would be set up all around the region and the goal is to have it all up and running by September.

It's a tall order but one the two men believe can be accomplished. They have submitted their business plan to the provincial government and have invited both Premier Doug Ford and Health Minister Christine Elliott to visit Niagara to see how the

concept could work.

Both Ryan, chair of NOTL Hydro, and Curtis, CEO of the utility, emphasize their real goal is more testing and tracking of the virus and not just of people who are displaying symptoms. Opening a lab is just a way of ensuring more tests can be processed.

And while they are spearheading this proposal in Niagara, they also say they simply want to make sure it comes to fruition, even if some other organization ultimately is the one to do it.

The continued number of new COVID-19 cases, insufficient testing and warm weather inspiring people to get out, be sociable and get back to work are three major problems the province must deal with, notes Curtis.

And "systematic, aggressive testing and tracking is the only way to meet these three issues. This creates the need for more lab capacity," he said.

Ryan said there is both a social and economic need to act fast.

"We've got to broaden testing, if we are to open up," he said in an interview. "And our fear is if we let this window between now and the next flu season pass without getting the resources in place to do that we'll be in another lockdown and, quite frankly, I'm not sure the economy can withstand another lockdown."

The hydro executives, both with strong business backgrounds, said their plan is about helping both the economy and the community.

One thing that stuck "in my craw," Ryan said, was that "it was quite clear very early on there was a problem in long-term care facilities and, despite that, there was no proactive stance to visit all long-term care and test people" unless there were positive cases.

He doesn't want to see that repeated.

Ryan was the instigator of the idea and it gained momentum after the NOTL Hydro board unanimously backed it. The proposal also received support from Niagara regional council last week.

Curtis will be seconded to oversee launch of the project if the group gets the go-ahead from the province.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Mayor Jim Diodati of Niagara Falls have both been supportive of the project.

Disero said she thinks it is "great" for two reasons. "One, a fast turnaround of tests taken in the region, as the transportation issues are removed which have been a problem and second because I see this as a good economic development project for the region."

Ryan and Curtis "have no personal financial interest

(in the project), they just want to make sure we do not get overlooked by the province," Disero said.

And while Niagara Health CEO Dr. Tom Stewart said he has not examined all the details of the plan, he said he is "a fan of more testing," adding that follow-up and contact tracing are crucial.

In developing their plan, Ryan said they have consulted with multiple experts to fine-tune and focus the project, including Norgen Biotek in Thorold and KPMG, the consulting firm designated by the province to help develop a testing strategy.

He said when they told KPMG they planned to do at least 5,000 tests a day and maybe as many as double that, the consultants asked whether the Niagara project could handle 20,000 tests daily. The answer: given sufficient provincial funding that would not be a problem, Ryan said.

Right now, there isn't adequate testing capability in Ontario, "let alone within Niagara Region," he said.

As far as Ryan knows, no actual lab testing is currently done in the region and swabs often are shipped out to Hamilton or Toronto. (Niagara Region public health said it has no details on where lab tests are done as many health care providers are involved in collecting samples.)



Jim Ryan and Tim Curtis of NOTL Hydro. SUPPLIED

To be most effective, turnaround time for testing needs to be quick, Curtis said. "To do what we are promoting we need a 24-hour turnaround time."

With so many hotels, restaurants and other service industries across Niagara, Ryan said, "They need proactive testing so that they can go to their staff and their customers and say, 'Look we get tested every seven days, or whatever the number is, we're COVID-free.'"

In addition, businesses would collect information on customers so if there is a COVID-19 outbreak, contact testing will be much quicker. Ryan envisions a similar approach working in the manufacturing and other sectors too.

Such a process might prevent future lockdowns, he said.

"We hope for a silver bullet, a vaccine, or something that mitigates this but that's a bad bet at this stage of the game. So we're saying, 'Let's have the processes in place, the lab capability to move forward.'"

Because they're starting

from scratch, "The one benefit we think we have is we don't have any invested infrastructure. Whatever structure they want us to use, that's the structure we'll put in place," Ryan said.

The testing equipment they plan to use would be adaptable so it could be used to test for other viruses in the future.

"The lab is a means to the end. Our goal is what can we do to get real aggressive tracking and testing here in Niagara," Curtis said.

Boosting lab capacity in Ontario, is the best thing that could come out of this, Ryan said. "The second-best thing would be to have part of that capacity in the Niagara region simply because it creates a good economic opportunity."

It would create jobs, including for younger people, and he believes "we have the quality of people in this region who would operate that facility at the highest standard and deliver what the province wants out of labs. I'm convinced we could put together the people who would do that."

First phase of heritage trail improvement set to begin

The Lake Report

Work is expected to begin in early June on the first phase of preserving and rehabilitating the Upper Canada Heritage Trail in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The section of trail from John Street south to Paffard Street at Charlotte Street is the first segment that will be improved, the town's heritage trail committee announced this week.

The three-metre-wide trail will have a fine, crushed stone surface. The project is expected to take four weeks to complete, depending on the weather.

In 2019, the committee was formed to preserve and rehabilitate the trail along the old rail line, which follows the historic Erie and Ontario Railroad along Concession 1. This was one of the first railroads in the

province and was used for over 100 years.

The committee's objective is to incorporate the Heritage Trail as an integral part of the active transportation system in Niagara-on-the-Lake, connecting communities and offering a multi-use trail for residents, the town said in a news release.

Thanks to generous donations from local "trail blazers," the committee can afford to start the work now.

Many of the donations have come from supporters in town and from people whose homes back on to the trail, the committee said.

"Thank you to everyone who has generously donated toward this trail rehabilitation," stated Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

"I'm so proud of our residents and community partners for valuing transportation connectivity and taking pride in the heritage



A dated sign for Upper Canada Heritage Trail, maintained by Upper Canada Equestrian Association. BRITTANY CARTER

legacy of this town. A big thank you to the heritage trail committee members for their dedication to this project. A job well done."

The committee, a group of dedicated volunteers,


hopes to achieve more milestones that will continue to raise awareness of the trail and sustain its maintenance.

Visit www.heritagetrail.ca for more information and a list of donors.

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Of 21 cases, **most** are travel-related

Continued from Front Page

the 21 cases, all came from travel, close contact or community spread.

There have been nine travel-related cases, five community-spread cases and seven close contact cases. The number of deaths by municipality has not been released.

