



# NOTL volunteers honoured

Province recognizes years of service by some of the people who help to keep organizations thriving

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

More than 15 Niagara-on-the-Lake volunteers have been recognized with special honours by the province of Ontario for their work in the community.

The volunteers, from various organizations, received Ontario Volunteer Service Awards during a virtual ceremony last Thursday.

Among the volunteers recognized were four people who help out at Radiant Care's Pleasant Manor in Virgil.

Lillian Bergen received a five-year award for therapy dog services, Rosie Deb was honoured for five years of running the home's tuck shop, selling coffee and other items to tenants, and Ralf Hamm earned a 10-year award for various duties, including running barbecues for special events, helping with food for long-term care residents and delivering fresh-cut flowers every week for the residence's dining room tables.

And Mary Janzen was recognized with a 30-year award for playing piano and doing singalongs with residents.



Pleasant Manor volunteers Ralf Hamm, Lillian Bergen (with Randy the shih-poo therapy dog) and Rosie Deb were honoured by the province of Ontario for years of contributions to the long-term care facility. RICHARD HARLEY

Tim Siemsen, CEO of Radiant Care, said volunteers typically play a big role at Pleasant Manor, but during the past year of the pandemic, many haven't been able to come into the home.

On top of that, the facility just saw the end of a 53-day COVID-19 outbreak, making it even more challenging.

"It's not possible to have a lot of volunteers come

into the home during a pandemic and let alone an outbreak," he said.

"But I've been in this business 21 years now at Pleasant Manor, and I'll tell you that the volunteers are a

big part of the backbone to the operation of our organization."

He said he's grateful to all volunteers and that Pleasant Manor's "campuses of care" model which includes long-

term care and retirement homes on the same property, has many volunteers who live right on-site.

"I can't say enough of

*Continued on Page 8*

# Community centre likely location for NOTL vaccine rollout

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Niagara Region's public health department doesn't want to use the Virgil arenas for the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine in NOTL, Lord Mayor Betty Disero says.

Instead, the health agency is looking at the NOTL Community Centre and it's very likely that will be the final location, Disero said in an interview Tuesday.

She said a final decision likely will be made Thursday.

Right now the region is also looking into how to co-ordinate different vaccine waitlists "that are floating around," Disero said, "to ensure that everybody is going to be able to get a vaccine who wants one, so that there's one co-ordinated effort."

Regional officials visited the community centre Wednesday.

"I think that sort of almost confirms it," Disero said. "It was their choice. They want to look at the site."

As long as there's nothing the region can see that will prohibit the rollout, "that's their preferred site."

In November 2020, flu shots were also administered at the community centre via a drive-thru hosted by Niagara North Family Health Team.

Mary Keith, executive director of the health team, told The Lake Report at the time that the drive-thru was a good rehearsal for distributing a COVID-19 vaccine.

"I think we're all hoping that we'll be using this as practice for when we have a COVID vaccine," she said. "Certainly with the positive feedback I could see us doing this again next year with the flu shots."

Disero said while it's not yet confirmed, she expects that will end up being the location.

"Nothing is 100 per cent until a final decision is made, but it seems like everything's pointing in that direction."



Lord Mayor Betty Disero says the region is interested in the NOTL Community Centre for its vaccine plan. FILE



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# COVID-19 outbreak ends at Pleasant Manor care home

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

After 53 days in outbreak status and two resident deaths, Virgil's Pleasant Manor is now free of COVID-19 cases, Radiant Care CEO Tim Siemens says.

With that news, there's a general feeling of relief in the facility that residents are safe, he said.

An outbreak of any type puts an extra "weight or burden" on staff, Siemens said, especially COVID-19.

"Typically when you're in outbreak, whatever kind it is, it takes a lot of focused effort on the staff. And this one, it lasts a long time, or it certainly did last a long time — 53 days — so being declared out of outbreak, it does lift morale, it does take a burden away in that sense from a psyche perspective."

He said it's also a relief to have an "extra layer of protection" now that residents and staff have been vaccinated.

It's always the hope that once out of outbreak, you won't go through it again, he said.

"But as we know and understand more of this COVID virus and its variants, we just want to make sure that we're doing all that we



Radiant Care Pleasant Manor chief executive Tim Siemens said a weight has been lifted with the COVID-19 outbreak being officially declared over. FILE/RICHARD HARLEY

can to remain vigilant and to protect our residents and our tenants and our staff with PPE and have measures in place that are based on the provincial guidelines and public health, to ensure that we're doing our part to keep anything out, COVID or any of its variants."

He had high praise for Niagara Region's public health department.

"We couldn't have done it without public health," he said.

When an outbreak is declared, public health comes in right away to do an

enhanced inspection of the entire home and continues inspections throughout the outbreak.

"They come in unannounced and it gives an opportunity for them to see what's happening," he said.

"It's like a report card. So you can see the areas that you're excelling in and the areas that you might need to work on. And then obviously the expectation is to fix those areas that need to be worked on."

He said while there have always been outbreak protocols, the ones for COVID-19

are "a lot more rigorous."

But outbreaks are about more than just numbers, he emphasized.

"We see it every day — numbers, numbers, numbers, right? It can be so easy to forget that behind each one of those numbers is an individual story and an individual life."

"We can never forget that there's an incredible story and an individual story behind each of those numbers. That's one of the things I've learned from this," he said.

"The impact of this particular virus on a person's

psyche and a person's mind and, I don't know about yourself, but each of us seems to be on a spectrum of fear and anxiety — fear of the unknown, anxiety of where is this thing going — and it's a very emotional time," he said.

"And then people start passing away in your home. With humility, it's such an honour to serve these people and to recognize and remember that there's an individual story behind each one of these people."

"We care for residents. And we care for residents well. And that means getting to know these people, learning who they are, and you become family. And when they pass away, we grieve."

He said during the pandemic, the home is operating with enhanced cleaning and infection control protocols at all times.

At the Niagara Long Term Care Residence on Wellington Street, a COVID outbreak that led to 11 deaths and more than 120 infections is now coming to an end too. As of Tuesday, the home had no resident cases and just one staff person still recovering.

Public health has lifted the outbreak status in all home

areas with the exception of two parts of the home, the Shaw and Pinery wings on the facility's second floor.

"This has allowed many residents to leave their rooms, engage in small group programming and even small-setting communal dining — all very limited and controlled, but balancing the physical and emotional well-being of our residents with all infection prevention and control protocols," said executive director Chris Poos.

He said the home remains in regular contact with public health officials and is continuing with infection prevention and control measures, including rapid testing and twice daily screening of residents and staff for any signs of the COVID-19 virus.

"We remain hopeful that if our test results continue to be negative, and there are no suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19, that public health may consider lifting the outbreak status here at Niagara on Feb. 28."

NOTL's third care home, Upper Canada Lodge, which is operated by the Region of Niagara, has not had any reported COVID cases.

# Hirji fears rapid spike in COVID variants with quick reopening

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Niagara is likely headed for the pandemic red zone, but not on the advice of the region's acting chief medical officer of health.

During a news conference Monday, Dr. Mustafa Hirji said with COVID-19 variants confirmed in the Greater Toronto Area, there's a real risk of the virus spreading to Niagara.

Public health is already investigating six cases of suspected variant cases in the region, all of which are linked to the GTA directly or indirectly, Hirji said.

Technically, most cases in North America and western Europe are actually a variant called D614G Variant, Hirji said, which originated in Italy last year.

"And that really became



Dr. Mustafa Hirji. SUPPLIED

the variant of the virus that spread through most of western Europe spread throughout North America."

While there is some debate about whether the common variant spreads faster than the virus that originated in China, one thing that is for sure is the new variants B117 (U.K. origin), B1351 (South Africa) and B.1 (Brazil) do spread much more quickly, he said.

"These ones are definitely

even more transmissible and spread more easily," Hirji said.

He said while the measures in place now have been somewhat effective, it "is not enough to control these other ones and slowly these other ones start to pick up pace and grow more quickly."

If it weren't for the variants and if people continued to stay locked down, "we're on this great trajectory that we would see cases continue to come down and down and down," Hirji said.

His concern is, now, with variants, the province is pushing to open up.

He said based on models with the variant included, cases are predicted to "spike very rapidly upwards."

"And quick reopening, of course, means that we see that spike more easily," he

said.

"To control these variants, we actually need to continue to have enhanced measures in place in society to continue to keep (cases) low. And that's unfortunately the scenario that we are potentially facing here in Canada with those various stories to establish themselves."

Around the world, in the U.K., Spain, Netherlands, Hirji said it's the same story, coming out of lockdown to a major spike in cases due to variants.

"And that's because those variants were able to spread even more quickly than the previous version of virus, leading to that kind of spread," Hirji said.

"That's what we need to try and avoid seeing here in Canada and particularly in Ontario."

