

# The Lake Report

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Hyper-local news for Niagara-on-the-Lake



Taco Bell pairs with NOTL wine | Page 7

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Niagara-on-the-Lake's first independent newspaper

September 24, 2020

## NOTL Hydro worker fired after major fraud discovered

Finance employee stole more than \$250,000, though official number not released



A NOTL Hydro employee was found to have stolen more than \$250,000. RICHARD HARLEY

Kevin MacLean  
Managing Editor

A longtime employee of Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro has been fired after admitting to setting up a fake invoicing scheme and defrauding the utility of more than \$250,000, The Lake Report has learned.

The former staff member, a manager in the finance department, has promised

to pay back the money, NOTL Hydro president Tim Curtis said in an interview.

The manager had repaid 30 per cent of the stolen money as of Tuesday. The exact total of how much was stolen has not been revealed,

In the meantime, hydro has turned the case over to the Niagara Regional Police to pursue possible criminal charges, whether all the

money is returned or not. On the advice of lawyers retained by the utility, Curtis said he could not release the name or personal details of the former employee.

The scheme involved phony invoices issued and paid over an 18-month period, he said.

The fraud "was accomplished by the creation of a false contract and the

approval of subsequent false invoices," Curtis said in a statement to The Lake Report.

"NOTL Hydro is working with the former employee to obtain restitution of all the funds," he said, adding hydro is confident all the money will be recovered.

In the event it is not repaid, hydro has insur-

*Continued on Page 2*



Ben Munro, Ascher, Laura Petronzi, Bill Munro, Ethan and Melanie Morris ran the Terry Fox Run as a family unit.

SUPPLIED PHOTO

## Terry Fox Run raises \$30,000

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

While this year's Terry Fox Run was much different, there was a common theme that resonated with Terry's message: Nothing, not even a global pandemic, was going to stop people from getting out to support the 40th anniversary of Terry's run for cancer research.

Joan King, who organizes a Niagara-on-the-Lake run, was in Simcoe Park Sunday morning, and set up a display of photos from past runs, along with newspaper clippings from Terry's 1980 run, and photos of when he stopped in NOTL.

"I just wanted to keep the spirit alive," said King.

The display of photos showed NOTL participants from 2007 to 2019.

"I wanted (people) to know that there were lots of people that have participated down in the park over all these years. So this was a meaningful anniversary. It's the 40th anniversary and I thought, what can we do to still keep his memory alive?"

She said since the first NOTL run in 1991, the town has raised \$937,000.

"So this year, if we could

raise at least \$62,000, we'd make the million-dollar mark."

So far the run has raised about \$30,000, including online donations, but the final number is not yet known.

NOTL resident Joe Pillitteri, who has traditionally been a major Terry Fox Run fundraiser, has yet to reveal what his Team Pillsy brought in.

Old Town resident Bill Munro joined the run with his family, including his wife, his son and daughter-in-law and his two grandchildren.

"It was great. It's a beautiful, beautiful day for it," he said.

"My best friend, whose name was also Terry, passed away last year just after the Terry Fox Run, and so I dedicated my run last year to him because he passed away of cancer. And I dedicated it this year to him again."

Ben Bartel, who is a fixture at the NOTL runs, said this year's run was "quiet."

"I usually ride the bicycle and I go around twice," he said, adding this year was the first time he's "won" the race.

"I was at the corner at 10 o'clock and the cenotaph bell started ringing, and I took off. And I was first — I won this year."

## Queen's Royal Beach passes 90% of E. coli tests

Kevin MacLean  
Managing Editor

The water at Queen's Royal Beach passed E. coli tests 90 per cent of the time this summer, and only failed three times, regional statistics show.

Data from the Region of Niagara, which oversees beach water testing, shows Queen's Royal only exceeded the limit three times — on June 24, July 17 and July 22.

The change is a remarkable improvement from a

year ago when serious concerns were raised about raw sewage seeping into Lake Ontario.

Water was tested three times each week this summer from June until Aug. 31 in conjunction with a major sewer repair project in Old Town.

The water passed 30 of the 33 times it was tested.

Every day during the summer, visitors flock to Queen's Royal beach, located



Queen's Royal Beach passed 90 per cent of E. coli tests this year. JESSICA MAXWELL

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# Hydro worker fired after **\$250K** fraud discovered

Continued from Front Page

ance that could cover any outstanding amount.

Meanwhile, "there will be no impact on rates nor is NOTL Hydro in any financial danger," he said.

The fraud was discovered by a co-worker in the finance department who was processing a payment.

After the co-worker brought the discrepancy to the attention of senior management, the utility began an internal investigation and subsequently hired a Toronto forensic accounting firm to look into the case.

Only two business days elapsed between the discovery of the fraud on a Thursday and the firing of the employee early last week.

"The board of NOTL Hydro was informed immediately after the fraud was discovered, legal counsel was obtained and a forensic investigator hired," Curtis said.

"Following the termination of the employee, staff and Niagara-on-the-Lake town council were immediately informed," he added.

NOTL Hydro is wholly owned by the municipality.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero declined to comment on the fraud case, noting the hydro board decided all communication on the issue would be handled by Curtis.

Police are assisting with the recovery process and the Niagara force's fraud squad will be involved in the criminal investigation, Curtis said in an interview.

News of the fraud hit Curtis and the staff hard, he noted.

"We work hard here to create a team environment," he said. "When you have a staff that works well together and that provides the best

service to our customers, to find out that somebody was doing something like this is, you take it personally."

The employees are still in a "bit of shock" over the incident, he added.

For now, the focus is on recovery of the funds, but looking ahead, hydro has already started a detailed review of its processes.

So far it has determined there were no other fraud-related incidents, Curtis said.

But internal processes will be tightened to "make sure something like this can never happen again."



NOTL Hydro president Tim Curtis says the fraud discovery hit him and staff hard. SUPPLIED

## Fraudsters are often **desperately** in need of cash, NOTL expert says

Kevin MacLean  
Managing Editor

When workers defraud their employers, it typically is because they are desperate and in dire financial straits, says a NOTL forensic accounting expert.

Having large debts or gambling and drug addictions are some of the common factors that can lead people to commit fraud, says Oleh Hrycko, a retired forensic accounting expert.

Hrycko was the founder of one of the largest independent forensic accounting and computer forensics/e-discovery firms in Canada.

While he has no involvement in or knowledge about the Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro fraud case, in more than 30 years of investigating a wide variety of cases, the NOTL resident has rarely seen it all.

"They usually start off small, say \$500, to see if it works, and maybe months later, 'Let's try \$1,000,' and then they go to many thousands and they come up to a point where they feel, it's under the radar. And then they simply keep doing it," Hrycko said in an interview.

"There are three common elements that explain an individual's motivation to commit fraud – opportunity, incentive and rationalization," said Hrycko. In the fraud investigation business, investigators like Hrycko look for "red flags."

Vendor payable fraud often involves false supplier



Fraudsters often use fictitious invoices. PIXABAY PHOTO

invoices, inflated billings or duplicate invoices from a supplier, he said.

"In false invoice schemes, what typically happens is the perpetrator will first set up a corporation that they control. Using readily available software, they will then generate fictitious invoices from their corporation, which will be below a certain dollar threshold so as to avoid scrutiny," he said.

"Since these individuals also usually have the authority to pay vendor invoices up to a certain dollar amount, they will process these fictitious invoices through the organization for payment to their fictitious corporation," Hrycko said.

"There's a whole bunch of red flags on these fictitious invoices. You could have vague or incomplete invoices with blank fields,

you can have typos and you can have invoices without any supporting documentation, like purchase orders and receiving reports." he said.

The fraud is often caught by another staff member.

"In many of the cases that I have investigated in the past people go on vacation" and a colleague filling in for them uncovers something questionable.

Likewise, if someone seldom takes a vacation, it could be a red flag. "If they haven't taken a vacation for two years, you know this thing's been going on for two years because that person is afraid to take vacation" for fear of getting caught.

Spot audits can also catch problems, he said. "Let's just say there's widgets being ordered using fictitious invoices. And they start trying to locate those widgets

in inventory and they find out that the quantities don't even exist" – that's another red flag.

"If you have the proper protocols in place at the organization, you greatly mitigate the potential for a false invoice fraud," he said.

"Segregation of duties" is one of the fundamental controls in an organization for minimizing fraud, he added. That means, for instance, someone who is responsible for processing the accounts payable invoices for payment should not be the final authority on paying those invoices.

"If someone's in charge of vendor payables and then that person is also in charge of issuing payments to those vendors, this creates one of the common elements to motivate an individual to commit fraud – opportunity," Hrycko said.

"If that person has an

approval limit up to \$5,000 unlikely anyone is going to check payments that are less than \$5,000 to a particular company because that falls within the organization's procedures," he said.

It might get caught in a year-end audit, but depending on what controls are in place, such fraud cases can go on for years without being noticed, he said.

Investigators like Hrycko are equal parts detective and accountant, and they love the work. "It was always a hunt for me," he said.

In addition to his forensic accounting firm, in 2001, he started another firm specializing in e-discovery and computer forensics investigations. This firm was involved in many major "electronic investigations" including the Air Canada corporate espionage lawsuit against WestJet that was

settled in 2006. WestJet admitted accessing commercially sensitive information about its rival by using a former Air Canada employee's password.

With the digital data trail we all create now, investigating fraud and corruption can be easier than following old-school paper trails. And people's work computers can be a trove of information.

Today when an organization uncovers a suspected internal fraud and identifies a perpetrator, in addition to gathering the paper evidence, the investigative protocol also involves preserving the perpetrator's computer laptop/desktop along with "CDs or USB keys or external hard drives."

"Once you get into the computer, unless they reformat the hard drive or use professional wiping software, or simply destroy it using a sledgehammer, we always told our clients, delete doesn't mean delete and we can usually find it."

As a veteran forensic accounting investigator, Hrycko's advice to companies is straightforward.