Niagara's acting chief medical officer of health, Dr. Mustafa Hirji, said people should keep in mind that the numbers don't necessarily reflect where people are getting infected.

"What we have here is where a person lives. It doesn't necessarily mean it's where someone may have contracted it from. If someone is regularly going to a store in another municipality, working in a third municipality, it's possible they could have got their infection in any one of those places, and we don't really know that. We can only really code them by where they live."

He said there's also a delay in time from when a person might be exposed to infection and when they are tested.

"So, we're looking back probably close to two weeks, in terms of when someone might actually have had the contact that led to exposure. This isn't necessarily reflective of right now, it's more reflective of what may have happened in the past."

He said as far as active



Margot Hickson, now recovered, contracted COVID-19 while away on vacation. FILE/KEVIN MACLEAN

cases, those are the ones that are potentially still infectious, however those people have been isolated.

"So they wouldn't really be around and potentially spreading infection."

The main risk comes from people who haven't been tested, "Because otherwise we would have already identified them."

He said a key thing to remember is the numbers don't show what the risk is, or where the risk is, but that everybody in Niagara is potentially at some risk.

"Everybody I think in Niagara is potentially at some risk, so we all need to take measures to continue protecting ourselves and protecting everybody else around us. That means we need to keep up our physical distancing, we need to continue being really good about hand hygiene, we need to avoid going out for frivolous reasons, make sure we're going out to get something important done."

Of the 21 cases in NOTL, two were related to outbreaks at health care facilities, but not facilities in NOTL.

"What this likely reflects is that there are people who live in Niagara-on-the-Lake who may have become infected because they work in an outbreak facility, or you had people who live in NOTL who are hospitalized in a hospital ward that underwent an outbreak."

Niagara-on-the-Lake long-term care homes have not had an outbreak so far.

As far as things reopening and what that could look like for Niagara, Hirji said it's difficult to know.

"It's hard to obviously predict the future to know for sure," he said.

"I think a positive part is, of course, that lots of people who have been hurting by not being able to work, or having their small business not operating, are fortunately going to be able to start getting back to work and

hopefully start to make that livelihood again," he said.

"There is, of course, the risk that more people are going to be out and shopping at the local businesses, and that's certainly something that we do want to see, people supporting our local businesses, but there's also a risk that people can start transmitting infection because they might be integrating more closely."

That means it is really important in the next while as businesses reopen, "because COVID-19 is not gone yet, that we keep physical distancing up, we keep washing our hands frequently."

The other message Niagara's public health department wants to emphasize is that people should get tested.

"We want to make sure we're finding as many infections out in the community as possible. When we know about an infection, we can isolate the person, we can do our contact tracing and isolate the contacts, and stop that infection from spreading any further."

He encourages anyone with any symptoms, even mild ones, such as a runny nose, to contact public health for testing.

"The more we can identify the cases, obviously we control the outbreak better, and again it gives more freedom for government to keep opening things up."



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We would like to thank everyone who has donated so far to the GoFundMe to help the paper, set up generously by Chef Ryan Crawford of Ruffino's and Backhouse.

So far there has been \$5,605 raised towards the \$30,000 goal.

We encourage anyone who can to make a donation to help us to meet this goal. All money raised goes directly towards printing and distribution costs for the paper, so we can continue to ensure NOTL's #1 newspaper reaches all members of our community during this pandemic, especially our seniors who are most at risk. Local news is more important than ever.

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The Lake Report

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Hang those baskets! Town **revives** flower program

The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has decided to revive its hanging basket program for 2020.

The decision was made "to further stimulate Niagara-on-the-Lake's economy as it gradually begins to reopen," the town said in a news release.

"The beautiful hanging baskets that adorn the streets of all five Niagara-on-the-Lake villages are one of our town's signature features," Lord Mayor Betty Disero said in the release.

"The breathtaking flower arrangements provide a

vibrancy to our town that residents and visitors have come to expect and appreciate. While we are not yet back to business as usual, I'm hopeful that the installation of these baskets will be another way to bring back some semblance of normalcy and hope to the town streets."

The town announced the cancellation of the basket program on April 28 as a result of "inadequate staffing numbers and budget issues related to COVID-19."

"In the weeks since this announcement, town staff have worked hard to recover some additional savings in

order to revive this program," said the town.

The decision to bring the program back was made after ensuring it is "still financially feasible and responsible, that the necessary contract staff can be rehired to create, hang and maintain the baskets, and that appropriate safety precautions can be maintained at all times."

"Staff feels that the revival of this program will not only support the recovery of the town's local economy, but it will also positively contribute to the mental well-being of residents and visitors," the town

announcement said.

"We're thrilled to find ourselves in a position where we can safely bring back our hanging baskets," stated Interim CAO Sheldon Randall.

"We've had a lot of comments just this afternoon at how pleased and how happy a lot of our residents are with moving forward with this program. So, I think it's a good news story," Randall told council Monday night.

Baskets are being prepared now and plans are to hang them in early to mid-June, depending on weather and staff resources.

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Image Detail: Tom Thomson, Twilight, pre-1914 Collection of Samuel E. Weir ©RiverBrink Art Museum

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Library gets creative during COVID

Jessica Maxwell
The Lake Report

NOTL residents can now look forward to getting library books back in their hands.

Starting June 8, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library will launch curbside pickup for community members.

The library spent the last two months operating strictly online through its website, with online workshops, clubs and trivia.

Returns now can be dropped-off at the library and holds can be placed on books for the upcoming curbside pickup. Reservations can be made by phone or online.

"We've just started receiving book returns. Our dropbox was not open until last week," Debbie Krause, the library's community engagement co-ordinator, told The Lake Report on Tuesday.

"Today was the first day some books came out of quarantine," she said.

"Books always go through a 72-hour quarantine before we can actually check them in and shelve them. So today was the very first day we were actually putting books on the shelf, and also pulling holds for people who had holds in place before the lockdown."

Cathy Simpson, chief librarian and CEO, said the 72-hour quarantine of returned materials is done to ensure safety.

The library's curbside pickup service will involve reserving a book, either online or by phone, and then scheduling a time to pickup at the library.

This past Tuesday was the first day people could arrange for June 8 curbside pickup – and all available spots on that first pickup day were quickly filled.