Even in Canada, in the

Atlantic bubble, cases are starting to overwhelm systems that had done a good job keeping the original variant at bay.

In Newfoundland, there have been more cases in the last 10 days than there had been since the start of the pandemic, Hirji said.

And while Ontario hasn't had nearly as many cases, he said nonetheless it's "a really cautionary tale of how quickly things could change if those variants start to take hold in a serious way here."

To control it, we need more strict measures, he said, not fewer.

He pointed out that even though cases in Niagara are coming down, the rate of new infections is still "well higher" than it was during the first wave of the pandemic.

According to Public Health Agency of Canada and the Ontario Science Table, Hirji said, at some point variant cases are "going to start to rise, very rapidly."

At Monday's council meeting, Coun. Gary Burroughs raised concerns about vaccines being diverted from Niagara without knowing where they went, and asked whether the town is "confident supplies are actually coming soon to our residents."

Chief administrator Marnie Cluckie said she didn't want to "overstep into public health's realm" by commenting on the vaccine rollout, but that the region is "making every effort to bring it here as quickly as they are able to and Niagara-on-the-Lake will not be left behind."

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# Pandemic forces Shaw to **cancel** 2021 musical

Staff  
The Lake Report

The Shaw Festival has cancelled its major 2021 production of "Gypsy: A Musical Fable."

Continued lockdown restrictions in Niagara Region "have made it clear" that the company is unable to present the musical this year, Shaw said in a news release.

The musical is now expected to be showcased in 2023.

"To collaborate on 'Gypsy' — one of the greatest musicals of all time — with this particular group of artists has been an immense joy," said musical director Paul Sportelli.

The restrictive measures on the rehearsal and performance of brass and wind instruments, and on singing "severely impact" the artistic vision for the musical, the festival said in a message to subscribers.

"I feel a deep sadness that we can't bring our fully realized production into the world in 2021, but the restrictions on our musicians and singing actors simply make it impossible to achieve what we intended



Shaw is planning a series of outdoor shows in light of the cancellation of "Gypsy." SUPPLIED

to do with this show," Sportelli said.

Artistic director Tim Carroll said though the company has become used to "being nimble" and adapting to the pandemic, the decision to cancel the show is "heart rending."

"But as one door closes, another opens. We were already planning a fabulous range of outdoor events, musical theatre, you name it. Having this group of amazing performers available for that work increases our scope hugely."

Details about the "mys-

terious projects" will be announced "in the coming weeks," he said.

The remaining playbill, which is currently not affected by changes to performance protocols, will continue to move forward in a reduced capacity, Shaw said in the release.

Scheduled shows for 2021 include "The Devil's Disciple," "Sherlock Holmes and the Raven's Curse," "Charley's Aunt," "Flush," "Desire Under the Elms," "Trouble in Mind," "A Christmas Carol" and "Holiday Inn."

Tim Jennings, executive director of festival, said the company remains confident the remaining shows will move forward in 2021.

"Our theatres are at the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake and we are deeply aware of the Shaw's economic impact on our surrounding communities," he said.

"With this in mind, supplementing the playbill with additional performance offerings will allow us to support the artists and the crew of the musical 'Gypsy' — and by extension our community — while offering our audiences safe, entertaining and inspired outdoor alternatives."

He said while Shaw did consider staging the show later in 2021, the shift in schedule of one show impacts many other moving pieces of the festival.

"We simply could not find a way to make that shift happen without detrimentally impacting everything else," Jennings said.

The show is also not scheduled for next year, as the theatre company has already secured rights to other performances in 2022.

# Fired hydro exec has repaid missing **\$426,000**

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

A former Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro executive who has been charged with defrauding the utility of more than \$426,000, has now repaid all the money.

Hydro CEO Tim Curtis said the entire \$426,992 amount was repaid as of last week.

Kazi Marouf, of Fort Erie, the former vice-president of operations, is slated to appear in court on the fraud charge on March 22.

Marouf, 67, who was fired in September, was charged in January with one count of fraud over \$5,000.

Niagara Regional Police investigators said the

alleged fraud occurred between March 2019 and July 2020.

As previously reported by The Lake Report, the scheme involved phony invoices issued and paid over that 18-month period.

The fraud was discovered by an employee in the finance department who was processing a payment.

After the employ-

ee 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.

Hydro officials emphasized that the fraud had no effect on the utility's financial status or customers' bills.

# Council **narrowly rejects** solution to light pollution

Evan Saunders  
Special to The Lake Report

Council members narrowly defeated a plan Monday to immediately address light pollution complaints from Virgil's popular pickleball courts.

The pickleball courts have become a popular attraction for NOTL residents during recent years and have provided a revenue stream for

the town.

They have also become a source of irritation for some neighbours.

The town has received two formal complaints regarding light pollution from the pickleball courts, located in the Centennial Sports Park, according to Monday night's council meeting.

The town has already tentatively set aside \$32,000

in the 2022 budget for improvements to the pickleball court lights.

The motion, defeated 5-4, on Monday requested that the town add the improvements to the 2021 budget and spend an additional \$13,000 to raise the lights to a height of 65 to 70 feet, in order to minimize light pollution for nearby residents.

Councillors against the motion took issue with

interfering with the 2021 budget instead of waiting until 2022.

"We don't have the money now," Coun. Erwin Wiens told councillors.

Wiens expressed his sympathy for residents, but said people buying property that backs onto a park should expect some activity at the park.

Read the full story at [niagaranow.com](http://niagaranow.com).



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**NOTL active cases: 9**  
**Region active cases: 256**  
**Region deaths: 369**  
**Region total cases: 8,514**  
**Region resolved cases: 7,889**

\*Feb. 24 data per Niagara Region Public Health



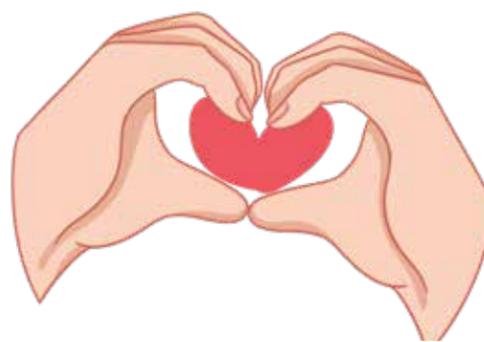
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## Editorial: Love for NOTL volunteers

Richard Harley  
 Editor-In-Chief



Niagara-on-the-Lake thrives on volunteerism. And it's so satisfying to see some of those volunteers recognized for the incredible number of hours they collectively spend helping our local organizations and non-profits.

The province typically holds a ceremony for its Ontario Volunteer Service Award winners, however due to COVID-19, the ceremony was a rather low-key online event this year.

It's disappointing and unfortunate, said Sarah Kaufman, curator of the NOTL Museum. But that's life in the COVID era.

Many of this year's award recipients didn't even know they'd won an award until they were contacted by The Lake Report.

So, it's our honour to make a big splash for these folks. They deserve it.

The Lake Report, like so

many other NOTL organizations, relies greatly on the help of community volunteers.

Our managing editor, Kevin MacLean, works tirelessly for the paper to help us bring great, informative and accurate information to NOTL residents.

And writers like Tim Taylor, Jill Troyer, Brian Marshall, Dr. William Brown, Sarah Kaufman, Gail Kendall, Patty Garriock, Jessica Maxwell, Steve Hardaker, our History Unveiled writers Denise Ascenzo, Linda Fritz and Betsy Masson, plus a long list of others have helped us tell the fascinating stories they find in

our community.

And it doesn't end there. Behind the scenes, folks like proofreader Susan Des Islets help us double-check the stories every Wednesday before we send the paper to press.

So, we understand firsthand the importance of recognizing volunteers for their hard work.

As our front-page story attests, the people honoured by the province are so wonderful that, when asked how it feels to be recognized, every one of them said it "feels good, but we're not doing it for any recognition."

So, we want to offer kudos and thanks to all of

NOTL's volunteers who have contributed in a positive way to our community.

Every year, organizations like Pleasant Manor and the NOTL Museum submit names to be considered for the volunteer awards.

And both leaders of those organizations acknowledge how hard it is to select the nominees every year (there's a limit on how many people an organization can nominate).

In the words of Tim Siemens, Pleasant Manor's CEO, the yearly winners are an important representation of a larger spirit of volunteers and community-minded individuals in NOTL.

Next time you see one of those volunteers in the community, even though they're not looking for praise, let them know you appreciate their hard work.

For without them, we wouldn't enjoy many of the great things this community has to offer.

editor@niagaranow.com



## Seniors only matter when politicians want their vote

Dear editor:  
 First, let me say I am unaffiliated with any political party and this letter is not intended to favour any particular party.

An extract from federal Liberal candidate Andrea Kaiser's media release stated the Liberal government has demonstrated decisive leadership in protecting our health and securing access to vaccines.