"It starts with senior management, so there has to be a fraud risk awareness within the organization. There also have to be very strong policies and procedures in place, including the segregation of duties of critical roles within the accounting/finance area," he said.

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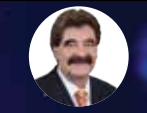
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# Integrity commissioner finds no code of conduct violations, but costs are way up

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's integrity commissioner has found no code of conduct violations after three investigations into alleged contraventions.

In a report to the town, integrity commissioner Edward McDermott, said he received three requests for investigation of alleged contraventions of the code for the year, from March 2019 to March 2020.

"After a full investigation of the various allegations (with respect to two of the complaints) it was determined by me that there had been no violation of the code by the councillors involved," he said in the report.

"The third complaint was withdrawn by the complainant during the course of the investigation," he added.

All details of integrity complaints are confidential unless they are upheld, so no information is available on the issues McDermott investigated.

He said in addition to



Couns. John Wiens, Clare Cameron, Allan Bisback and Norm Arsenault. FILE

the complaints, there was a "substantial increase" in requests for advice from various members of council and local municipal boards.

"Most of these were dealt with by means of a full written response to the issue(s) raised by the councillor as is mandated by the provisions of the Municipal Act."

The integrity commissioner's role is to help councillors and board members ensure they are doing their jobs in accordance with the town's code of conduct, and to educate and provide advice to members on matters governing their ethical behaviour and compliance

with the code and Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.

The commissioner is also responsible for receiving, assessing and investigating appropriate complaints made by council, committee members and the public regarding alleged breaches of the code or conflict of interest rules.

The total cost to the town during the year for the investigation and adjudication process as well as the responses to requests for advice amounted to \$59,957 after taxes.

"This amount is a considerable increase from the expenditures incurred in the first year of our service

to the town (\$8,085)," said McDermott's report.

"It is to be noted, however, that these increased costs may also reflect the changes in the governing legislation which came into effect on March 1, 2019," he said.

Those amendments expanded the role and responsibilities of the integrity commissioner and served to heighten the awareness of councillors and the public to the importance of having and complying with a code of conduct, he said.

His report noted there were three complaints that had to be dealt with (one of which was withdrawn as the matter progressed) "which consumed 47 per cent of the total cost incurred."

The average cost for the two complaints that went through the whole process was \$12,580.

"There were 12 requests for advice which led to no complaints. The average cost for research, investigation and production of a full written response to the member seeking the advice was \$1,750."

# Queen's Royal Beach passes 90% of E. coli tests

Continued from Front Page

in Old Town near the iconic Niagara-on-the-Lake gazebo. Many families and children swim, wade or play in the water.

In 2019, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake released a 210-page consultant's report showing that raw sewage had been leaking into Lake Ontario from the town's sewer system for several years.

The consultant's two-year study of the situation could not determine how long the problem had been going on.

The report forced the town to launch a nearly \$500,000 repair project. Grants from other levels of government helped cover some of the municipality's costs.

This summer, in partnership with the region and the provincial ministry of the environment, the town sampled the water regularly



Queen's Royal Park Beach. JESSICA MAXWELL

and the region analyzed those samples.

"We have been successful in reducing the limits to bring them within provincial guidelines," Brett Ruck, the town's environmental services supervisor, said in response to questions from The Lake Report.

In the long term, "with the amount of work we've done, we will not have to do continued testing. We are seeing, and expect to continue to see, good results from the sewer now and in

the future," he added.

That said, the town has already asked the region to continue to test the water at Queen's Royal beach next summer.

Ruck said he is unaware of any plans to ask the region to test water at Ryerson Park, which has a small beach that is popular with area residents and visitors.

"There could be a potential request to the region, however that request would be made by council," Ruck said.

Heavy rains, high winds

and other environmental factors can influence E. coli levels, Niagara public health says. The town now posts "educational signs" along the NOTL lakefront warning that the water is not tested and advising about factors that can affect water quality.



The Region of Niagara said it is still planning to post Queen's Royal beach's 2020 test results on its "open data" website.

It will likely include test results from beaches across the region, said Jeremy Kelly, a public health inspector with the region.

"We are working on a project to have results automatically posted to open data throughout the season," he told The Lake Report.

"This would allow easier public access to the results and more real-time reporting. We hope to have that operational for the 2021 season."

We acknowledge the support of the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

### Niagara-on-the-Lake Launches Tourism Recovery Grant

Applications are open for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Recovery Grant, created in collaboration with FedDev Ontario and delivered in partnership with the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, Winery Operators, and the Niagara Region.

ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES:

- Eligible projects will be granted a minimum of \$4,000 & up to a maximum of \$20,000
- Minimum 20% matched funds by the recipient required
- Project costs incurred from June 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020
- Businesses must be located in Niagara-on-the-Lake
- In operation on or before January 31, 2020
- Business must demonstrate a reduction in revenues comparable to last year due to COVID-19
- Any project costs already funded with Federal relief dollars are not eligible
- Recipient must obtain all necessary permits and abide by all municipal and provincial laws
- Recipient must be able to pay for eligible expenses up front and be reimbursed
- Recipient acknowledges this grant is considered income to their business and agrees to keep accurate records
- Recipient acknowledges their name and grant amount will be public information, displayed on the Town's website and/or social media platforms, and possibly used in the Ministry's success stories or public announcements
- Project activities are new to the business and must be related to tourism-focused adaptation of COVID-19 protocols or practices, sustaining or growing revenue generation and ensuring long-term stability

Online applications will be accepted until October 15, 2020. For more information, visit [notl.com/feddev-grant](http://notl.com/feddev-grant). To begin your application, visit [notl.com/feddev-apply](http://notl.com/feddev-apply).



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**Contributed by Patty Garriock**  
 "If we don't help each other, who will?"  
 - Barbara Mandrell



**Contributed by Norm Arsenault:**  
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## Editorials: Virgil Business Association deserves a **big thank you** for park vision

Richard Harley  
 Editor-In-Chief

It's been a long road, but year after year, Centennial Sports Park in Virgil keeps getting better and better. The continued improvements are largely the result of the Virgil Business Association, which has had

a vision for the park since before there was an arena.

We want to say thank you to all involved in the process of making the Virgil park an incredible addition to our community.

We're so fortunate to have these types of amenities for our youth to enjoy.

So, a big congratulations

and kudos to the entire Virgil Business Association, as well as president Richard Wall.

It's community leaders like you that make such a difference and have such a positive impact on Niagara-on-the-Lake.

To our town staff and elected councillors over

the past several years who helped make this park a reality, thank you for your hard work and dedication to our town and this project.

Without dedicated individuals who care, we wouldn't be the unique community we are.

editor@niagaranow.com

## Parents, please make sure kids wear **helmets**

Richard Harley  
 Editor-In-Chief

For the safety of all the kids using the new skatepark, parents should ensure their kids are wearing helmets when they go out to skate, bike or ride

a scooter.

To state the obvious, the park is made entirely of cement — which is unforgiving when a skull cracks down on it.

Broken arms heal, broken legs heal, but one bad fall can leave a child perma-

nently injured, or worse.

So, please be careful.

The Lake Report was told a newly opened skatepark in Port Colborne has already seen one really bad accident because a child wasn't wearing a helmet. He is now in a coma and a bystander

was left traumatized by the sound of his head hitting pavement.

That's a story we don't ever want to have to write about somebody in our town, or a visitor.

Please be careful.  
 editor@niagaranow.com



## Did heritage trail trees **really** have to be cut down?

Dear editor:

The Lake Report's coverage of the destruction of trees along the Upper Canada Heritage Trail ("Residents angry after healthy trees cut down along heritage trail," Sept. 10) was deeply disturbing if somewhat alarmist, I thought, after having visited the site.

Still, was there, as claimed, no option to removing the trees?

I phoned an arborist, Andrew Cook, of Andrew's Tree and Shrub Care. While he had not visited the site, he thought the trees should have been spared.

He cited a company, the Truly Canadian Wood Service out of Wainfleet, in

possession of state-of-the-art machinery for tree removal. Would this company have been able to spare the healthy trees?

Were we to learn that we could have saved the trees, how sad it would be for those of us for whom the trail was a place of refuge and healing in these traumatic times.

The shocking scale of tree removal in Niagara-on-the-Lake over the past several years has prompted the town to enact a tree policy.

It would be sadly ironic were the authors of this policy to have sanctioned the needless felling of "dozens of trees."

David Lailey  
 NOTL

## Celebration of life for **Joseph Pohorly** was lovely

Dear editor:

This past Sunday was a glorious outdoor day to celebrate the life of Joseph (Joe) Pohorly.

Taking place under and around the pavilion at the St. Davids Lions Club on York Road and

staffed by Lion members, those attending this celebration were treated to not only delicious Lion Burgers, but also had the opportunity to indulge in the best chocolate cake, brought there by Rick Lakeit from Caroline Cel-

lars' restaurant menu.

Both foods were one of Joe's favourites.

A few speeches by fellow Lions as well as from Joe's nephew Steven Pohorly were indicative of a life well-lived by Joe.

The best part of this

wonderful sunny day was reminiscing with old friends on the different aspects of Joe's life and character.

R.I.P. Dr. Joseph E. Pohorly.  
 Frank and Susan Pohorly  
 NOTL

## Correction: Happy Rolph's

A story last week said the name of Happy Rolph's would be changing, however it is only the name of the park's playground that will be changed.

The playground's name will change to Rotary Club of St. Catharines Centennial Playground.

The park's name will remain as Happy Rolph's.



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# OPINION

## Sentineal's carriage horses are well cared for

Dear editor:

I recently read Syme Jago's poignant letter you published in your wonderful Sept. 10 issue, "Protesters are bullies wreaking havoc." I definitely agree with her, and, of course, countless other residents must feel the same way.

I have lived in the Niagara Region since the age of seven. Niagara-on-the-Lake has always been a special haven even for locals such as myself to escape to.