"Staff handling materials will be wearing masks and gloves and we're looking to schedule the pickups far enough apart so that people don't cross each other's paths," Simpson said.

Patrons won't be able to enter the building, but the



Debbie Krause, community engagement co-ordinator at NOTL public library. FILE PHOTO

library will be utilizing the circular drive out front as a kind of drive-thru, she said.

"You don't have to drive, you can walk too," Simpson said.

"That way people will just pull up or walk up. We have a mobile bookcase that'll be out there, and their items will be clearly labelled so they don't end up touching other people's stuff."

Krause said the library will post videos and pictures online to show how the process is going to work so people know what to expect.

"Near the end of June, we will be implementing a delivery service to our homebound patrons, or those who are most isolated," she said, "but the logistics of that needs to be sorted out a little bit."

She said the library has quite a few patrons who can't leave home and was operating a robust delivery service before all the shutdowns due to COVID-19.

"We know those people are out there, definitely. They've been on our minds this whole time because so much has gone online," she said. "And those are also the people that can't be reached

that way, so sooner rather than later, hopefully, we'll be able to get that going."

"We're asking for people's patience, but we're using an abundance of caution just slowly trying to get the protocols in place, one step at a time," Krause added.

"It can work as slick as possible but there are going to be kinks because we've had so many unknowns. So one thing at a time."

Krause recognizes her hardworking team that knows if something needs to be done, they are all willing to do it.

"It's not going to be perfect but at least something's happening and we'll get the books into their hands as quick as we can, as cautiously as possible."

While residents are eager to get reading materials back in their hands, there is a wealth of resources through the library online at www.notlpubliclibrary.org.

The website provides online reading resources available through Cloud Library for adults and the Tumble Books Collection for children. The National Film Board of Canada and Mango Languages are also accessible from the li-

brary's homepage for those looking for something interesting to watch or to learn a new language.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Heritage Portal on the website is where the library is digitizing its local history collection for community members to learn more about the town they live in.

Simpson said another easy-to-use resource on the website is a link on the homepage called "While the library is closed," which is divided into family and adult sections.

These provide curated resources including online programming information, activities and lessons, virtual story times and book readings, zoo and museum experiences, concert streams, exercise videos, free streaming services and limited-time free trials.

Simpson wants patrons to know there are all kinds of great resources available on the library's website.

"You can still talk to us as well," she said. "You can phone us, email us and we have a real-time chat."

Anyone looking for help navigating the new curbside pickup process or online resources is encouraged to contact the library.

During this time of uncertainty, please remember to support the lo

RIDDLE ME THIS

It's the right thing to keep me, even though you've given me to someone else. What am I?

Last Week: I may have eyes but I don't use them to see. I live in the dark until you have need of me. What am I?

Answer: A potato

Answered first by: Margie Enns

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Kathy Neufeld, Kieran Jones, Janice Hall, Elly Koop, Lynda Collet, Brenda Bartley, Quinn Tiller, Katie Reimer, Mike Davies, Susan Hamilton, Sylvia Wiens, Gary Davis, Britiney Turasz, Sheila Meloche, Mary Kolbuc

Email answers, with your name, to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to win a prize. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

with COVID-19

Market opening weekend a success

Jessica Maxwell
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake Farmers' Market staff, vendors and customers experienced the first "physically distancing" market day on Saturday, May 23.

Adapting the market included limiting the number of customers and vendors walking through the market, a hand sanitizing station at the entrance and a reimagined product set up.

"We didn't know what to expect but we had a lot of our regulars coming out and showing us support so it was great," market co-ordinator Sharon Brinsmead-Taylor said.

"I've talked to a few of my vendors about what they felt in their sales," she said.

"A couple of them said that their sales were right on par with prior year opening days and a couple of them actually said that their sales were better than prior years, so I think all in all it was pretty successful.

It was also nice to see so many familiar faces, she said.



Cheese Secrets booth set up at the first farmers' market for 2020. JESSICA MAXWELL

Farmers' market regular Margaret Walker said she is glad to see it open again.

"I'm so, so happy,"

Walker said.

"It's so nice to see some of the vendors back and see some of the people and just to say hello and be out."

Walker said the process set up for the adapted farmers' market works out nicely, but you have to be patient.

Brinsmead-Taylor said she anticipated the first week to be a bit of a learning curve for both the market staff and vendors. She said no major changes are needed to the new set up, just a few tweaks here and there to help things run smoothly.

"Being out there, in an outdoor setting, we're all kind of used to flying by the seat of our pants and mak-

ing adjustments as needed," she said. "So I think it was a good first day."

Market staff said comments from the shoppers who came out were all really positive.

"From a market standpoint, vendor standpoint and customer standpoint I think everybody was pretty happy with the way things went," Brinsmead-Taylor said.

June book club explores women in the War of 1812

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The Friends of Fort George will host a second online book club in June, this time exploring the untold stories of women in the War of 1812.

"After the success of our first book club, where over 50 people participated online and through email, we are excited to host another book club throughout the month of June," Amanda Gamble, executive director of Friends of Fort George, said in a media release.

The club is hosted on Facebook, where organizers will post questions, quotes and pictures about the featured book starting the week of June 1.

This month's book is "In the Midst of Alarms: The Untold Story of Women and the War of 1812."

Anyone who is inter-



Re-enactors show what officers' dinners would have looked like in the War of 1812 for the people in the upper class. FILE/DARIYA BAIGUZHUYEVA

ested can participate by joining the Facebook group "Friends of Fort George - Book Club".

For those who are not on Facebook, but would like to join the discussion, the book club will also be

hosted through email.

Copies of the book are available by mail order, with a 10 per cent discount for NOTL residents throughout May and June, as well as free porch delivery.

The book can be ordered

at <https://friendsoffortgeorge.square.site> or by emailing giftshop@friendsoffortgeorge.ca.

Inquiries on how to participate can be sent to admin@friendsoffortgeorge.ca.