I would categorize this release as pure political puffery or, as former U.S. President Donald Trump would say, the big lie, "fake news."

To launch any political campaign with this lead is offensive to the families of the residents who died in long-term care homes, representing 70 per cent of all deaths in Canada.

Additionally, as we are approaching March, the vast majority of Canadians

are frustrated and patiently waiting on their first vaccine shot.

We are the laughing-stock of the world. PM Justin Trudeau, like most politicians, is not shy when taking lots of poetic licence in his interviews and stump speeches, lots of promises and political wordsmithing, with no meaningful vaccine deliveries as an end result.

Let's examine other issues with the Liberal party's hollow promises as it relates to our undervalued and underappreciated senior citizens. Ottawa announced a paltry \$300, one-time COVID-19 payment to seniors, with a strong inference of a further payout. None materialized.

In an article by Kathleen Harris on CBC News posted Sept. 18, 2019, she wrote: "During a re-election campaign in Fredericton, N.B., Justin Trudeau announced a re-elected gov-

ernment led by him would provide a 10 per cent boost to Old Age Security at age 75 and 25 per cent increase to the Canada Pension Plan for widows. The increase would give Canadian's 75 and older \$729 per year and lift 20,000 seniors out of poverty. Widows and widowers would receive up to \$2,080 in additional benefits each year under CPP." More fake news.

A major portion of the Niagara riding voters are seniors - 60 per cent in NOTL. They are hurting with grocery, fuel cost increases, etc. Many are on fixed incomes.

I would suggest your party address these hot issue topics prior to the next federal election.

Seniors are only important when you want our votes. Otherwise we are the forgotten class, similar to our Indigenous popu-

lation, ignored by Ottawa for decades.

Clearly, as is evident by their plummeting poll numbers, these issues are already negatively impacting the Liberals' popularity. The aftermath of these, and other broken and unfilled promises, reflects poorly on the image of Trudeau and his party. He has become the poster boy for the oxymoron "honest politician."

Andrea, when you are out campaigning shaking hands and kissing babies, hopefully with your leader as in 2019, be prepared to address the question, "How did these promises work out?" I will be there to ask the question.

Good luck with your campaign. You'll need it with these anchors around your party's neck.

Samuel Young  
 NOTL

# OPINION



## Paramedics are **under-appreciated** heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic

Rick Chandler  
Special to The Lake Report



During this unprecedented pandemic, The Lake Report and other area media have done a commendable job updating readers on the rules of engagement with COVID-19 and reiterated those rules as often as is necessary for most of us to understand. Most follow these rules to keep ourselves, our family and friends safe.

There has been some confusion over which businesses and services are permitted by the government to open. Some businesses, like liquor stores and cannabis dealers are deemed essential. How long did we manage to go without cannabis outlets? Now they are essential.

I grew up in an age where services were classified as essential or non-essential for contractual purposes. Police, fire, health care, if allowed to strike, posed a threat to the public welfare, and thus were classified as essential services.

Police, fire and EMS are three of the groups that take on a role to serve the public in spite of risks that are

inherent in their job.

Police do not refuse to respond to a call that involves violent offenders, firefighters do not refuse calls because there is a dangerous fire. Paramedics do not refuse to answer a call when a person's life is in danger. Accommodations and procedures are made by all groups to lessen the danger to each and often work in conjunction with each other to achieve the goal of public safety and care.

One group still stands out from the rest. Paramedics.

Last month, during the initial vaccine rollout, Niagara Health in conjunction with Niagara EMS medics were running clinics at the hospital, prioritizing health care workers within the hospital. Paramedics were administering the vaccine but were unable to get the vaccine.

The reality is paramedics respond to calls that involve considerable risk and

exposure to this virus. They do have personal protective equipment available and use it as directed, but obviously, with a consistently high number of employees off, this level of protection is not always effective.

During a 12-hour shift, they enter private homes, businesses, long-term care homes, hospital emergency departments and many other venues where people are sick or injured. They are exposed constantly. They get sick, they take it home to families when they are asymptomatic, as well as to the next call they go on.

What a recipe for disaster that is not recognized or being addressed by the public health department or the government of Ontario.

Paramedics were finally being vaccinated as of Feb. 23. Any further delay in the vaccination of paramedics in your area and the variants that are being introduced to the equation keep getting more easily transmittable and deadly, you will find the community in a profoundly serious situation.

Paramedics are the vector for transmission of this and many other communicable diseases, others which

they are vaccinated against according to provincial legislation because of their interaction with the public. The provincial government makes this a condition of employment. Why was the COVID-19 vaccination not placed on the same list?

The Jan. 28 edition of The Lake Report had a picture of a long-term care residence in NOTL with a picture of an ambulance sitting at the front. This is a commonplace event, so why are they not treated like other workers in the same facility?

Who are the heroes? Everybody that works as a front-line caregiver to those who are exposed or infected with COVID-19 are heroes.

The most heroic are the paramedics who are doing it at the expense of themselves and their families because they were not considered important enough to be vaccinated until this week. They come to you and they do their job without complaint or recognition. Not one individual, but all of them are heroes!

*Rick Chandler is a retired paramedic and paramedic educator who lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake.*

## Taxpayers **footing the bill** for NOTL water losses

Dear editor:

The Lake Report (Feb. 18) reports that "Town lost \$719K in water in 2019" as stated in the Deloitte audit report.

The Deloitte audit report explains that the town buys water from the Region of Niagara and it is then delivered to residential and commercial customers.

Then due to the town staff's unrecognized water leakage, with a single year's value of \$719,000, the shortfall between what the town pays and what it collects is then passed on to ratepayers via higher water bills you pay via your NOTL Hydro bill.

So now thanks to this council and staff, ratepayers pay higher taxes and higher-than-necessary water bills.

The report then goes on to recommend that the town

perform a water leakage survey every five years. The town staff has not performed one in 20 years!

One can then deduce that ratepayers have been overpaying for water for up to 20 years. If the town staff had been doing their jobs, the ratepayers would not be left holding the proverbial "increased taxation/water bill bag."

But it is always too easy, especially with this council, to not hold staff accountable; it rewards staff management with six-figure salaries and increases taxes to cover their mistakes.

The town's environmental services supervisor is quoted as saying, "For myself, it was pretty eye-opening some of the detail and numbers to be looked at."

Well, isn't it your job and that of the director of op-

erations to identify and fix problems, and manage those numbers?

Coun. Norm Arsenault is downplaying the financial impact to ratepayers and defending staff by saying "things have a tendency to fall between the cracks."

Well, Councillor Arsenault, I believe you come from a world where the fallback position is taxpayer funding, but in any other business the six-figure salary-earning staff would have been shown the door and replaced with competent managers who would be full value for their salary.

By the way, \$719,000 falls through a chasm not a crack. Your cavalier attitude is poor form.

This town needed a strong kick-ass CEO type to improve the skill set of staff management and control

spending, but instead council hired another municipal bureaucrat as CAO who shortly after being hired, opined at the budget review meeting, that the 2021 budget is a "maintenance budget" with the implication that taxes must increase to maintain service levels.

In 2022, let's bring in new staff and a council that doesn't come from a world that relies on tax increases to cover its mistakes and poor decisions, and treats taxpayer money with the respect it deserves.

In 2022, let's elect at least five experienced CEO types that bring private sector experience (of which there is no shortage in NOTL) and with it a joint resolve of purpose to fix our sorry operational and fiscal state.

*Joe Accardo  
NOTL*



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# St. Davids entrepreneur **glad** construction can resume

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Rob Begin is happy construction crews can resume building his new restaurant and brewery in St. Davids.

The project was shut down during the province-wide lockdown, but the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake gave him the green light to continue work Feb. 16.

Begin said finishing touches are just being done now on The Grist, a project he's been working on for three years with his family.

He had been worried with Niagara remaining in grey-lockdown status that he wouldn't be able to get back to work. He said his lawyer initially was told by the town it was unlikely he would be able to resume work.

"I thought, 'My God, that's just absolutely nuts that everybody else is going to be at 25 per cent capacity in a mall and I'm not allowed to have five guys do construction.'"

He said one of the frustrations of being shut down is it's hard to just pick up where you left off, mainly because contractors find other work they can do while things are shut down.

"So when my trades leave, they go on, they have jobs that they're still doing," he said. "Like my plumber said they were going to be in this week, but because we've been down for two weeks they took on other jobs."