In all the years the horse-drawn carriages have been in operation, I have never ever seen any of these beautiful animals being treated badly or with disregard; in fact, quite the opposite.

Anyone can see by looking at the horses, i.e. their shiny coats, their eyes, their teeth, their hooves, their posture/stance, just how



A carriage tour heads down Queen Street. SUPPLIED

healthy and well taken care of they really are.

I am definitely an advocate for animal rights and cherish these amazing creatures. In my honest and experienced opinion, there is absolutely no harm being

done to these horses.

They have been bred for centuries as animals of husbandry and are being cared for humanely and properly. Another thing these so-called "activists" don't realize is one horse doesn't

work the entire morning, afternoon and evening. They only work for part of the day in shifts.

It also disturbs me when the "activists" claim they care for animals, yet they have no regard for other human beings. If they cannot be kind and considerate to their fellow citizens, then how does that fit into their final equation? How does that help their cause?

I hope that something concrete will be done about these protesters. Furthermore, they are even causing problems for the horses themselves: The last thing a calm and steady horse wants to see is a bunch of loud, angry people acting like lunatics and waving a bunch of signs around.

Anjulika Chand  
St. Catharines

## Moving carriages is a victory for town's protesters

Dear editor:

Our tiny not-so-perfect Lord Mayor and the Eight Dwarfs have moved the iconic horse and carriages, and their historic, longtime tax-paying owners, from their longstanding location at the corner of King and Queen streets, where untold numbers of tourists have taken pictures that now form

family memories.

The move, one block north and out of a high-traffic area on weekends, is seriously hindering the carriages' customer base.

So the protesters were handed partial victory and encouragement. Of course, this never occurred to the decision-makers.

However, perhaps the

move is Machiavellian, as the protesters might follow in to the residential area of our wonderful Old Town and residents can witness their presence and antics without leaving their homes.

And the parishioners of St. Mark's will be inconvenienced and the groundswell of complaints will rise to a level where they cannot be

ignored.

A brilliant manoeuvre!

An added benefit will be the disruption of peace and quiet for AirBnB renters who will leave and never return. Two birds — one stone.

In the meantime, bring on the election, or resignations, the broom and air freshener.

William Cochrane Sr.  
NOTL

## Town action, and inaction, on dead tree removal

The following letter was sent to Niagara-on-the-Lake town council on Monday.

We have asked for three years to have two dead trees removed from private property behind our homes on Shaw's Lane.

The dead trees would fall on both our properties, destroy our fence and possibly cause damage to our decks and landscaping.

We have also asked for the removal of poison ivy, which climbs up the back of our fences and ever-

greens. Each year we are told by the town's bylaw folks that the property owner has been requested to do this.

It is a vacant lot with access on two sides. In the spring it is a swamp and promotes the hatching of mosquitoes and other insects, and certainly promotes the growth of the poison ivy.

So here we are, but the town rushes and destroys 34 good trees and widens what started as path to a road to

bring equipment in to remove one dead tree along the Upper Canada Heritage Trail.

We are in accord with those who support the heritage trail and the concerns of the neighbours on both sides of it. Trees lost, canopy disappears, more traffic than intended. Maybe it should have a name change to Line 1.5.

We also were surprised when town officials say it is just normal maintenance and therefore there was no need to give the public

notice of their intentions.

A recent article says that further work will not be carried out until after the public has been given the opportunity to voice their opinion and input on a final design? We trust that this will be the case.

Now it is the fall of 2020. No acknowledgement by the town of our request and no apparent action taken to resolve our problem.

Allan Magnacca  
Peter Ashton  
NOTL

## Bikers on trails need to ring those bells for walkers

Dear editor:

Niagara-on-the-Lake trails are extremely popular with both walkers and bikers during these beautiful sunny days. Sharing the trails is no

problem, but the bikers need to learn how to use their bells when approaching walkers from behind.

Even if walkers are hugging the edge of the trail, a warning

that the bikers are coming is so appreciated.

At any time, a walker could step out in front of them, not realizing a biker is fast approaching.

I would like to encourage the bike rental businesses to mention this to all potential customers.

Kathy Neufeld  
Virgil



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# Point of heritage trail is to celebrate and **preserve heritage**, not destroy it

Dear editor:

With reference to the letter last week “We’re quite happy with changes made to the heritage trail,” I would suggest that the writers’ lauding of the widening, resurfacing, tree cutting – essentially the urbanizing of the trail – is wildly out of touch with the landscape of the original trail and has a naïve take on what constitutes progress.

In their minds it appears that these “improvements”

were absolutely necessary, although they concede that the cutting and disappearance of healthy trees in the interests of this so-called progress is “unfortunate” (but not to worry, the town will be “planting new trees, shrubs and evergreens” so that in 20 years the periphery of the trail will look just as it did before these unnecessary disruptions).

But, oh the horror – imagine, it was “badly rutted, with puddles and uneven terrain.” There was

even, wait for it, “mud.” This is a heritage trail – get it? – appears not.

Their hope is the travesty that is the widened, resurfaced trail to this point (which is so flawless that the town has put a temporary hold on its continuation) will continue unabated to its conclusion because, after all, what they want is a trail wide enough, flat enough and devoid of pesky vegetation that the hordes of visitors who this summer overflowed the town’s parks

and other green spaces will find their way there.

Let’s see how the wildlife that the writers imply has been undisturbed so far respond then to this new, improved heritage trail.

To the letter writers and all those who believe this nature trail needed improvement I would refer them to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s words “adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.”

**Michael Howe**  
NOTL

# Rotary adapts to the times with **virtual tasting tour**

Brittany Carter  
The Lake Report

When the world seemed at a standstill this summer, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club proved its “People of Action” creed true by dreaming up innovative fundraisers during the coronavirus pandemic – and thus, the Rotary Virtual Tasting Tour was born.

The inventive at-home wine tasting fundraiser will happen every Tuesday in October, featuring a different NOTL winery, with proceeds going to a different charitable organization for each of the four events.

“We thought we would go virtual because, you know what’s happened to us in the spring. Suddenly, we went, ‘Oh my gosh we can’t have any of our events,’” said Jolanta Janny, NOTL Rotary marketing co-chair. “So suddenly everything was shut and we had nowhere to go.”

“We decided to do the wine tasting because it was very unique and never done before. It’s a new concept for us and for many other people,” she said.

For \$65 per evening, or \$240 for an early-bird, all-access pass for all four nights, participants will receive two bottles of wine delivered to their home per event, winery tasting notes and food pairing suggestions, and the opportunity to interact with the winemakers via Zoom chat.



At home wine tasting. SUPPLIED/SANDRA OZKUR

The deadline to purchase tickets for the first event, and the all-access pass, is Monday, Sept. 28. Tickets can be purchased at [niagaraonthelakerotary.ca/page/rotary-virtual-tasting-tour](http://niagaraonthelakerotary.ca/page/rotary-virtual-tasting-tour).

Steve Dainard, the NOTL Rotary member who dreamed up the virtual tour idea, said instead of simply allowing participants to watch each winery speak about its selections, the event will be viewed as a conversational personal wine tour between the winemaker and the sponsor for that event.

Viewers will be able to ask questions through the chat function, which will be monitored by Rotary volunteers.

“We’re asking the sponsor to be on-site at the actual events, so they’re having a conversation with the winemaker and the people are listening in. It will be more conversational in nature, with us eavesdropping in and a chance to be able to ask questions,” Dainard

said.

The NOTL club stepped into new technology with some hiccups along the way, he said. But it’s been relatively smooth, he added, with members picking up on the new way of connecting through virtual meetings.

“You can teach an old dog new tricks. And it’s interesting how resilient people are on gravitating towards it (virtual meetings). It’s something new, you’re a little bit afraid, but once you do it ... And they’re getting on and it’s working out really, really well,” he said.

Before the event goes live on Oct. 6, organizers will run through the video and sound to ensure everything will go smoothly.

“We’ll have a pre-event site visit, making sure that all that technological stuff is hopefully going to be dealt with before we actually go live, maximizing positive experiences,” he said.

Club members knew

the pandemic affected the community in many ways, he said, which is why the specific beneficiaries of the fundraisers were selected.

“It was really important for us this time around to say, with COVID, there’s a lot of potential mental health issues, there’s a lot of people who are dealing with their world being different because they’ve had to go on CERB,” Dainard said.

“So, we wanted to be able to get a cross-section of current trends that are happening,” he added.

The first event on Oct. 6 will be hosted by Caroline Cellars Family Estate Winery and sponsored by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Bed and Breakfast Association. Proceeds will go to the MS Society of Canada’s Niagara Peninsula Chapter of Hope.

The Oct. 13 tasting is hosted by Strewn Winery, sponsored by Bosley Real Estate Ltd., with proceeds to Niagara Falls Community Outreach.

On Oct. 20, the event will be hosted by the Hare Wine Co., sponsored by Desjardins Insurance, Travis Cairns Insurance and Financial Services, with proceeds going to the Kristen French Child Advocacy Centre Niagara.

The final one, on Oct. 27, will be hosted by Between the Lines Family Estate Winery, sponsored by Revel Realty, Andrew Perrie Real Estate, with proceeds going to No One Goes Hungry.



Cars lined up for the Legion’s fish fry. RICHARD HARLEY

# Legion fish fry **sells out** on reopening night

Brittany Carter  
The Lake Report

The Legion fish fry made its post-COVID return last Thursday and demand was higher than ever – orders sold out by about 6 p.m. as hopeful customers were turned away.

NOTL Legion branch 124 president Paul Eramian said before shutting down this spring the fry was always well-received. The influx of people out for its first reopening could have been due to a number of factors, he said.

“It was the absence of it, I think people wanted to come back and see what’s going on,” he said.

Being awarded The Lake Report’s NOTL’s Choice Award may have also turned on some people to the fry, he added.

“Any one of those that did not come to our fish fry before and read your article, I’m sure it had a great impact. Give it a shot, right,” he said. “They might not even have known that we were around, believe it or not.”