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Have some fun

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**
- Of the red planet (7)
 - Family line (7)
 - Sandbag (4)
 - Hostile (10)
 - Balladeer (8)
 - Resembling a horse (6)
 - Yuletide visitor (5,5)
 - Talk irrationally (4)
 - Agitate (4)
 - Not doable (10)
 - Entertains (6)
 - Burn without flame (8)
 - Narrow entrance (10)
 - Encounter (4)
 - "Stand by your Man" singer (7)
 - Exact (7)
- Down**
- Space traveller (9)
 - This evening (7)
 - Water-dwelling (7)
 - Banish (5)
 - Vanquish (7)
 - Thermoplastic yarn (5)
 - From a distance (4)
 - Greek liqueur (4)
 - Member (4)
 - Worth nothing (9)
 - Politician's badge (7)
 - Sensational novel (7)
 - Mohammedan (7)
 - Temperamental (5)
 - Slumbered (5)
 - Storage shelter (4)


Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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INNOVATION IN WINE COUNTRY: Part 6

Henry of Pelham Winery running 'flat out' with new production facilities

Editor's note:
 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we launched our series on Innovation in Wine Country to focus on innovation and expansion in the industry. Today, our final instalment takes a look behind the scenes at Henry of Pelham's new bottling facility and expanded production space.

Jill Troyer
 The Lake Report



Bottles being rinsed and filled. JILL TROYER

A newly completed production and storage space and high-tech bottling line is the single biggest capital investment ever for Henry of Pelham, says Matt Speck, owner/operator and vineyard manager.

The bottling line in action is an impressive sight to see.

Each bottle is unerringly guided through the same steps by the softly whirring machinery.

First the bottles are unloaded onto the waiting conveyer, swept along to the next station where they are rinsed, then they fall into the circle where they are precisely filled before being propelled to the machinery that applies the closure, whether cork or screw cap, and then

around the corner for labeling, before snaking along the super-structure to be packed, put on pallets and shrink wrapped. This new bottling line delivers greater speed, increased capacity and enhanced flexibility.

"We can do 100 bottles per minute," explains Speck. That translates to about 5,600 bottles per hour.

At that rate, the winery's bottling capacity is quadrupled.

"Our old bottling line was in the same space as our winemaking, so we couldn't bottle during harvest and

production. We could only bottle from January to August," Speck says, adding, "In this new scenario, we have flexibility for bottling 12 months per year."

"Our capacity was too small for our needs, so we're using much of the extra capacity. We also speculated there would be a need for custom bottling we could do for other wineries, and it's turned out to be even greater than we thought," he says.

The system offers greatly enhanced flexibility in the types of labels it can apply. The old system could apply

one front label and one back label. The new one can do "up to four different labels, including various styles of neck bands, medallions and medals," Speck says.

There are also more options for closures, including screw cap, premium screw cap, cork and sparkling cork and foil.

That last feature will be well used, since "we intend to do more sparkling wine," he says.

The popularity of sparkling wine is growing, notes head winemaker Lawrence Buhn, "especially the charmat method, which makes a

fun, friendly bubbly at lower price points."

When sparkling wine is made in the charmat method, the secondary fermentation, which produces the bubbles, occurs in large tanks. In the traditional method, a more costly process, that stage happens in the bottle, and takes significantly longer.

Just steps away from the new bottling line stand three brand new charmat tanks, ready to start supplying that demand.

The end to end journey for the bottle may be short, but the road to launching the whole system has been a long one.

"It's been two and a half years of design, construction, delivery of equipment and commissioning," explains Buhn.

The first step was the new building for bottling and storage. "It's almost the size of the existing winery," says Speck.

The new bottling system is from Italy. The installation began last October, with set up and commissioning underway in December, and the line became fully operational early in 2020.

One of the first runs on

the new line bottled 2,000 cases of Chardonnay in just two days. "It's pretty exciting for this team," enthuses Buhn.

The winery has made adjustments to make sure staff are safe working in this pandemic era, but "the production side is still producing, and the crop is still growing," says Speck. "We're trying to run full speed."

"LCBO and grocery sales have been good," he notes and "they account for 75 per cent of our overall sales." Restaurant and onsite sales are down, but online sales have "really taken off," he adds.

"The vans we use to deliver to restaurants we're now using to deliver direct to customers."

The winery has plans to set up outdoor spaces to accommodate visitors at safe distances later in the summer.

"I'm kind of optimistic we'll be busy. We need to be creative with our outdoor spaces."

READ THE SERIES:
 To see our entire six-part series, go to www.niagararow.com and search on "innovation in wine country."

Town opens green spaces and some recreational amenities

Richard Harley
 The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has opened all municipal green spaces and some recreational amenities effective Wednesday, May 20.

Open are: pavilions, shelters, soccer fields, basketball courts and baseball diamonds.

These spaces are open for use by people from one household only, the town said in a media release.

Organized recreational sports are still not permitted — yet.

The changes come after last week's announcement

that town tennis and pickleball courts would reopen and are a "direct response to the provincial news release issued on May 19."

Town staff has begun removing "park closed" signs and will install revised signage advising of safety measures in their place, the town said.

"Staff will also begin removing yellow caution tape from park benches and returning picnic tables to green spaces in the coming days and weeks. Furthermore, the majority of municipal parking lots will be reopened to accommodate those visiting town parks."

The town is asking the public to be patient as staff implement changes.

Town-operated outdoor playgrounds, structures and equipment, fitness equipment, public swimming pools, splash pads and wading pools remain closed for now.

Anyone planning to utilize municipal green spaces, recreational amenities, or benches and picnic tables are "strongly encouraged to ensure preventive measures, as outlined by the Niagara Region public health department, are followed at all times," the town said.

"I fear people may gain



People gathered in Simcoe Park on Sunday. For the most part they appeared to be distancing. RICHARD HARLEY

a false sense of security with these reopenings," said Lord Mayor Betty Disero, in the release.

She said it is "imperative that everyone continues to follow public health guidelines, the most important being to stay home."

She said if you can't stay home, you should practice social distancing.

"If you go out and use town spaces and amenities, please only do so with members of your household. If you're near people who do not reside with you, always maintain physical distance."

She noted the province is recommending wearing a cloth mask if you cannot maintain physical distance.

By-law enforcement officers will continue to enforce provincial emergency orders, including restricting gatherings of more than five people outside the same household.

Those wishing to report a violation or issue a complaint are encouraged to email covidcomplaints@notl.com.



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Queen Street businesses put safety first

Continued from Front Page

really not a lot left over.”

He said the store has been coping by trying to mitigate the losses.

“We’re knocking down the labour cost as much as we can. I’m only here today because the owner actually had a meeting this afternoon or else it would be the owner that was here. So, you know, we’re doing everything we can to try to maximize our earning potential,” he said.