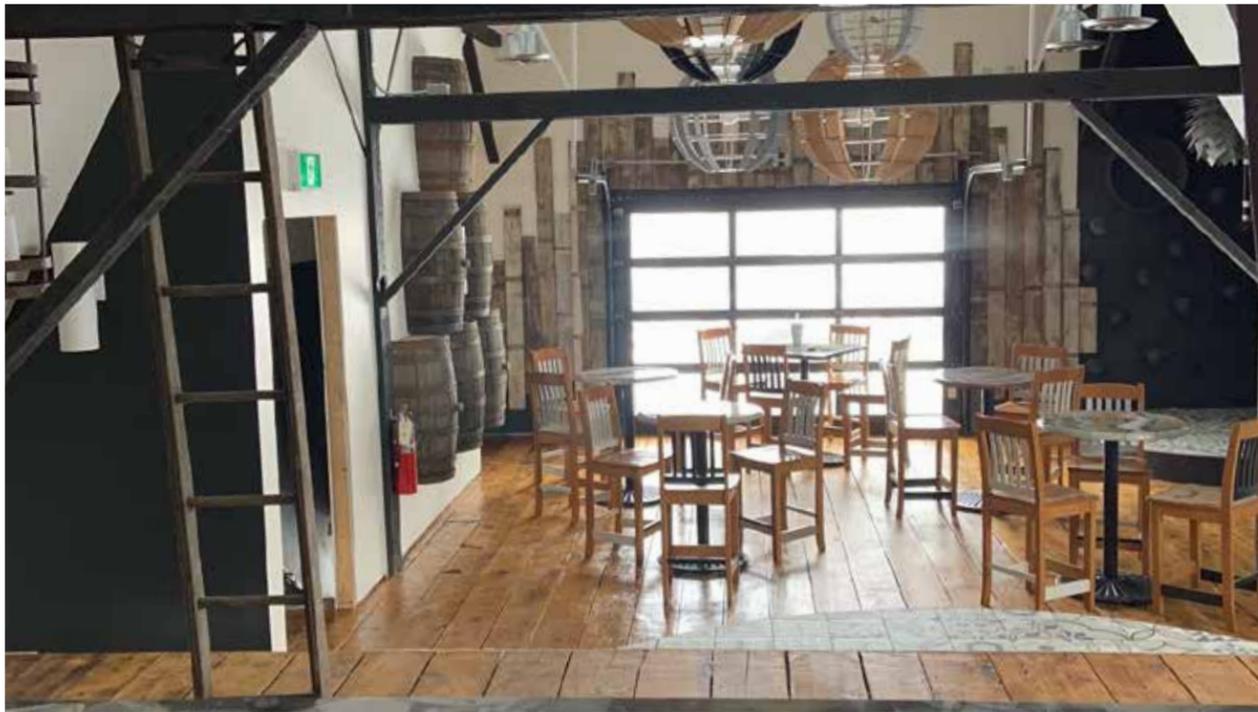
Throughout the process, there have been other hurdles, including a lengthy site plan approval process and installing a \$300,000 storm system underground.

"The worst part is the town actually sent me an email saying that I didn't (need to put in the storm system), so I purchased this property with the assumption and the blessing that we wouldn't have to do it."

"That was like a \$300,000 oopsie," Begin said.

He was also made to install oil and grid separators, meant to retain any oil leaked into the ground from vehicles.

"Only Walmarts and Costcos have these," he said. "Honestly, it was



Top: The interior of The Grist in St. Davids is pretty much ready to open. Left: The 140-person brewery and restaurant is decorated and waiting for customers when it finally opens. Right: During initial construction, siblings Elizabeth and John Fedorkow, grandchildren of the farm's founders who built the packing-house-brewery-to-be. SUPPLIED/TIM TAYLOR

an extra \$15,000 for this particular one that the town was adamant on having and it's like you can't win either way."

He said he doesn't want to "bad mouth the town," but feels it hasn't made the process easy.

"I love the town. I grew up over here on Line 3. My dad was a councillor for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for four terms. But if you understood how much we had to go through to get this thing done, you would say to yourself, 'Was it really worth it and is the town really wanting to support a local guy that's just rehabbing an old barn?'" he said.

He said the town asked him to preserve the barn when he purchased the property.

"You feel almost like

you're doing something wrong as opposed to doing something right," he said, and redoing the old barn cost a lot more than knocking it down and starting fresh would have.

"When we did it, the town said 'We really want you to save it.' I said, 'Absolutely, we're going to do it' and we didn't add one square inch to that building. And when we got our development charges, the (town) said 'OK, here's the bill, \$78,000' and I said to them, 'OK, that's for a full tilt for a new building, we have an existing one, we haven't done anything to it, we're renovating it. And they said, 'No, no, you have to pay full tilt.'"

He said after trying to ask the town for help, he had to pay full development

charges for a new build on the renovation. The town also tried to charge him \$11,000 in parkland dedication fees, which the previous owner had already paid.

He said "after much discussion" the town let him pay the difference based on the change in property value.

However, the municipality would not accept his three-month old appraisal and he was forced to pay another \$2,000 to get a new one done.

"So I had to pay out of my pocket an additional \$2,000 to get an appraisal dated that specific day, so that they could make a determination on what my parkland dedication fees were."

He said he questions whether the system in NOTL encourages people to

do things above board.

"Everybody is into self-preservation, so if they can say yes or no, they'll just say no. It's to protect themselves, it's just easier to say no," Begin said.

He said it's been tough, adding there's nobody "with deep pockets that is financing this thing."

"So, in the end, I made a decision to do all the (general contracting) on this project myself and I'm sure that things probably would have gone faster had I paid several hundred thousand to somebody else to do, but I just don't have that kind of money," he said.

Now, instead of dwelling on the obstacles he faced, he's looking forward to having his brewery opened.

"It's been real challenging for us but I always say that I

hope that it's all going to be worth it in the end. I really like the place. I think that it's going to be a real value to the locals in the area and that's what we're trying to appeal to."

About 20 years ago, his family operated Garciolos Pizza where the Sandtrap Pub and Grill is now and his dream was to once again build something for locals, but in a different way.

The property wasn't even up for sale when he bought it – he and his wife just had a dream and made a phone call.

"We just drove by the one day and I said to my wife 'I'm gonna call the guy up and see if he wants to sell the property and, you know what, 24 hours later we had a deal worked out, and it happened to be a guy that used to live on the same street that I was living on, on Line 3. Rainer (Hummel), go figure.'"

He said he's mentioned his struggles to Hummel.

Begin said he's not sure when The Grist will be opening and is deciding whether it's best to open right away or to wait until pandemic restrictions are lightened. Until he gets his occupancy permit, he's still paying farmland property taxes, so he's losing less money than he would if he opened and was forced to close right away.

"The minute that I open for occupancy, I go from \$1,200 to \$32,000 a year," he said, adding there are other initial costs like insurance, staff and food.

He also doesn't want to have to lay off any newly hired staff.

Whenever The Grist opens, he said it won't be rushed.

"You only have one time to make an impression on somebody," he said.

If a mistake is made, "it's gonna do more damage to us than it is if we just stay closed and make sure that we're ready to open up in the proper way."

"I really am going to be excited once we finally do open and I think everybody's going to be real happy with what we're trying to do here."



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## A socially distanced scavenger hunt in Queenston



John and Ethel Vandenberg and Patti Nickel and Marc Plouffe on a scavenger hunt in Queenston. SUPPLIED

Gail Kendall  
Special to The Lake Report

For many years, Lisa and Steve Wilson would gather their group of friends for a New Year's Day outdoor activity.

Traditionally, the activities have included a cross-country ski, hike, skate or even a chilly bike ride.

The reward afterward? Breakfast at a local eatery.

With COVID restrictions, they knew they would not be able to gather as they have in the past. After a great deal of thought, the Wilsons, who live in Niagara Falls, came up with the idea of conducting an outdoor scavenger hunt.

This would take place over a number of days, keeping social distancing at the forefront so people would not be in groups or taking over trails.

Over four days, participants walked Niagara's Millennium Trail, following clues to 30 questions, searching for hidden props and, finally, submitting their answers. Their only reward at this time was bragging rights.

The friends enjoyed the event so much they asked when the next one would be. The Wilsons then challenged their friends to create the next one.

Four friends, Patti Nickel, Marc Plouffe, Ethel and John Vandenberg, better known as the JEMP Team (John, Ethel, Marc, Patti), created the next scavenger hunt.

It took place Feb. 12 to 14, with answers to be sub-

mitted by the 15th.

They chose Queenston Village with its rich history and guaranteed beautiful views while on their quest.

They included a map of Queenston, instructions, the clues and pictures to be identified.

With the bar set high by the Wilsons, the JEMP Team created a list of challenging questions. Not only did the participants enjoy days of fresh air and exercise, but with the questions, clues and answers, they learned some history about the area.

Donning appropriate clothing that would keep them warm and comfortable for hours, they wandered throughout the village with clipboards and cameras in hand to search for clues and answer questions.

Climbing and sliding down hills, the participants really put their all into making sure they captured every clue and answered every question. According to Nickel, some of the answers were better than theirs and the creativity certainly showed.