With social distancing restrictions in place, Eramian said the fry needed to change the way it operates. Instead of customers walking in and ordering with the option to eat inside, it instead ran as a drive-thru.

He said he was “disappointed” some customers were sent away without their orders last week. Legion volunteers are working hard to plan a smoother event this Thursday.

The fish fry runs every Thursday from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at the Legion headquarters on King Street.

# NOTL Rotary Estate Sale to go ahead **as planned**

Brittany Carter  
The Lake Report

Next month’s NOTL Rotary Estate Sale will continue as planned, with a few updates, despite the Ontario government tightening private gathering restrictions.

“Our premier just announced that no gathering bigger than 10 inside and 25 outside would be allowed,” Jolanta Janny, marketing co-chair for the NOTL Rotary said. “So, that’s very challenging.”

After the club’s board meeting on Monday, however, Janny said her fears were put to rest.

“The town is allowing

Rotary to hold our Rotary Estate Sale as planned,” she said.

The sale will be Oct. 3 and 4, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. both days, at 949 East and West Line Rd.

As a registered charity holding an event open to the public, the club will have “experienced staff to monitor the event and a nurse on duty to ensure that COVID protocol is in place and consistently followed,” Janny said.

Masks will be mandatory and proper distancing will be encouraged while in line and inside. Hand sanitizer will be placed throughout the venue and will be required before entry.

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The Pedal Pushers gear up for the 2019 Healing Cycle. SUPPLIED/BONNIE BAGNULO

## Healing Cycle to support NOTL palliative care

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Bonnie Bagnulo is eBonnie Bagnulo is excited about this year's Healing Cycle ride for palliative care and is encouraging as many people as possible to come out to the main ride on Saturday.

The 10-kilometre ride will start at the former hospital in Old Town at noon and head up the Niagara Parkway for five kilometres before heading back.

Bagnulo, executive director of Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service, said this year there are several new participants in the Healing Cycle, but it's been harder to collect donations.

"People are not in the same position as they were last year financially," she said.

"We have quite a few new followers because the ride has changed due to COVID this year. Anyone can ride with us," she added.

Typically the run happens out of town, with other palliative care providers around Ontario.

This year will be the eighth year NOTL Palliative Care has participated. In that time, the team has raised over \$90,000 for palliative care in NOTL.

NOTL resident Tim Taylor (also known as Santa and a Lake Report journalist) is one of the major sponsors this year, having already raised more than \$4,000 riding around town. "He raises funds all over NOTL and surrounding areas for palliative care. He is truly the essence of a 'gift,'" said Bagnulo.

There are two ways people can support the ride – either by sponsoring the Pedal Pushers team, or by sponsoring an individual rider, she said.

More information on how to donate can be found at [www.thehealingcycle.ca](http://www.thehealingcycle.ca).

Bagnulo also said anyone wishing to donate by cheque can do so at the ride Saturday, or she'll pick it up.

She can be contacted by email at [notlpc@bellnet.ca](mailto:notlpc@bellnet.ca) or by phone at 905-468-4433.

Since 1986, Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service has helped area residents cope with serious life-limiting illness, death and bereavement.

In 2019, the not-for-profit organization served more than 160 clients with nearly 1,800 volunteer visits.

More information about NOTL Palliative Care can be found at [www.notlpc.com](http://www.notlpc.com).

# Queenston Mile, Taco Bell 'pairings' draw international media attention

Jill Troyer  
The Lake Report

In a world grown weary of COVID-19 case counts and bleak economic outlooks, Queenston Mile winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake gave us all something to smile about last week.

The story was irresistible to international media, garnering attention not just from Canadian news outlets, but CNN, Forbes, Fox News, "Good Morning America" and even a mention from Stephen Colbert on 'A Late Show.'

What was all the fuss about?

Taco Bell announced it was pairing a premium wine with its new menu item, the Toasted Cheesy Chalupa. And the wine? None other than Jalapeño Noir, from NOTL's own Queenston Mile Vineyard, made with grapes from its own 50 acres of vines.

In a media release, Taco Bell extolled the pairing, saying, "Just like the delicious aged cheddar of the Toasted Cheesy Chalupa's shell, every bottle of Jalapeño Noir, made by Queenston Mile Vineyard in Ontario, has gotten better



Taco Bell pairs its Cheesy Chalupa with Queenston Mile's Jalapeño Noir. TACO BELL PHOTO

over time. Together, the duo is irresistible."

Queenston Mile general manager Alison Zalepa described the circumstances that led to the pairing as "a little bit fortuitous."

"When we opened two years ago," Zalepa explained, "our marketing partner was a company called Grip Ltd." It turns out, Grip is also Taco Bell's marketing partner, "so when they were looking to launch in Ontario," Grip thought of us.

The timing for the wine itself had serendipity on its

side as well.

At the time, the winery had five barrels of 2018 Pinot Noir aging in newer French oak barrels, which gives it a little extra spice, Zalepa said. They were keeping it because they "knew there was something special there, something different."

It turned out to be just the thing for the new Cheesy Chalupa.

At Queenston Mile, they "never want to put wine on a pedestal, we want it to be accessible," Zalepa said, so this partnership made

perfect sense. "We're always trying to take the pretension out of wine."

Consumers couldn't wait to show their enthusiasm.

The first 20 cases sold out in just 11 minutes. Zalepa said Taco Bell asked for the rest, another 80 cases, and they sold out in 40 minutes.

The wine was sold online, and through Uber Eats, from two licensed Taco Bell outlets in Hamilton and Toronto.

It wasn't just the popular press who were taken with this story. Serious wine aficionados got in touch with Queenston Mile, too.

Wine Spectator Magazine published a full article in its newsletter and well-respected winemaker Joe Wagner, who specializes in small batch Pinot Noir in California, called as well. "He heard about the wine and wanted to buy two bottles," Zalepa said.

In a summer bereft of stories to make us smile, this speaks to an appetite for something with a spark of fun, and on a more serious note, it shines an international spotlight on Niagara wines, giving a boost to their growing reputation.

## Legion Remembrance Day altered by COVID-19

Marg Boldt  
Legion poppy chair  
Special to The Lake Report

At this time of the year the Niagara-on-the-Lake branch of the Royal Canadian Legion usually salutes the great sacrifice and service of local military veterans.

Starting in mid-September we mark the graves of veterans with a maple leaf and a Canadian flag, and end with our remembrance services honouring our fallen heroes. Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, we cannot hold many of our ceremonies in our usual way.

Here are this year's planned events:

Graves will be marked as usual. This started on Sept.



Remembrance Day ceremony in 2019. FILE

1, but there will not be a parade at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. We will instead provide an update of our ongoing memories project in conjunction with the NOTL Museum. We have also introduced our new website.

Our annual poppy campaign will start Oct.

30, with boxes of poppies available at participating businesses.

Our remembrance services for seniors cannot take place but we are investigating ways to help our seniors reflect on their past.

The annual veteran's dinner is cancelled for this year.

The services at our cenotaphs on Nov. 11 will not be held this year. Instead there will be an invitation-only service held at the Legion monument at 410 King St. This will be livestreamed online.

Wreaths will be laid at each cenotaph at sunset Nov. 10 and we request those who wish to offer a wreath contact the branch any time before Nov. 2. We will publish a list of wreaths in our local papers and on websites.

There will be a spot at each cenotaph for all to leave your poppy on Nov. 11 as a personal act of remembrance. We will maintain as much planning flexibility as possible and as circumstances change, so will our plans.

  
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Last week: My rings are not worth much, but they tell my age. What am I?

Answer: A tree

Answered first by: Sheelah Young

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Margie Enns, Howard Jones, Margaret Garaughty, Cheryl Kincaid, Bob Wheatley, Wendy Bosela, Bill Hamilton, Wade Durling, Josh Langendoen, Pam Dowling, Sheila Meloche, Jeff Weir, Katie Reimer, Sylvia Wiens, Sandra Lawrence, Hugh McLean, Britney Turasz, Christine Yakymishen

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

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
<p><b>COVID-19</b></p> <p>Due to COVID-19, many events are now virtual. Find a list of NOTL events here week to week.</p> <p>Stay safe, wash your hands, wear a mask and distance whenever possible.</p>			
<p><b>27</b></p> <p><b>Historic Walking Tours - 11 a.m.</b> - Queen's Royal Park</p> <p><b>Yoga in the Vineyards - 10 a.m.</b> - Palatine Hills Estate Winery</p> <p><b>Bit Fitting Clinic - 1 p.m.</b> - Benchview Equestrian Centre</p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p><b>Famous and Infamous: Pioneer Aviation Alcock and Brown - 2 p.m.</b> - NOTL Museum</p> <p><b>Community Wellness Committee - 10 a.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="http://livestream.com/notl">livestream.com/notl</a></p> <p><b>Council - 6 p.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="http://livestream.com/notl">livestream.com/notl</a></p> <p><b>Name that Tune - 7 p.m.</b> - The Irish Harp Pub</p>	<p><b>29</b></p> <p><b>Outdoor Acrylic Painting - 10 a.m.</b> - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p>	<p><b>German Conversation - 7 p.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="http://contactaol.com">contactaol.com</a></p> <p><b>Grinder Pump Commemorative - 10 a.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="http://livestream.com/notl">livestream.com/notl</a></p> <p><b>Lecture Series with The Quantum with Einstein - 11 a.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="http://notlpubliclibrary.org">notlpubliclibrary.org</a></p>
<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>S.L.A.P.S. Fundraiser - 2 p.m.</b> - Club 55</p> <p><b>Last Night of the Proms: At Home Concert Series - 4 p.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/MusicNiagaraFestival">Facebook/MusicNiagaraFestival</a></p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p><b>Committee of the Whole: Planning - 6 p.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="http://notl.org">notl.org</a></p> <p><b>Public Meeting - 6 p.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="http://notl.org">notl.org</a></p> <p><b>Ask a Tech: One on One Tech Tutoring - all day</b> - contact <a href="mailto:creganti@notlpl.org">creganti@notlpl.org</a></p> <p><b>NOTL Community Centre Reopens for programming - all day</b> - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p><b>Niagara's Name that Tune - 7 p.m.</b> - The Irish Harp</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p><b>NOTL Rotary Virtual Tasting Tour: Caroline Cellars - 7 p.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="http://niagaraonthelakerotary.ca">niagaraonthelakerotary.ca</a></p> <p><b>Virtual War of 1812 Trivia Night - 8 p.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="http://www.friendsoffortgeorge.ca/">http://www.friendsoffortgeorge.ca/</a></p>	<p><b>Irrigation Committee - 7 p.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="http://notl.org">notl.org</a></p> <p><b>German Conversation - 7 p.m.</b> - Virtual: <a href="http://contactaol.com">contactaol.com</a></p> <p><b>Lecture Series with The Atom with the Rutherford, Bohr and Einstein - 11 a.m.</b> - register @ <a href="http://notl.org">notl.org</a></p>