“But at the same time, this is Memorial Day weekend where, I mean, we should be full of Americans. And the border is closed. So, like I said, it is absolutely the best thing for everybody from a safety standpoint. But from a business standpoint, it’s not doing us any favours.”

He said for him, it’s nice to be working.

“It’s nice to be out of the house for a change. My wife’s a PSW, so she’s getting like 40-plus hours a week, but I’ve had to completely restrict my travel. I go to like Shoppers Drug Mart once a week. That’s my weekly outing.

Because I can’t get sick because if I do, she does and then she can’t work.”

Down the street at The Butterfly Gallery, owner Jadwiga Dabrowski says it’s good to be open again, though things are a bit slower than usual.

“But we’re very happy that we’re able to open back up and take it slowly,” she said.

She has a four-person limit in the store, a protective screen at the checkout and is constantly sanitizing the store after every customer.

She said she’s had to ask a couple of people to wait outside, and so far customers are respecting the store’s safety protocols.

“I’m very pleased with the way customers are acting. They all respect the rules, use hand sanitizer and keep a distance,” she said.

Like the rest of the stores, she said she’s doing her best to keep people safe.

“All of us are trying to do our best to stay open and do everything possible not to increase (spread) and go back to what we had



Top left: Dan Holden, an employee at Oliv Tasting Room. Bottom left: Bill Pullman, owner of Old Town Goodies. Right: Shannon Berardi, manager of Wow Me Gadgets and Wow Me Too. JESSICA MAXWELL

before,” she said.

“So everyone is really trying their best to be able to prevent any spread of the disease, as much as possible. And we’re all trying to navigate through the new way of shopping being open and interacting, with each other, which is not an easy task to do.”

right till July possibly. So anything is a little bit better than nothing, I guess at this point.”

She said the store has been doing well in online sales.

“We’ve been running our website and doing curbside pickup and all that kind of stuff. So that’s been doing

Like the others, Beau Chapeau has taken extra measures to be safe. The store has made masks mandatory for everyone and was even supplying them to customers.

“It just is more comfortable for us as sales associates. We have some tight corners in here (which) makes it difficult to maintain that six-foot distance all the time. So, we’ve done that for our staff and our guests. And a lot of the locals seem to really appreciate that,” she said.

“I was speaking to a guy yesterday, he almost had me in tears, he was so happy that we were doing that ... it’s a kindness at this point to make sure that we’re doing that.”

She said the store plans to keep the mask policy in until the state of emergency ends in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

At Old Town Goodies, owner Bill Pullman said the weekend was busier than he thought it would be, though

it wasn’t as brisk as the typical American holiday weekend.

“Not as busy as a normal May weekend, obviously. But pretty good,” he said.

Many businesses are “taking a hit” during the week, he said.

“We’ve heard from other people that during the week (business) is dead, but what are you gonna do? There’s no international flights, the border’s closed. And the Shaw usually has five or six plays open. So those day-trippers aren’t coming down either. Anybody doing wine tours are not coming down. We’ve talked to a couple of tour guides, like they work with bus companies, and they’re all cancelled right to the end of June. So, they’re not going to come until mid-July probably.”

He said he’s had to cut back on staff to try to mitigate some losses.

At Wow Me Gadgets, the store is defying the odds, and just opened for the first time on Saturday.

Store manager Shan-

non Berardi said it’s been an interesting experience opening a new store amid a pandemic.

“When we got the green light open we kind of just jumped on it and opened up our doors,” she said.

“So we had a couple sales, which was nice — two local people, which was nice as well.”

She said the biggest challenge is making sure people feel comfortable coming in to shop and she is also taking extra measures to make sure it’s safe.

The store has set up tape markers, plexiglass, hand sanitizer and is limiting customers to four at a time.

Still, she said, people are unsure about coming in.

“I think a lot of people kind of like walk by, look, and they’re a little hesitant to come in.”

She said she thinks some people just aren’t ready to enter stores yet if they don’t need something essential, and others might not think spending money right now is a good idea.

“We’ve heard from other people that during the week (business) is dead, but what are you gonna do? There’s no international flights, the border’s closed. And the Shaw usually has five or six plays open. So those day-trippers aren’t coming down either.”

BILL PULLMAN
OLD TOWN GOODIES

At Beau Chapeau, which reopened the Wednesday before the weekend, manager Nicole Fraser says it’s been “unpredictable.”

“But (it’s) not too bad. We’ve had some traffic. It hasn’t been as busy as we expected. But we also kind of expected to be closed

really well for us. We’ve still kind of made ends meet at least that way.”

While weekdays are slow, the weekends are busy “traffic-wise,” she said.

“We were pretty busy on Saturday and Sunday for sure.”

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Dr. Brown: An imaginative alternative to the pandemic: **Change the universe**

Dr. William Brown
Special to The Lake Report

We all need a rest from the pandemic – why not try physics?

The 20th century was the golden age of physics and cosmology. At the start of the century there was one galaxy (the Milky Way), one particle (the electron) and the universe was a stable affair.

And by the end of a very busy and productive century we had learned that the universe was expanding under the influence of a mysterious expansile force called dark energy, time and space were warped by massive objects, the ultimate expression of which were black holes, and the visible universe made up less than 5 per cent of the total universe, and of the rest, 65 per cent was dark energy and 29 per cent was dark matter.

Then there was the physics of a menagerie of tiny subatomic particles and their associated fields, some of which, like the quanta of the electromagnetic spectrum, are without mass and others of which turned out to have differing masses. All were governed by natural laws and forces.

The “quantum field theory,” as it was called, matured and became known as the Standard Model into which neatly fit all the known particles and their associated fields. Or so many physicists thought. But there was a fly in the Standard Model’s ointment: What conferred mass on those particles which, for example, made up the nucleus of atoms?

Over 50 years ago, Peter



Large Hadron Collider. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Higgs, a young physicist, proposed a radical idea: what if there was yet another field, passage through which, conferred mass on particles, more mass for the larger ones and less for smaller particles. The field became known as the Higgs field and the associated particle as the Higgs particle.

After some initial wariness, the theory became widely accepted and, finally, using the giant Hadron Collider in Switzerland, the illusive Higgs particle was found. In short order, the Nobel Prize was awarded to a beaming, now white-haired Higgs in 2013 to a joyous worldwide audience of physicists and a public enamoured with the “god” particle, so named by Leon Lederman in his 2006 book, “The God Particle: If the Universe is the Answer, What is the question?”