The winners were announced and ironically, with an almost perfect score, turned out to be the Wilsons, who accepted a handmade sea glass wind chime and a generous amount of chocolate.

Nickel said It was fun, both participating and designing the hunts, and hope that they inspire others to create similar events.

They look forward to a possible Easter hunt.



Father and son, Tim and Vlad Haltigin. Tim is a senior mission scientist on the Mars rover mission. SUPPLIED

## NOTL dad 'over the moon' with son's role in Mars mission

Gail Kendall  
Special to The Lake Report

Vlad Haltigin is one proud father these days.

The NOTL resident, a retired former executive with Xerox Canada Ltd., has a new "out-of-this-world" claim to fame: father of Tim Haltigin, Mars senior mission scientist.

The younger Haltigin is part of the international team of scientists involved in the successful Mars Perseverance rover landing last week.

The Mars mission has captivated space observers who look forward to its findings as it seeks signs of ancient life and collects rock samples from the Red Planet.

But, due to COVID restrictions, Tim, 44, was unable to be at Mission Control in Pasadena, Calif., and instead watched events unfold from his basement in Montreal.

Vlad and his wife, Cathy Stewart, retired executive director of human resources for the Canadian Olympic Committee, watched the exciting and tense landing from their home in NOTL.

"We were glued to the NASA TV broadcast and to

CBC Newsworld," Vlad told The Lake Report.

"As the landing on Mars of the Perseverance rover was confirmed at 3:55 p.m. last Thursday, we cheered along with the specialists at Mission Control. Within 20 minutes, Tim was being interviewed live on CBC. We were even more excited for him and proud of the role he played in this historic event."

Moving to NOTL from Oakville 18 months ago, Vlad, a member of the Shaw Guild and the Rotary Club, admits he and the entire family are "over the moon" with son Tim's role in the Mars mission.

Vlad is also the father to son Chris, an obstetrics and gynecology resident in Detroit, daughter Larissa, a sales manager for the Whistler-Blackcomb Mountain resort in B.C., and their oldest brother, Nick, who is involved in the wine trade and lives in Chilliwack, B.C.

They also are keenly following the Mars mission.

"Tim is helping to lead the team which is designing the science program for the overall Mars sample return," his father said.

"The Perseverance rover

that landed last week is the first step of multiple missions to get samples back to Earth in 2031. Other than this Mars mission, Tim is also involved with OSIRIS-REx mission, which launched in 2017, to recover surface samples from the asteroid Bennu, and which will bring the samples back to Earth in 2023, landing in the Utah desert," he said.

Tim began working on the Mars 2020 mission about six years ago and expects his work to continue until around 2033.

His interest in the space program stemmed from his experience growing up on a farm in Saskatchewan under the wide-open skies of the Prairies. He knew as a high school student that he wanted to study science.

Tim received his PhD from McGill University in 2010 and joined the Canadian Space Agency that year. He is now a senior mission scientist, planetary exploration.

He also holds the title of geomorphologist – someone who studies rocks, rivers and ice.

While studying for his PhD, Haltigin spent a couple of months every summer drilling ice in the Far North

on Axel Heiberg Island, an uninhabited island in the Qikiqtaaluk Region in Nunavut.

So-called "cold springs" may be similar to active springs that could potentially exist on Mars, scientists studying the phenomenon suggest.

Haltigin also managed the Canadian laser on board the OSIRIS-REx spacecraft that mapped the asteroid Bennu to identify the best place for it to land.

The spacecraft successfully landed on the asteroid in 2018 and in October 2020 began its return flight to Earth, where it is expected to land in 2023.

Haltigin, who lives with his wife, Melissa, and their two daughters in Saint-Constant, Que., has been credited with the ability to "take a complex subject, such as all the science involved in the mission, and to be able to relate it in a way that is exciting and understandable to the world at large," Vlad said.

He added his son "is passionate about what he does and is excited about what this mission opens up not only for today's scientists but especially for those in the future."



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Elaine Evans, 10 years, Shaw Festival



Leonard Conolly, 20 years, Shaw Festival



Glenna Collins, 10 years, Shaw Festival



Margie Enns, 35 years, Shaw Festival



Clara Tarnoy, 15 years, NOTL Museum



Deborah Paine, 15 years, NOTL Museum



Lois Chapman, 15 years, NOTL Museum



Ron Dale, 15 years, NOTL Museum

# Dedicated NOTL volunteers ho

*Continued from Front Page*

how worthy those individuals are for what they're being recognized, look at the volume of years," he said.

"The history of volunteerism at Pleasant Manor is huge. Thanks to our community, the community of people who live on the campus, the community of people who live in Niagara-on-the-Lake that have supported Pleasant Manor through their volunteer efforts. Every second, every minute, every hour of time, we just value so very, very much."

Bergen, who visits once a week with her dog Randy from Therapy Tails Ontario, said the award was "unexpected" and really gives the credit to Randy.

"These people are so lonely. They need comfort and they get such joy out of this character," she said, with Randy at her side during an interview outside Pleasant Manor.

She said it's been a year since Randy and she have been able to visit and that residents are missing him, and he's missing them. She doesn't live far from Pleasant Manor, she said, and sometimes Randy will lead her that way on walks, and they'll wave at residents on their balconies.

Deb, who normally runs the tuck shop at the home for people who can't go out, was also surprised to learn she received the award and said it's really something she just likes to do. She also volunteered for a long time at various places like Sun-

nybrook and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Hospital before it closed.

"I am not doing it for recognition. I like it, to serve people. For anything you do, even if you just pour coffee, they're so thankful," she said. "It's good to have that little shop."

Hamm also was not expecting the award. He also wasn't seeking or expecting any recognition, but said it feels nice to be recognized.

"I'm not looking for something like that but it's always nice to be able to have somebody recognize what you're doing."

He said he gets the most joy from the actual volunteer work. "That's where you get your most pleasure out of it," he said.

At the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum,

several members were honoured for their years of volunteerism as well. Award winners were: Tom Patterson (five years), Peter Babcock (10 years), Lois Chapman, Ron Dale, Deborah Paine and Clara Tarnoy (15 years).

Museum curator Sarah Kaufman said volunteers are an "invaluable" help to the museum, with more than 100 people whose hours every year equal that of several full-time staff members.

She praised Patterson, who lives next door to the museum, for his work doing data entry.

Before the pandemic, he would come into the museum on Wednesdays to help.

"It's a lot of computer work and it can be quite tedious," she said, adding his wealth

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John Mather, 10 years, Shaw Festival



Brenda Ferguson, 5 years, NOTL Brownies



useum



Tom Patterson, 5 years, NOTL Museum



Judy McHattie, 5 years, NOTL Sparks

## RIDDLE ME THIS

I am a five letter word. Take away the first letter and I am a place's name. Take away the first two letters and I become the opposite of the five letter word. What am I?

Last issue: I am a five letter word. Take away the first letter and I am a place's name. Take away the first two letters and I become the opposite of the five letter word. What am I?

**Answer: Woman**

**Answered first by: Sheelah Young**

**Also answered correctly (in order) by: Margie Enns, Bill Hamilton, Frank Bucci, Cathy Watson, Pam Dowling, Elaine Landray**

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

# honoured by province

knowledge as a longtime resident has become a major asset to the museum. Leonard Conolly, who also has lived in NOTL for a very long time, helped during the 1812 bicentennial to transcribe all the Old Town area's war-loss claims. Kaufman said the work is extremely valuable to the museum. "I went in and did a transcription of the records for the Old Town area, which is a very long work, and absolutely tedious," she said. Kaufman, on top of being a former member, is always out at charitable events helping in one way or another. Kaufman said. Fundraisers, of course, are extremely important to nonprofits, and so having

extra hands to help out with those events is very important." Dale, who is well-known as a local historian, has done "a lot of research" to help the museum. "And he was also a former board member as well, so he's done a lot of great work for us." Paine is one of the "original vault ladies," Kaufman said, and has spent countless hours describing new pieces as they come into the museum, as well as helping at events. Tarnoy has been working for years on the museum's "deeds database," after the land registry office cleared out old land deeds and donated them to the museum, Kaufman said.

She said it's another laborious project of inputting information, which should be completed in a couple of years. Volunteers were also recognized from NOTL's Girl Guides and Sparks, with Brenda Ferguson and Judy McHattie receiving honours for five years with the 2nd Niagara-on-the-Lake Brownies Unit and the 1st Niagara-on-the-Lake Sparks Unit, respectively. At the Shaw Festival, several members of the Shaw Guild were given honours for more than 80 years of combined volunteer service. Recipients were Margie Enns (35 years), Leonard Conolly (20 years), and John Mather, Elaine Evans and Glenna Collins (10 years).