Know of a local event? Tell us. Submit it directly to [www.niagaraonthenet.com](http://www.niagaraonthenet.com)



# Lake Report

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## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Sept. 25 - Oct. 10

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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>24</b> Yoga at RiverBrink - 9 a.m. - RiverBrink Art Museum Scenic Nature - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre RiverBrink Reads: Warhol by Blake Gopnik - 7 p.m. - Virtual: riverbrink.org/events	<b>25</b> Lion Burger Drive Thru Barbecue - 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. - St. Davids Lions Club Comedy Show: Humour and Hops - 8 p.m. - The Exchange Brewery Historic Walking Tours - 11 a.m. - Queen's Royal Park	<b>26</b> Rock the Roof with Riley Michaels and the Breakfast Club - 5 p.m. - Club 55 Fall Fest Evening Market - 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. - 1126 Line 8 Rd. Watercolour: Let's Get Better at it - 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre
	<b>1</b> Two Part Lecture Series: Portraiture - 2 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre LearnMORE from Home: Fakes and Forgeries - 10 a.m. - Virtual: www.riverbrink.org/education.html Virtual Live Breathe Pilates Classes - 9:30 a.m. - Zoom info@livebreathepilates.ca	<b>2</b> Two Part Lecture Series: Portraiture - 2 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre Lion Burger Drive Thru Barbecue - 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. - St. Davids Lions Club Fort George Murder Mystery - 2 p.m. - Fort George National Historic Site	<b>3</b> Picnic in the Park - 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Lions Club Park Historic Walking Tours - 11 a.m. - Queen's Royal Park NOTL Rotary: Multi Location Estate Sale - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Multiple locations in NOTL + Niagara Pumpkin Spice and Everything Nice - 11 a.m. - Outlet Collection at Niagara NOTL Rotary Estate Sale - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - 949 East West Line Road Virtual Live Breathe Pilates Classes - 9:30 a.m. - Zoom info@livebreathepilates.ca
<b>7</b> Environmental Advisory Committee - 6 p.m. - Virtual: notl.org LearnMORE from Home: Fakes and Forgeries - 10 a.m. - Virtual: riverbrink.org	<b>8</b> LIVEStream.Love.Jazz with Bill Mays - 7 p.m. - Virtual: youtube.com/jazzniagara Lion Burger Drive Thru Barbecue - 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. - St. Davids Lions Club The Wild: Exploring NOTL - 10:30 a.m. - Niagara Shores Park	<b>9</b> Historic Walking Tours - 11 a.m. - Queen's Royal Park	<b>10</b>

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# New NOTL skatepark **officially opens** in Virgil

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

The new skatepark in Niagara-on-the-Lake has already been bustling with activity, but on Friday was officially opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Richard Wall, president of the Virgil Business Association, presented a \$150,000 cheque to the town for the park.

He said members of the association have been involved with talks about the new skatepark for more than 10 years.

“There’s a handful of us that have been involved in discussions for over a decade and we feel it’s been a long time coming for this, but when I was thinking about it, I was reminded of something my mother used to tell me as a kid — ‘Good things come to those who wait,’ and I think this is a good testament to that.”

He singled out Dennis Dick, a longtime supporter of the association, town councillor and “community leader” who died in August.

“Dennis was a long believer that we needed a



Virgil Business Association president Richard Wall says some words during the grand opening of the new Virgil skatepark. RICHARD HARLEY

permanent structure for the betterment of our community. That started a long time ago,” Wall said, noting the park was “put on hold” while the business association helped build the Virgil splash pad.

“About 2015, it came back to light, and took a few years of planning — a little longer than we anticipated — but I think we built a great project, and I’d just like to dedicate this grand opening to the memory of Dennis Dick and his perseverance and his vision to support what we built here today.”

Wall said while the Virgil Business Association is typically quiet and mostly recognized for the Virgil

Stampede, it meets every month and members continually work on projects to help improve the town, “whether they’re small, worth hundreds of dollars or thousands, and in this case hundreds of thousands of dollars.”

He said the entire park in Virgil is a testament to the association’s vision.

“It started with one arena. It went to baseball diamonds, bleachers, lights for baseball diamonds, purchasing the orchard behind us which has now become a soccer field, the splash pad, playgrounds, you name it and now we are celebrating the next piece of infrastructure which has already been well used so I think the kids

are enjoying it.”

Families are also important to the business group and “I think we’ve really created an all-ages sports park that is second to none in the area.”

He also thanked town staff for being involved in the project.

Tony Baldinelli, member of parliament for the Niagara Falls riding (which includes NOTL), said the park is all about community.

“This is an important facility that’ll provide physical opportunities, social opportunities, and it’s great for the mental well-being of our children to get out and have that ability to meet and use a place such as

this,” he said.

He thanked the Virgil Business Association, the Town of NOTL and all the volunteers who help out at the Virgil Stampede.

“It truly is all about community and what a fabulous community facility this is,” he said.

Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates said while there might have been disagreements about whether the skatepark was the right thing for NOTL, it’s important to invest in young people and attract new families to town.

“We’ve already attracted seniors here, we know that,” he said. “But we need to attract young families. And by having a skatepark, young families will take a look at that and say ‘Niagara-on-the-Lake gets it — they understand the importance of having a place for my kids to go get some exercise.’”

He said it’s even more important during the pandemic, “as we’re not allowed to do a lot of things in our community.”

“You have to invest in our young people,” Gates said.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero cut the ribbon, saying the project wouldn’t have been possible without the help of the Virgil Business Association, town staff and NOTL residents.

“I really want to say that it is through co-operation of all the residents that we get amenities that we have in Niagara-on-the-Lake and we are able to continue to live the quality of life that we all love and look for in our lives,” she said.

She said she appreciates the efforts of town staff in helping to get the park completed.

“Quite often, they take the brunt of everyone’s concerns, anger and even their enjoyment. But I really believe that they are not recognized enough for the professionalism they’re carrying and their devotion to this town.”

She commended Wall and the businesses that donated to making the park a reality.

“I know I won’t be on a skateboard but I can certainly walk the steps around so I’ll be exercising here at some time,” Disero said.

## Music Trivia

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# Carriage operator asks residents to support bill to **protect farmers**, limit protesters

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Laura Sentineal wants residents to make it clear to the provincial government that horse carriages should be protected under Ontario's Bill 156.

For the last year, she's been involved with various levels of government about the new protection bill, called the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act.

The bill limits the rights of animal rights protesters from trespassing on places where animals are kept and engaging in "unsafe, unauthorized interactions with farm animals and transport vehicles."

Sentineal is asking supporters of the carriage company to help out by sending an email to the province, to advise that carriages should be included in the protection and to encourage animal safety zones around working animals to prevent activists from following carriages and harassing drivers.

"The bill is to protect animal agriculture. So farming, transportation and food processing against the very same activists that we're dealing with here," Sentineal said in an interview.

So far the bill has been worded to protect drivers transporting animals, but is not specific about whether it should apply to carriages that she said are facing the same type of harassment by



Laura and Fred Sentineal. FILE PHOTO

animal rights activists.

"It's called animal protection zones. And that's what we've been sort of working with, that we could have an animal protection zone, either around our standing area or ideally around our horses. Because we're farmers, we're a registered farm. It's just our end product isn't pork or wheat, it's horse and carriage tours and services," Sentineal said.

"The animal protection zone portion of the bill right now is very vague. But (public opinion is) part of the process where they can sort of hone in what they need to do and where they need to do it."

She said she's hopeful the province will support protecting all working animals.

"They pushed through the portion about transporting the animals, because they were having huge problems in Burlington that resulted in that poor woman losing her life," Sentineal said.

"But now, we have those same activists who've all of

a sudden become displaced, because they don't want to suffer any (fines)."

Fines associated with the bill can go up to \$15,000.

"So people don't want to take that risk, because most of these activists are fair weather activists," she said, adding that those displaced activists are now ending up in Niagara-on-the-Lake, where she says they know they can get away with it.

"They are coming here, because they know they can come here, they can do whatever they want."

Activists have continually been in town in recent weeks, protesting various issues including the carriages and child abuse.

"They had double bull horns going down there (Sunday), without any interruption, intervention, nothing."

Sentineal said she's been very active in trying to support the bill by contacting members of the legislature.

"I presented to the committee, I've talked to a multitude of MPPs, and they definitely want to help

us," she said.

"But right now, they said, the best thing we can do is for all the people — wonderful people — out there who want to help us, is they can go and they can comment on this bill."

"It's just an opportunity for the residents of Ontario to make their feelings known about the bill," she said, adding that activists are "commenting every day that it's horrible and it's against their rights."

"But at the end of the day, what this bill is trying to do, and this is all we've ever wanted, is just create some balance. So that, you know, we can go about our business without being followed, threatened, interfered with, our guests are not interfered with.

They can have their rights — nobody's looking to take that away, but we just need some physical distancing. And that's what we're looking for."

She said it wouldn't just be carriages that are protected.