Now on to the really interesting stuff. Given the fact that the masses of several types of particles were imparted to them by the Higgs field and that the relationships between different particles were related to their mass, what if the value of the Higgs field changed?

Such a change might have catastrophic consequences for the subatomic building blocks of all atoms, molecules, all of chemistry and, therefore, life. There’s no reason to suppose that the Higgs field has changed in the 13.8 billion years since the Big Bang – but the question is – could it?

Brian Greene, the well-known MIT physicist and author, in his superb new book, “To Explain the World,” raises that very question. The answer depends on a fundamental property of the quantum world whereby, every event can only be described in probabilistic terms – not as certainties.

Using one of Greene’s examples, imagine a glass marble at the bottom of a fluted champagne glass and ask the question – what’s the chance of that marble escaping? Short of the glass falling over or breaking for some reason, your answer might be very unlikely or perhaps never.

Now let’s shift to the quantum world and imagine an electron lying in the bottom of the same glass – what’s the chance of that electron jumping out or

perhaps through the glass? In the quantum world the answer is probabilistic: in this case very unlikely but possible, given enough time for the electron to escape.

And in the universe, we inhabit, there’s plenty of time, billions, trillions and trillions of trillions of years. Over such a timespan, even unlikely events become likely sooner or later, as the case might be with a change in the Higgs field.

The chance of the Higgs’ field changing and setting the mass characteristics of most particles, is small – after all, it hasn’t happened since the Big Bang. But it could happen anytime, even in the far distant future.

Theoretically, such a change would upset all the natural laws, constants and the subatomic bits and pieces that make up all the various atoms and any arrangements of atoms into molecules, if indeed any atoms are possible.

And should it happen, it probably will begin in one spot in the universe and spread outward at the speed of light, leaving a universe within the circle without particles and anything we would recognize and business as usual beyond, for whatever time remained. It’s an exercise in playful imagination at a time where we need imagination. Tune in for more surprises in the universe.

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the Info-health series held on the second Wednesday of each month at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.



Electrical lines on the ground outside of Willow Cakes & Pastries after being pulled out of the building by a passing truck. JESSICA MAXWELL

Garbage truck **pulls** service line down

Jessica Maxwell
The Lake Report

Electrical power to Willow Cakes & Pastries was cut off around 9:30 Monday morning after a passing garbage truck yanked the service line out of the building.

“All of a sudden, I was upstairs and the whole building started to shake,” said Catherine O’Donnell, head chef at Willow.

“I look out and all I see is wires everywhere,” she said. “An environmental truck went through (the intersection) and he caught the wire.”

The truck was passing through the intersection at Mary and Mississagua streets headed southeast on Mary as it passed the building and struck the wire.

“The truck hit our phone wire and our hydro wire and ripped all the hydro out of the building,” she said.

NOTL Hydro responded quickly after her son Sean called. “They were here within about 10 to 15 minutes,” O’Donnell said.

“A truck hit the line and unfortunately pulled the service out,” said Tim Curtis, president of NOTL Hydro.

NOTL Hydro has to work with the electrician at the customer’s location to coordinate and rebuild.

“Of course, you’re trying to do that as quick as reasonable so the customer

can get power back,” Curtis said.

“Unfortunately, these things happen, so we try to get on them right away and get the power back.”

O’Donnell said the response from NOTL Hydro was impressive.

“The guy basically just said, ‘This is our fault, it’s our wire, we’re calling an electrician’ and the electrician was here within 20 minutes,” O’Donnell said. “Now it’s just a waiting game to get it fixed.”

All staff had to be sent home after the incident Monday morning and for the rest of the day Willow was only able to offer customers what was already baked and available to sell.

“Probably tomorrow we’ll have to close, too,” O’Donnell said. “Then we have to do inventory because the fridges, freezers, everything is off,” she said in an interview on Monday.

“So, we’ll have to start from scratch.”

Although this incident happened after the weekend, any business missed out on can hurt as shops like try to bounce back from the pandemic, O’Donnell said.

“We’ll find out once they get the hydro up if we’ve lost any equipment or if the damage is done internally. We won’t know until they turn it on.”

Willow was back baking on Wednesday.

Town says **no** to garage sales, for now

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is asking people not to hold garage sales during the state of emergency due to COVID-19.

As of press time Wednesday, Lord Mayor Betty Disero could not confirm if garage sales are technically

illegal under provincial orders, but she said they are “not recommended.”

The town put out a news release in early May to let people know: “Garage and yard sales are considered to unnecessarily encourage contact between individuals. As such, the town will not permit sales of this kind to take place while emergency

orders remain in effect, or until further notice is given.”

The release said town bylaw officers will be “following up with reported or spotted advertisements for garage or yard sales, advising those responsible not to operate. Persons found in contravention of these warnings will be fined.”



Despite the town urging people not to hold garage sales, someone in Garrison Village held one on the weekend. RICHARD HARLEY



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An empty street



A rare shot of a silent, carless Niagara-on-the-Lake. Photographer Sonja Schindeler took the picture in early May, early in the morning. SUBMITTED

Charlie will be missed



A grey tabby tom cat, Charlie was a regular fixture at Lakeshore Antiques & Treasures. Sadly, he passed away last weekend and will be missed by staff and many of our customers. He enjoyed laying across the hallway so all had to stop and pet him, voicing his opinion on whether it was treat time, hiding out for naps on blankets or his favourite spare paper box under the cash counter. Charlie was quite the character and made an impression on everyone he met. Regular customers would enjoy looking for Charlie and when they didn't see him would ask where he was hiding. The surprising thing was that he really belonged to the family next door and at closing time went back home. Charlie, a lovely big tom cat, will be missed by all the staff at Lakeshore Antiques & Treasures and customers alike. SUBMITTED BY MARG CASWELL

Two accidents within hours on Niagara Stone

Continued from Front Page

Highway Traffic Act and not the Criminal Code of Canada.”

NOTL resident Kirby Davis emailed The Lake Report shortly after the incident to express concerns about the speed limit on the road.

“It appears (the victim) will be OK, but I am angered at the speed limit within Old Town and basically from where the Old Winery restaurant is to Virgil is 70 km/h. There is no need to have the speed limit at 70. I have witnessed too many cars fly through the intersection with no regards to the speed or signals of the traffic lights,” Davis wrote.