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# Ross' Ravings: 'Tennice' makes its world premiere in NOTL

Ross Robinson  
Special to The Lake Report

Our new game of "tennice" laid an egg on Lansdowne Lake, but NOTL athletes continued to have fun and get some fresh air as the COVID-19 lockdown continues.

We are all trying to obey the health protocols, so the new game was not really promoted to the public. Heck, there weren't even any cardboard cutouts around the rink to add festivity and enthusiasm. No fake noise, no artificial excitement.

Multi-sport Niagara sports legend Tady Saczkowski had the idea for this combo sport, and quickly borrowed a Spec Tennis net from NOTL Tennis Club director Rosemary Goodwin.

Wooden racquets were purloined from the tennis pavilion, along with a couple of dozen used yellow tennis balls. Green balloons were purchased at Avondale, as green seems to work well with tennis, especially against a bright backdrop of crisp white snow.

We were ready to try something new and it all



Neighbours play a game of "tennice" on a frozen One Mile Creek. SUPPLIED

came together within 48 hours.

As we prepared to start our game, snowflakes drifted down, compliments of Mother Nature. Every one a different shape, right? New girl Natalie Early was ready with her fancy camera, and she had agreed to handle our wee canteen and sell 50/50 tickets. Two great Canadian traditions, to cover our costs.

Danna McDonough arrived from St. Catharines with beautiful new

skates. She is from a hockey-playing and figure skating family, so this was a treat for her.

Tady Saczkowski hadn't had his skates on for over 15 years and they seemed to have shrunk. His tennis skills compensated for his skating pains and the game was underway. Your correspondent joined the fray and Nancy Saczkowski showed alacrity in both aspects of tennice.

At the last minute, as more and more cars drove

by on Niagara Boulevard, searching for parking spots, we decided to close the canteen and limit spectators to a physically distanced and masked 10 people. Yes, we created the Chautauqua Bubble and we played our new game under very isolated conditions.

We really were moving along with good humour, everyone pitching in, and the sense we were on the cutting edge of a new sport. Perhaps the Winter Olympics in 2054?

Several tennis friends dropped by for a look. Zeny and Manny Umoquit, originally from the hockey-less Philippines, couldn't resist, and ventured out on the ice for some fun.

Let's face it, folks, James Naismith got lucky when he invented basketball back in 1891. The Canadian employee of the YMCA in Springfield, Mass., was asked to create an indoor game for young people and remembered the game of Throw the Stones he had played back home in Ontario.

It took him quite a while to develop the rules of his game and he attached a large peach basket to the walls at each end of the gymnasium. The first game lasted 30 minutes and the final score was 1-0. How times change, eh? Just last week, my fave Toronto Raptor, Fred VanVleet, scored 54 points in a single game.

Well before that, Abner Doubleday and his buddies developed baseball, an American "let's get going" modification of cricket. Important cricket matches back in England could take five days to declare a winner.

The new game of baseball only took two or three hours. The first game in 1846, played at Elysian Fields in New Jersey, lasted four innings, with a score of 23-1 in favour of the New York Mutuals over the New York Knickerbockers.

Which brings us in a roundabout way to Lansdowne Lake in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Rare weather conditions had produced smooth ice and the lack of heavy snow made scraping possible each day for over two weeks.

Local residents and visitors just sort of organized themselves, respecting COVID-19 protocols and each other.

It's amazing what people can do without written rules and regulations.

What weather we have had this winter. So many people outdoors, so many tired doggies.

We tried a new winter sport. The world premiere game of "tennice." It needs some work. Skating and pivoting is tough. The game laid an egg.

We tried. We were out in the fresh air. We had fun! Everybody was a winner.



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*The Lake Report wants to help recognize NOTL's Pandemic Heroes — people who have made a difference, big or small, in a positive way. You can help us recognize someone in the community by sending a bit about the person and why they're a Pandemic Hero. Please send your nominations early to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com). A special thanks to Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery for providing a bottle of sparkling wine to each of our pandemic heroes. That's the spirit!*

# Anjulika Chand

Anjulika Chand has been nominated as one of our Pandemic Heroes by Penny-Lynn Cookson. Chand, 55, is a front-line respiratory therapist at Etobicoke General Hospital and has more than 27-years' experience in the field.

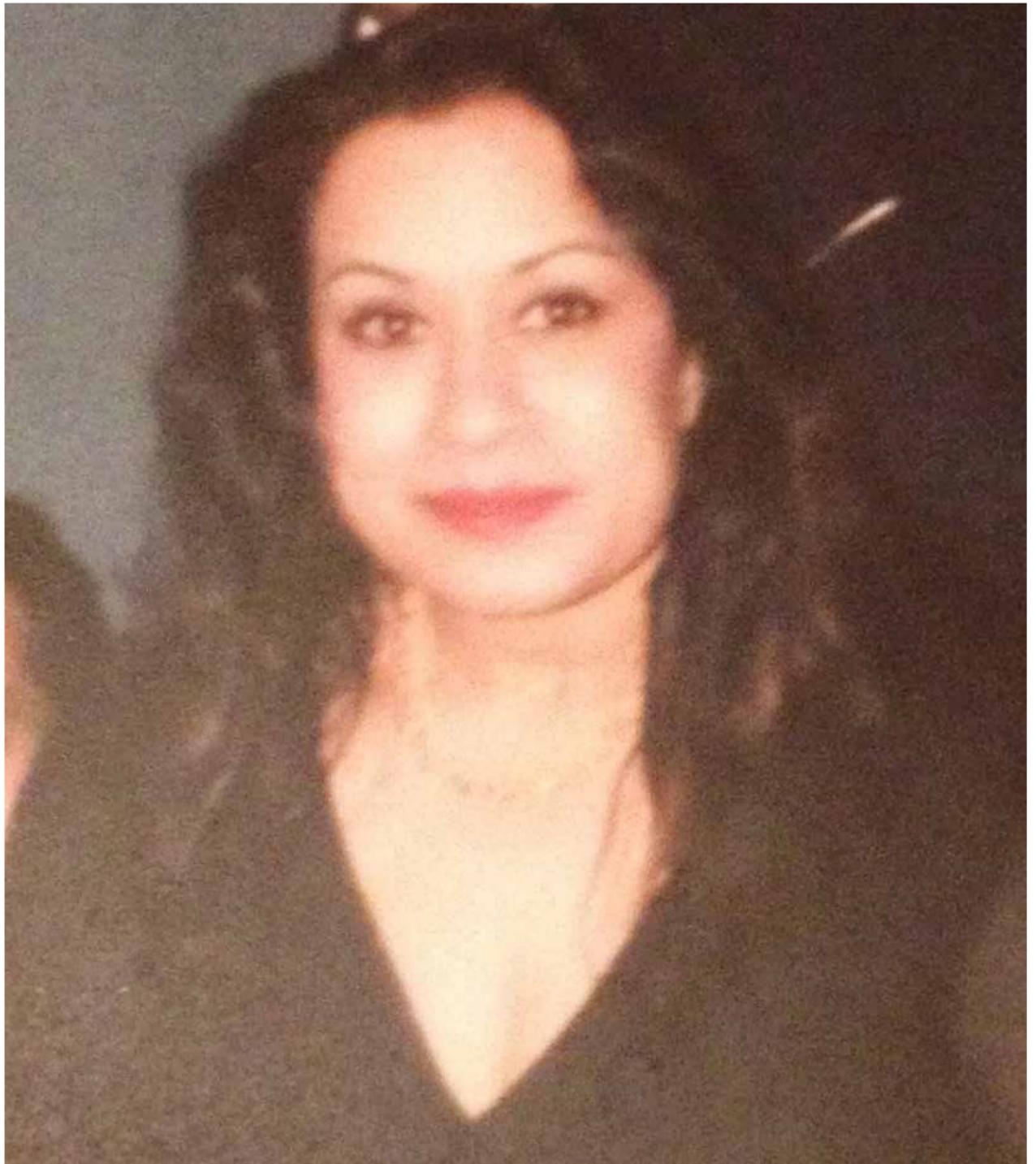
"A veteran of the SARS epidemic and now hands-on for COVID-19 patients, Anjulika exemplifies the extraordinary courage and commitment necessary for caring for coronavirus patients on a daily basis," Cookson said in her nomination.

Chand, of St. Catharines, is a long-time volunteer and parishioner of NOTL's St. Mark's Anglican Church, having helped with the Cherry Festival for the past three years and serving with the team of volunteers who organized this year's silent auction.

She says she comes from a long line of medical professionals and always dreamed of working with people hands-on.

She said she is "very nurturing" but the work she has done throughout the pandemic, and on a regular basis, is all made possible because of the "incredible" people she works with.

"It's a real team effort. I'm not alone. I have a great team that I work with and that makes all the difference," she said.