"This won't just protect us, this will protect the Mennonites, this will protect anybody with a horse in public, which is ideal."

She said anyone emailing should simply ask the province to "please include working horses, working animals in public in this legislation."

Anyone wishing to comment on the bill can send an email to SecurityFromTrespass.OMAFRA@ontario.ca

# Residents **urged to comply** with new restrictions on gatherings

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is urging residents to comply with new provincial limits to private gatherings.

In response to an increase in COVID-19 cases, the province has decreased the number of people allowed to attend an unmonitored private social gathering to 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors.

The change went into effect across the province Saturday morning and will remain in place for the next four weeks.

The new limits do not apply to gatherings held in staffed businesses and facilities, such as bars, restaurants, cinemas, convention centres, banquet halls, gyms, places of worship, recreational sporting or performing arts events.

"We understand that this step backward may be disheartening," Lord Mayor Betty Disero said in a town media release. "But we refuse to lose hope that as a community, we will get through this together. We must remain calm and continue to comply with provincial orders and public health recommenda-

tions."

The town's emergency control group has met about the reduction to gathering sizes and will be working with Niagara Regional Police "to determine enforcement mechanisms," the town said.

"Staff is monitoring these rapidly changing circumstances and will continue to respond accordingly and inform our residents of changes," said interim chief administrator Sheldon Randall.

The town recommends the following practices to help people stay safe:

Stay home when sick.

Keep children home from school when they are sick, even with mild symptoms.

Monitor your symptoms and complete self-screening, as required.

Practise physical distancing with those outside your household or social circle, or at gatherings.

Protect your social circle. Wear a face covering when physical distancing is a challenge or where it is mandatory.

Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly.

Adhere to gathering limits and rules.

Be mindful of others.



We need your help, please email as often as possible requesting protection for working horses

Email:

**SecurityFromTrespass.OMAFRA@ontario.ca**

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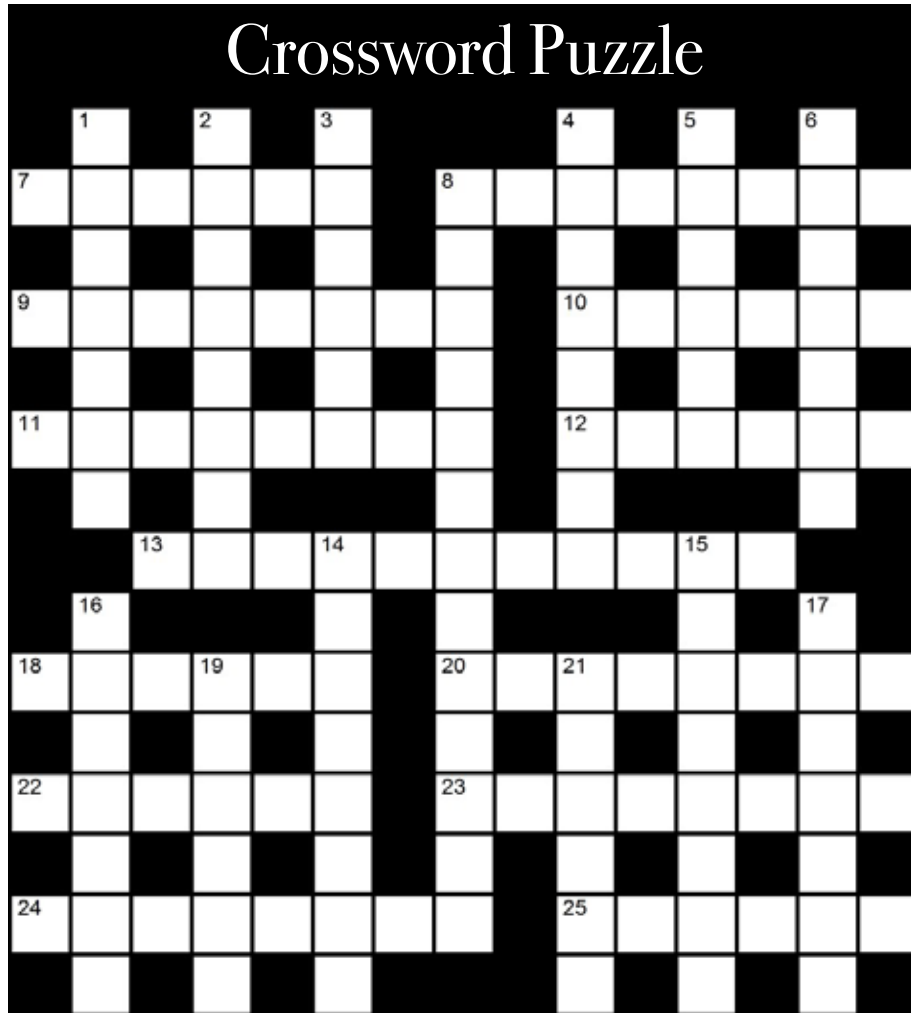
# GAMES



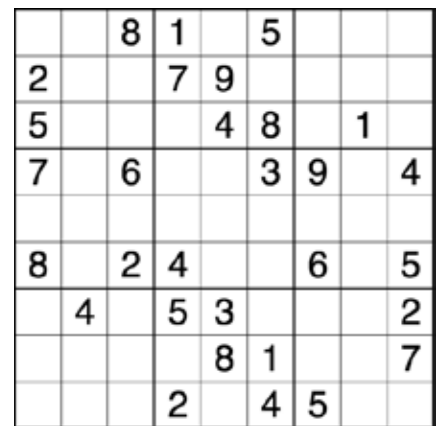
*Have some fun*

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@niagararegion.com](mailto:editor@niagararegion.com)

- Across**
- 7. Missing (6)
  - 8. Enormous (8)
  - 9. Type of lights (8)
  - 10. Shrink back (6)
  - 11. Saviour (8)
  - 12. Man (6)
  - 13. Moving to and fro (11)
  - 18. Austrian composer (6)
  - 20. Inspector (8)
  - 22. Light-hearted TV show (6)
  - 23. Person practising deception under an assumed name (8)
  - 24. Forced high notes (8)
  - 25. Tooth covering (6)
- Down**
- 1. Belly (7)
  - 2. Uneasy (8)
  - 3. Flowing water (6)
  - 4. Yes (3,5)
  - 5. Tapered frozen mass (6)
  - 6. Circumscribed (7)
  - 8. Supreme commander (13)
  - 14. Cosy (8)
  - 15. Abroad (8)
  - 16. Of local interest (7)
  - 17. Regimental commander (7)
  - 19. Charge (6)
  - 21. Small sword (6)



## Last issue's answers



## ADD YOUR VOICE TO NIAGARA'S OFFICIAL PLAN

### NIAGARA IS GROWING!

The region is forecasted to grow to a minimum of 674,000 people and 272,000 jobs by the year 2051. To guide this growth, Niagara Region is creating a new Official Plan.

The Niagara Official Plan will set out objectives and policies to shape Niagara's physical development, while protecting what's valuable. It will cover topics like: Niagara's natural environment, land needs, growth allocations, housing, transportation, urban design, employment lands, agriculture and more.

### YOU'RE INVITED

Attend a series of virtual public information centres to learn more about key directives and core policy information that will inform the Niagara Official Plan. Get informed, ask questions to staff, and provide your input on how Niagara should grow.

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in meetings or events, contact the Niagara Region's Accessibility Coordinator at 905-685-4225 ext. 3252 or [accessibility@niagararegion.ca](mailto:accessibility@niagararegion.ca).

Information will be collected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. With the exception of personal information, all comments will become part of the public record.

If you are not able to attend, you can provide input or ask questions by emailing [makingourmark@niagararegion.ca](mailto:makingourmark@niagararegion.ca), or contact **David Heyworth**, Official Plan Policy Consultant at 905-980-6000 ext. 3476

### VIRTUAL PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRES

Register for each of the following sessions at [niagararegion.ca/official-plan](http://niagararegion.ca/official-plan). Video recordings will also be available online following the sessions.

#### Wednesday, Oct. 7

6:00 p.m.

Topic: Growth Management - Growth Allocations, Settlement Area Boundary Review, Regional Structure, Land Needs, Housing

#### Thursday, Oct. 8

6:00 p.m.

Topic: District & Secondary Plans, Urban Design, and Employment Lands

#### Tuesday, Oct. 20

6:00 p.m.

Topic: Rural & Agriculture, Mineral Aggregate Resources, Archaeology & Culture

#### Wednesday, Oct. 21

6:00 p.m.

Topic: Infrastructure, Water and Wastewater, Stormwater, Transportation



# Dr. Brown: Creative destruction, Nobel Prizes and an **expanding universe**



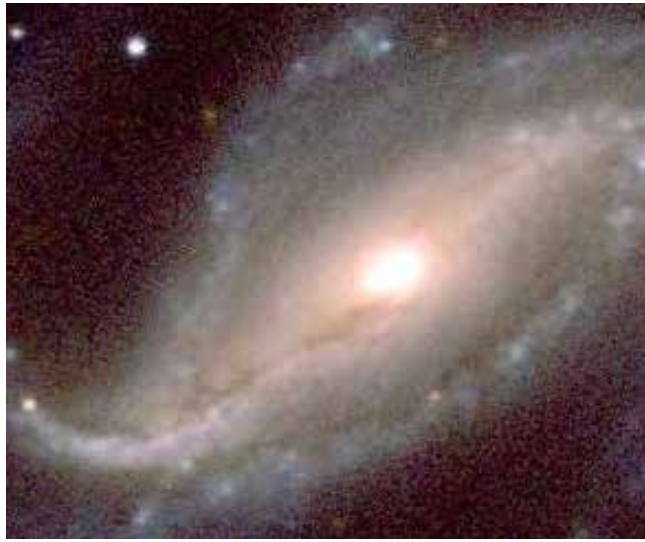
Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the Infohealth series held at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.