A two-vehicle collision on Niagara Stone Road sent three people to the hospital Saturday. RICHARD HARLEY

“Quite frankly I am surprised we have not seen more accidents at this intersection. This needs to be addressed and now before there is another accident and possible death.”

Not long afterward, a two-vehicle col-

lision near Hunter Road sent three people to hospital with minor injuries, police said.

The collision occurred at about 1 p.m. when a 68-year-old male driver from Fort Erie attempted to make a U-turn on Niagara

Stone Road, investigators said.

The vehicle he was driving was struck by an oncoming car, police said.

The man from Fort Erie was charged with careless driving under the Highway Traffic Act.

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Obituary Anna Robertson



ROBERTSON, Anna “Ann” (DYCK) (nee BARTELS)- On May 15, 2020. We celebrate the life of our beloved Ann, who went to be with the Lord in her 98th year. Ann will be sadly missed by her son Jim; son Gord (Mary Anne) grandchildren Chris (Meredith), great-granddaughters Savanna and Erika; grand-

son Dan (Gill), great-grandchildren Annabelle and Nolan; daughter Karen; daughter Nancy (Kevin Dick) grandchildren Ashley and Connor; step-son Bill (Susan) Robertson, step-grandsons Mark (Julie) and step great-grandson Mason; step-grandson Warren (Andrea), step-great-grandchildren Noah and Elsie; step-son Bob (Sharon) Robertson, step-grandchildren Meagan, Melissa; as well as numerous precious nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her husbands, Jacob Dyck in 1989 and Bruce Robertson in 2002. Born on March 30, 1922, at Fuerstenwerder, Ukraine, her family immigrated to Canada in July 1924, settling at Beavertown and then Hespeler in the Cambridge, Ontario area. With her father, she helped to build a home in Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1940. On May 11, 1946, she married Jake Dyck and tended to their small farm while Jake started his car sales business. They raised their family in the Niagara-on-the-Lake area. They wintered in Florida and travelled extensively around the world, experiencing adventures that few of us can imagine. Ann had known Bruce Robertson for many years. They married October 24, 1992, continuing to winter in Florida and travelling. The story of her life, the lessons and her values are embedded in our hearts to cherish forever. Ann was a woman of great faith who loved the Lord. She was a kind, generous, and loving soul who treasured her family and friends, giving of herself and her time freely to everyone. For over 15 years, she resided at Pleasant Manor in Virgil, reuniting with life-long pals and enjoying new friendships. If euchre, rummy cube and scrabble were competitive sports, she would be a gold medal champion. Ann will be missed more than words can express. Our sincerest thanks go to the wonderful and caring staff at Pleasant Manor who are beyond comparison in their compassion and dedication. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Ann’s memory to the Mennonite Central Committee, or a charity of your choice would be accepted by the family.

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com

In memoriam

Dr. J.R (Dick) Armstrong



Dr. J.R. (Dick) Armstrong - August 25, 1930 - June 2, 2019.

Remembered lovingly by wife, Diane. Sadly missed by children, David (Marlene), Bruce (Nicole), Anne (Allan), grandchildren, Kristen, Heather and step-children, Jocelyn, Alison, and Chuck Conley.

To share your memories of loved ones with the community, email editor@niagaranow.com

The Checkout: Smalltown grocers social hubs

NOTL resident John Scott is chair of Niagara College, as well as a former CEO, current board member and retail adviser in the grocery industry. He offers his perspectives from the grocery aisles in the era of COVID-19.

John Scott
Special to The Lake Report

Peter and Jacqui have been owners of a grocery store in a small community in northern Ontario for over 30 years.

From the outset, in pursuing this career, they understood that they would hold a very special role. They would need to ensure that each day on opening their store was not only filled with product but that the environment was pleasant and conducive to a leisurely shop; they were current with community issues and events to discuss with consumers; they knew the days when pensions and payroll were received; they were prepared to listen carefully to stay abreast of changing consumer demands; they knew and responded to special days for regular customers; and above all they were prepared to delight every consumer that came into their store.

Over the years they rolled with their commu-



People lined up to get into Phil's Valu-mart. FILE PHOTO

nity realizing that evolving demographics result in the need to accommodate new preferences.

One of the major trends became the daily shop by their growing, retired population. They came to understand that their store was a respite for loneliness and, for many, was no longer just a place to buy groceries – but had become a needed part of their personal community.

So, they encouraged their staff members to interact with these consumers and over time a special bond was formed.

Enter COVID-19. A few weeks ago, we had a Zoom call with Peter and Jacqui and the conversation moved to the dramatic changes in the business and the adjustments they had been forced to make.

One was the significant increase in online and de-

livery orders. Another was the limitation of the number of customers in the store.

But the one that clearly hit Jacqui the hardest was the need to request that customers limit their store visits to once per week. She knew the personal impact this new policy would have on so many of both her consumers and staff.

With tears streaming down her cheeks she told us that many seniors were calling her with their order rather than going online.

The reason: they wanted to chat with someone who was an essential part of their community. The solution: Jacqui has chosen to stay on the line and speak with them despite her workload.

This reality came home to me in spades when I read the news media reports quoting requests by our local Valu-mart retailers that

consumers limit the number of times per week they are in store.

I know that it has been extremely difficult to refocus grocery stores from being a delightful shopping experience to an essential food depot. It has been even more challenging to change the mix in product offering.

But that aside, I can guarantee that asking our NOTL consumers, (many of whom shop every day for the same reasons Jacqui and Peter have experienced), to limit visits to what has become an essential element in their personal community has been one of the hardest requests they have ever made of their customers.

It's the antithesis of the concept of the community grocery retailer who is always on your side and strives to accommodate your needs at every turn.

So, we owe much more to these retailers than the reality of the exceptional job they are doing in being open and fulfilling our needs through this crisis.

We owe them compassion and understanding as not only their business model, but their social reality is being sorely challenged. Our visible goodwill, expressions of appreciation and steady patronage are essential and must extend well beyond this crisis.

'45,000 people' enter Old Town on weekend

Continued from Front Page

Old Town on the weekend of May 2 and 3.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said the statistics are concerning and the town needs to be “very careful” about how it handles the situation — especially with how well the town has done so far in minimizing COVID-19 infections.