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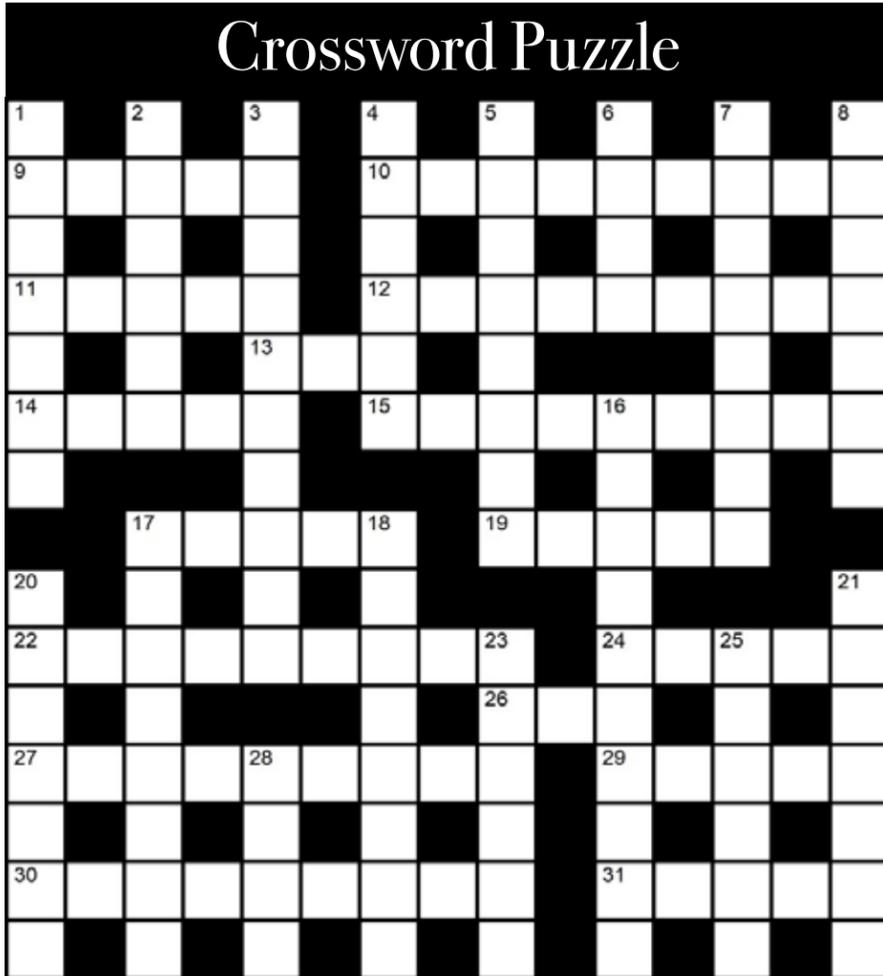
*Have some fun*

**Across**

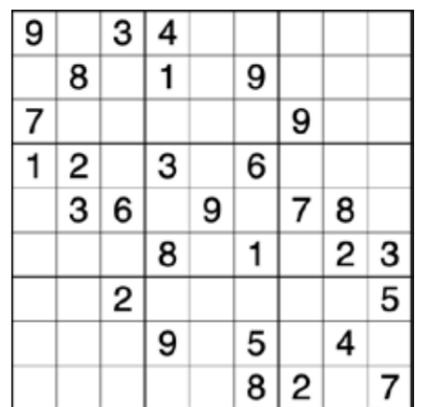
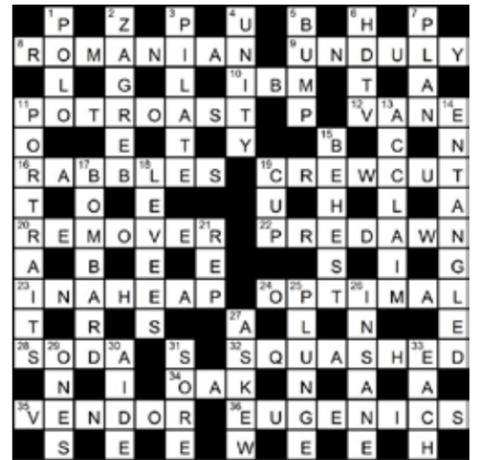
- 9. Inverted slow-mover (5)
- 10. Hyped too high (9)
- 11. Carton containing other cartons (5)
- 12. Exciting experience (9)
- 13. Teetotal (3)
- 14. Once the subject of a financial bubble (5)
- 15. House of worship (9)
- 17. Explode (5)
- 19. It's white for a new Pope (5)
- 22. Construction sites with slipways (9)
- 24. Informal greeting (3,2)
- 26. Temporary home for many serious cases (1-1,1)
- 27. Most employees think this of themselves (9)
- 29. Goes for gold? (5)
- 30. Lofty (9)
- 31. Military subdivisions (5)

**Down**

- 1. Dates (7)
- 2. Backpackers' stopover (6)
- 3. Neither you nor me but the other guy (5,5)
- 4. Sudden attacks (6)
- 5. Portions (8)
- 6. Left behind after a cat vanishes (4)
- 7. Conflict (8)
- 8. Stuck redhead goes crazy (7)
- 16. Pleasant mood (4,6)
- 17. Beneficiary of a Biblical miracle (5,3)
- 18. Corrida star (8)
- 20. Soften minced sausage (7)
- 21. Hold (7)
- 23. The "Ice Age" 9 Across (6)
- 25. Advantageous to both sides (3-3)
- 28. Harassed persistently (4)



Last issue's answers



# Social gatherings can have deadly consequences.

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## A state of mind

Penny-Lynn Cookson  
Special to The Lake Report

In this on-going year of COVID-19, when we are isolated at home and not seeing family and friends, it has become for some, a time of self-reflection, writing in diaries, reading, or putting old family photos in albums.

Ah yes, we think, there are the grandparents and great-grandparents lost to the Spanish Flu in 1918-19. A pity we didn't know them.

There has been a curious resurgence of interest in that pandemic, perhaps because it too was transmitted person-to-person and was global with an estimated 50 million deaths, more than died in the First World War.

Artists were not immune to the Spanish Flu but surprisingly few chose to

depict it as a subject. An exception was Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863-1944), best known for his famous "Scream" paintings and prints.

Munch was no stranger to illness as a child. His mother and favourite sister had both died of tuberculosis and his physician father, who was obsessively religious, saw death as God's divine punishment. Munch later wrote "angels of fear, sorrow and death stood by my side since the day I was born."

In Munch's "Self-Portrait with Spanish Flu" (1919), he gives us a vivid view of his illness, conveying not only his physical struggle but his emotional and psychological state of mind. We see only the essentials: the turmoil of the bedcovers having been pulled up with chills and



Edvard Munch Self-Portrait with the Spanish Flu, 1919 Oil on canvas National Gallery, Oslo. SUPPLIED

thrown back from fever and perspiration.

Munch sits in his robe in a wicker chair, fists clutching the blanket over his closely held legs and feet as he controls his trembling. He turns his face toward us. It is pale, gaunt, unshaven, his eyes are glassy and barely discernible, his gap-

ing mouth gasps for air as he struggles to breathe.

The background is minimal, the wall bare, the hallucinatory orange and green colours deliberately strong to convey strong emotion. Details of the room are as blurred to him as to us. The brushstrokes are loose. The work conveys fear, anxiety,

tension and emotion.

He felt, and was, lucky to have survived. Munch wrote: "In my art I try to explain life and its meaning to myself" and in so doing, he gives us further pause to consider our own lives in these turbulent times.

*Penny-Lynn Cookson is an art historian who taught*

*at the University of Toronto for 10 years. She also was head of extension services at the Art Gallery of Ontario. See her upcoming lecture series "Art and Revolution, From Cave Art to the Future" Thursdays on Zoom, March 11 to April 29 at RiverBrink Art Museum in Queenston.*

## Dr. Brown: Mapping COVID genome **essential** to updating vaccines

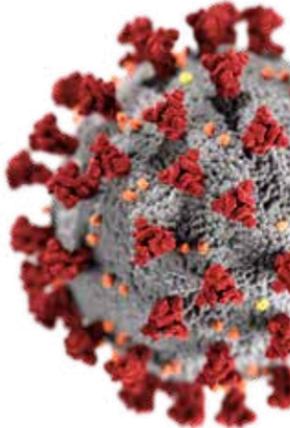
*Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the Infohealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.*

Dr. William Brown  
Special to The Lake Report

It's been quite the year since a previously unknown coronavirus emerged in China, only to wreak havoc with millions of lives around the globe, striking hardest the old, the infirm and those confined and unable to escape its reach.

What kept the virus in check were simple time-proven measures – wearing masks, social distancing and avoiding get-togethers except for those in our closest and most familiar bubbles. Those simple measures and widespread lockdowns finally brought the massive surge created by the Christmas season under control in Ontario, much of the United States and the U.K. – with a difference.