Dr. William Brown  
Special to The Lake Report

Just in case any of us might be in danger of thinking small, the attached photo portrays a supernova, the explosion in this case of a star more than a billion years ago, which was thousands of times the mass of our sun and surrounded by thousands, possibly millions of stars. With such a gigantic system there were probably many planets, more

than a few of which might support life now or in the future. And for those where intelligent life, equivalent to our own, exists, it's highly unlikely that any would have any awareness of who we are, what we feel or think. That's quite a perspective.

There are thousands of these supernovas at any one time, each the crucible for all the elements essential for life such as oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, sulphur and that most essential element of all the elements, carbon. Carbon is the one element, which more than any other, is most capable of forming stable, but not too stable, relationships (bonds) with those and other elements essential to carbon-based life and without which RNA and DNA, proteins and their constituent amino acids and other organic compounds would not have been possible. In that sense, carbon is the matriarchal bond-making element. However, a strong case could be made



A supernova exploding. SOURCED

for hydrogen and oxygen too, given that they share electrons with one another to make water, life's universal solvent for a myriad of molecules and ions.

Stunning too is the fact that recurring cycles of creative destruction and recreation, exemplified by the supernova destruction of this once giant star, were essential for life. For in their death, many stars, through a combination of intense

temperatures, pressures and nuclear fusion, create the elements for carbon-based life and scatter them throughout the neighboring universe, to be incorporated in the birth of new stars, most well beyond our reach. On the one planet we know about, earth, warmed by a middling-sized star, life took hold and evolved – the product of chance and natural selection – into increasingly complex lifeforms of

which our species was but one of millions, and perhaps not the most important.

Lest we think life emerged on our planet alone – think again. Current estimates based on data from the Kepler and Hubble telescopes, suggest that in our galaxy – the Milky Way – planets similar to our own may number in the many millions. Given that there are well over a trillion galaxies out there, the chances of carbon-based life taking root are very high in many places, and times in the universe. Such a realization suggests the very real possibility that intelligent life, the equal or exceeding our own, might exist or possibly could emerge elsewhere, perhaps in many places in the expanding universe, even if well beyond our reach.

The wonder is that our species over so many millennia and generations had the where-with-all - the imagination, creativity and audacity - to begin to grasp the magnificence of the

macro world of the cosmos, the quantum world of the tiny and ephemeral, the biology of life and evolution and the natural laws, which govern all. That's a stunning achievement for one species.

The Nobel prize for physics in 2019 year was awarded to Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz for studies that revealed the first evidence and tools for finding planets outside our star system and James Peebles for his work which helped us understand the role of dark matter in the formation of the earliest stars in the universe. The 2019 and 2017 physics prizes, the latter of which highlighted gravitational waves created by massive mergers by black holes and neutron stars billions of years ago, play into this year's physics series, which focuses on the first three decades in the twentieth century physics when an expanding universe and the whole idea of a big bang began.

## Keeping it Green

### Recycling is not a **catch-all** solution



Kyra Simone  
Special to The Lake Report

Garbage collection is changing in Niagara. If you kick-start your recycling habits now, you'll be prepared for Oct. 19 when trash pickup moves to alternate weeks.

Recycling and green bins will still be collected weekly, but this is a good time to reconsider your approach to waste.

In Niagara Region, half

of our garbage bags contain recyclables and compostables. What's more, careful sorting does not always mean containers and paper are recycled.

Little oversight throughout the recycling process and large-scale sorting errors make curbside bins a last resort rather than a guaranteed solution.

**Why Can't We Just Recycle?:** Unfortunately, putting waste in the right place does not guarantee a green outcome.

After it leaves the curb, recycling in Canada is not well accounted for. Once collected, recycling is sold to facilities that convert it into new packaging.

However, this only occurs if a market exists for the material. If there is no demand or the recycling is contaminated, undesirable



Buyerarchy of Needs, by Sarah Lazarovic. SOURCED

recycling may be sent to a landfill or burned.

Recycled plastics are almost always "downcycled." Unlike glass, hard plastics cannot be remade into containers of the same quality.

Plastic containers are often reborn as inferior textiles or films. The next step for these is probably the landfill.

Most of Canada's recycling used to be exported to Asian countries but as these facilities became overwhelmed, only high-value materials were recycled while other plastics were

incinerated.

In 2018, China banned imports of more than 20 different materials. Malaysia, India, Taiwan, Vietnam and Thailand have also since restricted plastic imports.

These restrictions were partly established because North American recycling shipments are often contaminated.

Contamination includes obvious errors, including dead animals or medical waste in recycling bins. But more commonly, individuals contaminate recycling by including items they

incorrectly believe to be recyclable.

In Toronto, up to 25 per cent of materials put in the recycling are considered contamination.

Food residue is also a form of contamination. For example, containers (yogurt, salsa, etc.) must be rinsed before they can go in the blue box.

Paper products with residue are not recyclable and should be composted. These include grease-stained pizza boxes and paper napkins.

It is important not to recycle "optimistically." Luckily, the Niagara Region's searchable What Goes Where guidelines ([www.niagararegion.ca/waste](http://www.niagararegion.ca/waste)) take the guesswork out of putting any item into a waste bin.

**Start at the source:** Household waste is closely tied to shopping habits. "Going zero-waste" is gaining traction as an accessible way to reduce pollution right at home.

It can seem difficult, but a zero-waste lifestyle does not mean collecting garbage from a whole year in one mason jar. It's about small shifts in everyday actions to reduce your environmental

footprint.

To start, it helps to buy new items only as a last resort. Second-hand alternatives conserve the energy otherwise needed to manufacture and ship new products.

Sarah Lazarovic's "Buyerarchy of Needs" illustration is also an excellent framework that leads to greener shopping decisions.

Area vendors and Niagara farmers' markets are a good way to source products without excessive packaging and shipping footprint.

There is also a "Buy Nothing" Facebook group for Niagara-on-the-Lake! This caring group of neighbours reduces waste by rehoming items within NOTL.

While our recycling bins may be part of the problem, it's exciting that Niagara can work together toward a solution.

*Kyra Simone is a NOTL-born nature lover with a master's degree in biology. In her spare time, she advocates for sustainable change, picks up garbage, makes recycled jewelry, and transforms furniture bound for the landfill.*



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# Church services resume around NOTL, Redbrick Church says opening a success

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Sunday services have resumed at Niagara United Mennonite's Redbrick Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake and lead pastor Daniel Janzen said it's been going well so far.

The church has put strict COVID procedures in place since services resumed Sept. 13, with members having to enter, take a prescreening and wear a mask for service.

About 40 people showed up for the first service since the church's closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Normally about 120 people attend a regular English service, Janzen said.

The church also offers services in German.

"It's not the same as it was before," Janzen said, adding he doesn't think things are the same for most organizations.

People attending need to register in advance online for the service, but there is some walk-in space available. When they arrive, the church checks them off or signs them up. They're then taken to a station with personal protective equipment like masks and sanitizer, he said.

"If they didn't bring their own masks one is made available for them," Janzen said.

"And then we have some ushers there to receive them and to direct them to be



Redbrick Church. JESSICA MAXWELL

spaced out according to bubble or family units. That takes care of some of the logistics of getting in and getting out."

When people leave the church, they're directed out in a "staggered" way that keeps groups together.

The service itself, he said, is "a mixture of live and pre-recorded elements," Janzen said, adding he's glad to be back to leading the service, but that it's definitely not the same.

"It felt good. I mean, it also felt strange being in a space that's familiar but sort of also unfamiliar," he said.

One big difference that will take some adjustment is he can't see people's faces.

"You look out and you don't receive a lot of facial expression and that's a different experience," he said.

While not everyone has returned, there was a "sense of joy" among people who were ready.

"We have a mixed con-

gregation with some people that were, I guess, ready to return earlier and some that are not ready yet," he said.

"I think that was a great joy to them, to be able to come into the space and to be physically in the space together to worship as opposed to maybe in their homes or in their small family bubbles or online."

He said while he was there for the Sept. 13 service, he wasn't there for the German service Sept. 20, but he heard people were even more joyful as they start to get used to the new procedures.

With the province tightening restrictions on private, unstaffed gatherings, the church will be keeping an eye on what happens next and whether the church will have to close again.

"It's something that I think everybody in leadership, as they heard the announcement sort of said, 'OK, this may be a possibility,' " Janzen said.

"If the provincial guidelines recommend or say that we need to make smaller gatherings or that we cannot be open, then we will continue to worship the way that we have been doing the last six months. And so we're geared up to do that."

During the time the church was closed, services were hosted online on various platforms, including YouTube and through ChurchOnlinePlatform.com, as well as on Cogeco on channel 10.

The church also continues to stream services to Pleasant Manor retirement home, "as was our custom before COVID," Janzen said.

### SERVICES AT OTHER CHURCHES:

Bethany Mennonite Church resumes in-person services Oct. 4.

St. Mark's Anglican Church resumes in-person services on Oct. 11.

Christ Church McNab resumes in-person services on Oct. 18.

Cornerstone Community Church resumed service outdoors only on July 5.

St. Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Church resumed in-person services June 21.

St. Davids-Queenston United Church remains closed, along with St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Grace United Church.

Other churches could not be reached by press time to confirm service schedules.

## Obituary

### Brigitte Knauer



KNAUER, Brigitte - After a long and vibrant life, Brigitte passed away peacefully after a brief illness at the Greater Niagara General Hospital on Sunday September 6, 2020 at the age of 85. Beloved wife of the late Harry Knauer (2008). Loving Mutti of Christine (Kevin) Beatty and Martin (Brenda) Knauer. Caring Oma of Geoffrey, Daniel (Kim) and Michael. Predeceased by her sister

Magdalene Wiebe and her parents Jacob and Margarete Wiebe. Brigitte was a long time and active member of Club Heidelberg. She loved working in her garden, camping and travel. Brigitte was also an avid writer and an excellent cook and baker, to which her family and friends can attest! A private family service has taken place at Trinity Lutheran Church with an interment at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. Arrangements entrusted to MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake. As an expression of sympathy, those who wish may make memorial donations to the Trinity Lutheran Memorial Garden, Walker Family Cancer Centre or Canadian Diabetes Association. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)



## Celebrate life's events

The Lake Report would like to help you celebrate events that are important to you. Birthdays, anniversaries, achievements, or just a fun message to a friend. It's a great way to support your local paper, and have some fun at the same time! Contact [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)

# Shaw Festival launches series of free shows outside theatre for the fall

Kevin MacLean  
Managing Editor

The Shaw Festival has launched a new, free, limited-capacity outdoor festival series to try to bring music and dance to the community.