“Our numbers were really good, in terms of 21 (cases). Particularly since we have so many people coming back from being away in the winter, I’m really pleased that we were able to keep it down as low as we did. But now as people start to get complacent, that’s going to be difficult,” she said.

She acknowledged that people are tired of staying at home.

“They want to go out and see new places and spaces. And we are such a beautiful town that a lot of them are choosing to come here. So again, we have to be very careful in how we react to that influx of people. If we protect ourselves, that’s all we can do, because the province is opening things up.”

Disero urged NOTL residents to avoid the large crowds on weekends to stay safe.

Randall said the town will continue using traffic counters until the end of the summer.

During the weekend, town bylaw enforcement handed



Lord Mayor Betty Disero says she recognizes people are tired of staying at home.. SUPPLIED

out eight fines for breaking emergency orders.

Coun. Clare Cameron asked Randall what the guidance is on having friends visit at houses.

Randall said that would be up to provincial regulations.

Provincial regulations say to limit the number of visitors in your home and only have visitors whom you

must see (for example, for medical reasons or to drop off groceries).

“Do not invite people over to socialize,” says the Ontario website.

If having a visitor for an essential purpose, the province advises to keep such visits short and don’t visit with people who are in at-risk groups.



The social medium is the message

Town of NOTL team takes creative approach to communicating with residents during pandemic

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

“Hello, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Betty Disero here ...”

The lord mayor, with her signature sign-on, the fire chief, a town bylaw enforcement officer and even a capeless crusader are among the new “stars” featured in a series of YouTube videos produced by a group of employees from the municipality.

It’s all part of a new approach to getting the town’s message out, using social media, video and sometimes a bit of humour to keep people calm in the middle of a pandemic.

Led by Lauren Kruitbosch and Beth Audet, the 21st-century communication strategy seems to be paying off – some of Disero’s videos have had hundreds of views and a few have attracted between 1,000 and 3,000 clicks. And the April 25 “Make Some Noise” project for front-line workers had people all over town banging and clanging.

A few months back, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake set in motion plans to boost its presence on social media, but the COVID-19 pandemic has sent that game plan into overdrive.

It’s a tag-team approach, thanks to Kruitbosch and Audet, who say they feed off one another’s creative and innovative instincts to come up with new approaches to bring the municipality’s message to the masses.

Audet, 35, who until a few months ago was

actually covering NOTL council as a reporter for the Niagara Advance newspaper, is a talented photographer who brings a keen eye to the video and image side of the communication strategy, says Kruitbosch.

And Audet credits the creative instincts of Kruitbosch, 28, with inspiring many of the concepts that the duo – with lots of help from a team of colleagues – has brought to life.

Over the past two months or so that team has created literally dozens of online messages for the public: from inspirational notes (“What are you grateful for today?” and a video titled “Not all heroes wear capes”), practical and promotional (#StayHomeNOTL, Make Some Noise, Shop Local), and helpful (Community assistance is available, area businesses that are doing good deeds).

The hardworking team also includes Ashlea Carter, Tara Druzina, Lucie Palka and Colleen Hutt, who work on everything from managing frequently asked questions, to co-ordinating the town’s Community Assistance Program, creating posters, or tracking what’s open, closed or cancelled.

In the midst of the pandemic, with citizens largely locked down and the town trying to keep everyone calm and carrying on, being able to get messages out to residents, visitors and the media has been crucial. Now, with businesses slowly reopening and pan-

FEATURED LOCAL STORY



Beth Audet, top left, and Lauren Kruitbosch, top right, lead the Town of NOTL’s creative and innovative approach to communicating with residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. SUPPLIED

demic protocols changing, it’s important to continue getting the word out.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero has been impressed with the efforts of Kruitbosch and Audet, who she notes, work “every day, seven days a week and many more than eight hours a day.”

“Lauren and Beth have worked over and above to keep the community of Niagara-on-the-Lake informed and educated on all events and decisions” being made by the town’s emergency control group, an assembly of key town personnel who have been quarterbacking municipal operations during the pandemic.

And, as active members of that group, Kruitbosch and Audet “come up with ideas to keep up the spirits of our residents during this time of stay home,” Disero says.

It’s been challenging and ever-changing as COVID-19 forced everyone, everywhere to behave differently and reassess priorities. For town employees,

that’s meant some hectic, crazy days.

Kruitbosch and Audet says they’ve just taken it “one day at a time, one hour at a time.”

They have embraced the challenge and it seems clear they have a chemistry that enables them to riff off one another creatively, while in conversation they often finish one another’s sentences: When Audet credits Kruitbosch for being a wealth of ideas, Kruitbosch in turn lauds her colleague for bringing “a whole new level of filming ability and editing” to what they do.

“The thing we’re most focused on is making sure the information is consistent, as accurate as possible and timely, too. So, we’re pushing out a lot of information, but it is important we keep everyone up-to-date on what the town is doing in response” to the pandemic, says Kruitbosch.

The pandemic provided a platform and a chance for the duo to work closely together.

And, while she admits it might seem oddly positive to say so in the midst of a pandemic, Audet notes, “The truth is, in having such focused, consistent messaging it has really given us this opportunity to work collaboratively as a team – and it turned out we work really, really well together.”

One thing that makes their job easier is having the emergency control group, interim CAO Sheldon Randall, the lord mayor and council “all on board with this kind of creative messaging and communication,” says Kruitbosch.

Once the pandemic is a distant memory, they hope to continue the town’s innovative approach to communicating after assessing what formats have been the most effective. “Everyone’s listening right now,” notes Audet. “So, we’re pushing out written messages, audio messages, video messages.”

Thus far, their video vignettes have been capturing a lot of attention, they say.

Making videos with Disero is a snap, says Audet. “Betty is just real. It’s not like we’re doing a thousand takes. We literally put a camera in front of her and in one take the message is out there. She’s just real, ready to go.”

While the lord mayor has become the face and voice in much of the messaging, the ultimate goal is to get information out to Niagara-on-the-Lake residents so everyone knows what is going on.

Disero appreciates what the communication team has accomplished and how NOTLers have responded.

“People can handle anything as long as they have information and are given logical rational reasons,” she says.

“Lauren and Beth have been doing that for the town. We could not have been so decisive without their help.”

Check out some of the town’s videos on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/user/NOTL100/videos>.

Do your part. #STAYHOMENOTL