About 40 bespoke concerts will be held on several Niagara-on-the-Lake outdoor stages and venues with a line-up of three concert revues

featuring the music of early 20th-century artists Duke Ellington, Dorothy Fields and Cole Porter and up to eight Shaw performers, the festival announced Wednesday.

A number of the concerts will happen in the Shaw's Baillie Courtyard. Due to limited capacity, Friends of The Shaw will have first access to the concerts and tickets for the public will be offered as availability

allows.

In addition to events on the festival's grounds, the Shaw is working with local hotels, wineries and private residences with suitable outdoor space to host concerts.

The festival's first partner is Jackson-Triggs Winery, which will host concerts in its bandshell on Oct. 6 and 13. Admittance to off-site performances will be limited and access

determined by each venue based on its safety protocols.

Tickets to the public will be made available through the Shaw's mailing list. The festival encourages everyone to sign up for its e-newsletter.

All shows in the Shaw's regular 2020 season were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Only "A Christmas Carol" remains on the schedule.



Kristi Frank in rehearsal for the Shaw Festival's outdoor concert series (2020). PHOTO BY KATIE MACCABE



Pauline Reimer Gibson  
Audiologist

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**EXPLORING PHOTOS**  
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## Lakeview House

This is a watercolour of the Lakeview House-Riverside-Harbour Inn. The inn was built near the corner of Melville Street and River Beach Road in 1860 by John Thornton. Many of the owners of the railway car manufacturing company located in the dock area stayed here. In 1870, John Rousseau Sr. bought the establishment and renamed it Lakeview House. Later owners included James Doyle and Frank Addison. Over the years the Lakeview was renamed the Riverside and then the Harbour Inn. The building burned down in the late 1990s and is now the site of riverfront condominiums.



### It all works together

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

Was your old house built before 1900? If so, it's almost certain that the basement foundation was constructed with lime mortar; a completely different critter than today's Portland mortars.

The master mason working on our Centre Street restoration project described it this way: "These old buildings are never completely still. When they move, it's the lime mortar that does the work. Think of the lime as a living thing. When the masonry shifts, tiny cracks open up in the mortar. Then with the first hard rain, the lime is activated and heals the cracks."



Mortar Loss hidden by Pebbledash Parging. SUPPLIED

But, he continued, "just like anything that lives, the lime has a lifespan which is eventually used up. You know it's time for repair when you see that those little cracks are just not going away after a few solid rainstorms."

Historically, the masons constructed buildings in a fashion that encompassed the nature of materials they worked with. Foundations were set on undisturbed soil and usually made of stone laid in a manner that was stable even as it shifted.

The brick, softer than its current-day counter-

part, was set in bonds that maintained integrity while moving with the foundation. The buildings were made to "breathe," moving water vapour through the walls as part of a natural renewing process.

And all of the components were bound together with a mortar that respected the materials, the movement of the building and "self-healed" to last through decades.

It was a marvelous system, provided that a little maintenance was performed with compatible materials when necessary. Unfortunately, the "innova-

tions" of the 20th century combined with the idea that "newer is always better" have, and are, leading to significant damage to these old buildings.

As an example, let's consider something that has been commonly done over the last 100 years: parging rubblestone foundations with the "new" Portland product. It would last longer and look just as good.

The problem was that the original lime parging was not simply for looks. It was meant to be a sacrificial layer to protect and extend the life of the lime mortar. When the parging needed replacement, one repaired any deteriorated mortar as well.

While Portland parging does last significantly longer, it is by its nature static, doesn't work with the original system, and the lime mortar hidden behind inevitably loses its structural integrity.

As a result, what holds up your old house might not be working like it used to.



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# Conversation group helps keep German alive in NOTL

Brittany Carter  
The Lake Report

Use it or lose it: these are words to live by for Yvonne McMorrough, founder of Niagara-on-the-Lake's German Conversation Group.

Since 2016, a small group of language enthusiasts have been meeting each week at the NOTL Community Centre to keep their conversational knowledge of German alive. And though the COVID-19 pandemic put a short stop to the weekly meetings, McMorrough said the group quickly adapted to online video conferencing technology to continue their regular meetings.

The group began as a way for advanced German speakers to maintain the language while keeping their minds sharp. McMorrough, who said just that she is in her 80s, said it's important to keep stimulating the mind as you age.

"What we're hoping to achieve with this is to continue our brain functions and not to forget (the language). The more languages you have, the more parts of



Yvonne McMorrough, founder of Niagara-on-the-Lake's German Conversation Group.  
BRITTANY CARTER

the brain that you use," she said.

Currently, she said she has a conversational knowledge of five languages. Native to Ireland, she said she believes she is the oldest NOTL resident from her homeland.

"I would say I have a reasonable knowledge of five but my own Gaelic language is the weakest these days. My strongest are Ger-

man and English, and I am functional in French and Spanish," she said.

The "amazing group" consists of five German native speakers, a Peruvian, two Brazilians and "our star Englishman, who lived in Germany for about 20 years and speaks better than any native."

Anyone is welcome to join the group, but they should have an advanced

knowledge of the language. The group is not for learning German, but to maintain it.

"This is not for beginners," McMorrough warns.

She said she leaves it up to the participants to decide whether or not they have a strong enough understanding of the language to continue with the group. Beginners have joined, but they often do not last, she said.

"They usually drop out after a while. We try to make everybody welcome. We give them time to observe, just to see how proficient they are. And if they can't join in, and we leave it up to them to decide if they want to drop out."

While the group will discuss some terms related to travel, she said it's not so much a group for tourists.

"We discuss a couple of fair tourist things like traveling by train or going to the seaside or going to the post office. We also cover some of the famous poets. We bring a bit of literature in there and music as well," she said.

Each week, one member leads the conversation topic. She said the group frequents world news sites to discuss politics, global events and international news. Meetings are conducted solely in German, and members are encouraged to research basic terms and words that may stump them during the conversation.

She said they build their vocabulary for certain subjects, so they can be

discussed in depth.

"We will build vocabulary for specific subjects. For example, here (in NOTL) there's a lot of gardeners. So, I have this vocabulary for different subjects. I could have herbs and spices, religions, different animals, political parties, etc."

"So, you have to have the in-depth vocabulary to discuss that subject," she said.

She said she's thankful to technology for allowing the group to continue meeting after the closures hit this spring. Now, after being introduced to video conferencing, she said she thinks the group will continue meeting this way for a while.

And, after in-person meetings pick back up, she said they will still be able to make meetings virtually for anyone who may be out of town.

The group is always welcoming new members, she said.

If anyone would like to join or sit in on a meeting to see if the group is right for them, contact McMorrough at [avocanotl@aol.com](mailto:avocanotl@aol.com).

# Zalepa, Disero support region's decision to extend mask bylaw

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

The Region of Niagara has extended its mandatory mask bylaw until April 1, 2021.

The extension, approved on Sept. 17 by a 25 to 5 vote, is unchanged other than the expiration date. Businesses may simply leave the signage already in place and continue with the current rules and guidelines, said the region in a news release.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Regional Coun. Gary Zalepa and Lord Mayor Betty Disero both voted in favour of the extension.

Zalepa, who voted against the bylaw originally, said he thinks it's important that it continues.

"I think it makes perfect



Masks are mandatory in the Niagara region. FILE

sense to continue. It seems to be an effective way to raise awareness for people to keep your distance and keep safe, so I think that's important," he said in an interview Monday.

He said he never disagreed with wearing a mask, but that he "had a problem with politicians making a decision to put a mask into play, when the public health officer at the time wasn't suggesting to do so."

"I've always agreed

with the fact that physical distancing, washing your hands, and if you can't physically distance you wear a mask," Zalepa said.

"I'm not against keeping people safe, that's for sure. I agree with wearing a mask, it was just that the 'mandatory' is a bit deceiving, because there's really no mandatory in any of it. It's hard to enforce, as we all know. It's just a matter of trying to do what's best for everybody and we're

hoping that by having a mask bylaw, it kind of raises awareness that, hey, this is important."

The Lake Report asked Zalepa his thoughts about anti-mask groups and if there is a concern about the spread of misinformation regarding masks.

"I guess there's a group for everybody," he said.

"I just think that if you're going to take a position either way, on a subject matter, whatever that subject is, I would hope you do your homework and feel comfortable about your position."

As a municipal politician, he said he thinks it's important to reply on the expertise of staff members.

"When those experts are telling you something, whether it's in a question

about a sewage treatment plant, or whether it's a question about a public health item, I think you have to really rely on the staff," he said.

He was also asked at what point the mask debate is no longer a matter of opinion and when politicians need to speak out against misinformation.

He said if people with uninformed opinions were influencing policy, that's when politicians would need to speak up.

He said he'd hope at that point, "our leadership is pretty capable of distilling the facts, taking the advice of the professional staff, and making sure they're not influenced by the false information that's out there," he said.

"I think that unfortunately,

social media, the role of social media is newer in our history. I think we're still figuring out how to deal with that."

Meanwhile, COVID cases continue to climb across the country, with 478 new cases confirmed in Ontario on Tuesday, according to the province's COVID-19 statistics page.

This week Niagara Region's total number of cases reached 1,003. There have been 43 cases in NOTL but there is only one active case now.

The Canada-U.S. border closure has been extended until Oct. 21. The decision was agreed upon by both national governments. Essential travel and the flow of goods will continue as before, but recreational travel remains forbidden.

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