The U.K. has been both a cautionary tale about the consequences of too late lockdowns and an example



SOURCED IMAGE

of how to roll out a successful vaccination program. Israel is often touted as an example of a can-do country in getting its citizens vaccinated but it is a small country used to getting things done in emergencies (with the caveat that the program hasn't been extended to the Palestinians except those with Israeli passports and health care workers).

The U.K. is a better example to consider. First, like the Israelis, science in the U.K. is world-class. Much of what we know about this virus has come from the U.K. and its partnerships with others such

as South Africa, not the U.S. this time around and certainly not Canada.

PM Boris Johnson has made his share of mistakes during this pandemic – what western leaders haven't except perhaps New Zealand's?

But at least Boris holds regular, widely viewed updates on where the U.K. is and where it is headed with the pandemic and, in a thoroughly U.K. fashion, he usually gets grilled on his answers. That's what we need.

The U.K. also created an effective, cheap and easy-to-transport vaccine through a co-operative effort between an Oxford University team and AstraZeneca. Lastly on the U.K. front, I'm impressed with how the vaccine rollout is going there.

They're way ahead of the U.S. and more so Canada and have done it with class. My screensaver these days is a picture I love and admire of over 40 senior citizens seated in the orderly fashion proscribed by distancing and waiting patiently for the jab in the

main body of Salisbury Cathedral.

And while some toy with their cellphones, others are actually reading – so British. We are many months behind the U.K. and the difference is telling for what is missing here in Canada – grit, determination and, at the top, leadership. Most worrisome to me is the fact that the longer this virus hangs around and multiplies globally, the greater the risk that some truly nasty variants will emerge. We've had a taste of that with the first four variants, all of which are more easily transmissible.

Also worrisome is the growing evidence that at least two of the variants (the South African and Brazilian) may have found a way around at least part of the body's immune system – the very antibodies that attack the spikes on the virus, against which most vaccines have been designed. Now a little lesson in viral genetics.

When medieval monks copied sacred texts even the best of them occasionally made a mistake – perhaps leaving out a letter, insert-

ing the wrong letter or even leaving out an entire word. It's the same with RNA. When infected host cells are co-opted to make thousands of copies of the COVID-19 RNA, mistakes copying the virus sometimes happen. Perhaps a single base is deleted, another base added or perhaps the wrong base is inserted into copies of the virus's RNA.

Most mistakes make no difference to the capabilities of the virus. That is, unless the mistakes involve the genes responsible for making the proteins in the virus's spike.

Computer-generated 3-D models of the COVID spike suggest that changing the shape and possibly the charge on the spike proteins might facilitate the ability of the virus to latch onto receptors in the host cell's membrane, enter the cell's interior and gain access to the copying machinery within the host cells.

Even minor mutations in the virus's genome that change as few as one in a thousand amino acids in the spike protein could create a variant virus that is much

easier to transmit and, possibly, more deadly. Something that simple probably created the U.K. and South African variants.

Changing the proteins in the spike might also cloak the spike's proteins from naturally acquired or vaccine created antibodies. For those and other reasons, worldwide sequencing of the genome of the COVID-19 virus is vital to keep up with the changing face of this virus and adapt booster vaccinations to provide added protection against emergent variants that threaten end-runs around the initial vaccines.

As of this moment, there are at least seven virus variants out there and those are the ones we know about. Given that the U.S. hasn't played much part in tracking new variants, there might well be others out there in North America, and well beyond.

That's why surveillance – think of this as intelligence work against a different enemy – of the virus's genome is so important to keep vaccines up to date.

And that's my update.

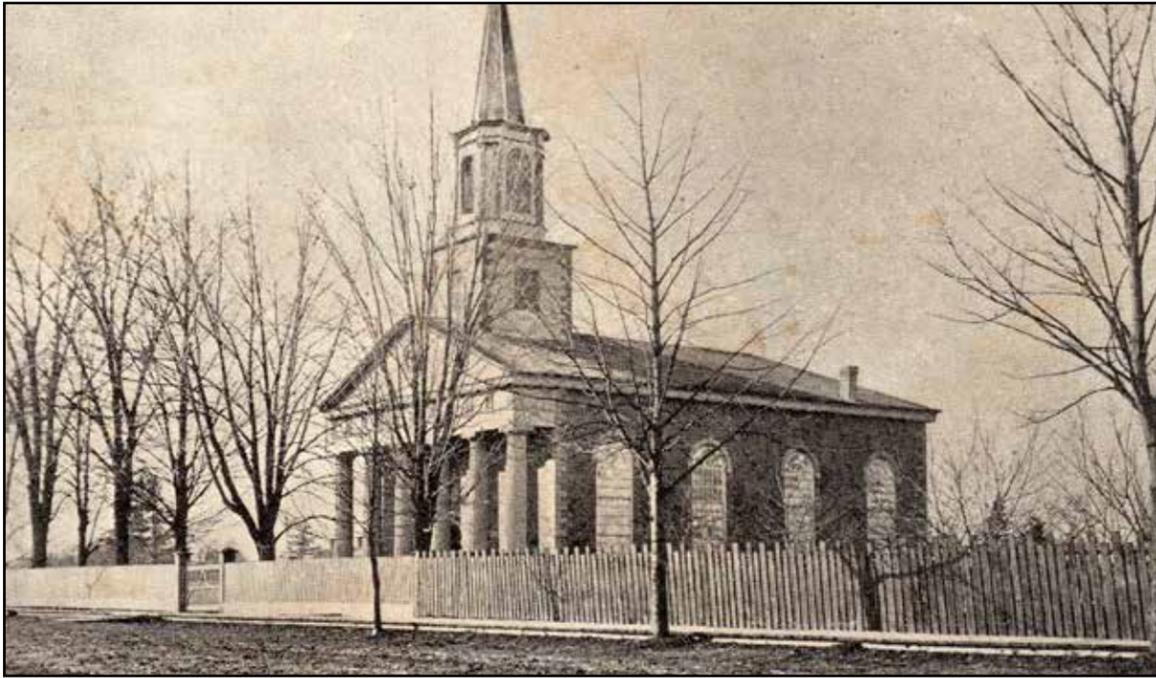


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# EXPLORING PHOTOS

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## Black school at St. Andrew's

Religion plays an important part in putting down roots in a community and many of our early Black residents belonged to the local churches, including the former Methodist Church that previously stood where the "Negro Burial Ground" is today. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church established a school in 1802 for Black children in the upstairs of the Sexton's House. Herbert Holmes was the teacher and, according to a former student, he was very strict but could also be kind. Sometimes he would walk the students to a local store, run by a woman from the Black community, and buy each of them a treat. Sadly, Holmes was killed trying to free Solomon Moseby during the Moseby Affair of 1837. The school operated until 1843. Unfortunately, we have yet to find any images of the schoolhouse. Today, you can find a plaque on the site along the Gage Street side of the church yard.



## Changing taste

Brian Marshall  
Columnist



Duggan House - an early 20th-century concrete statement. SUPPLIED

It's the first decade of the 20th Century and you are Dr. David Duggan of St. Davids. You are planning to build a new house and have engaged with an architect to develop the drawings.

From what you've seen and read, the work of that American fellow Frank Lloyd Wright tickles your fancy. You particularly like the practicality of the American Four Square building form, the deep overhanging eaves, the slight bellcast curves of the roof and the textured patterning in the wall cladding he used on the Porter House in Wisconsin. And Wright's favoured L-shaped footprint also appeals.

Mind you, boxing the eaves is a little too severe, don't you think?

You know, there's really something about the exposed rafters and the low front dormers with diamond-shaped leaded glass windows that the Arts & Crafts folks put on their houses to dress up the facade.

As to its exterior, brick, wood and stucco are old-fashioned. This is to be a modern house and those new concrete blocks seem to fit the bill. Do you think textured patterning can be created with those?

And so, the doctor's house was designed, built and

completed around 1911.

The use of concrete block in the build was cutting edge and must have been a common topic of conversation around town. The block was made of the "new" portland cement and formed in the machine patented by Harmon Porter in 1900. In fact, it wasn't until the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis that concrete block was seriously considered as a building material.

Then here, in St. Davids a mere six years later, it was put to use.

To produce the textured patterning, the designer used two different blocks:

a course of blocks with a rusticated face followed by a course of shorter smooth-faced blocks; this repeated all the way up the walls to the eaves. Of particular note, this block pattern was carried onto both the dormer and the tall, slender chimneys.

In 1911, the Duggan House would have been a show-stopper! Almost certainly unique in Niagara.

As the 20th century progressed and builders discovered just how fast and easy construction with block was, the demand for the material grew exponentially while its cost dropped. Reasonably priced, block-built houses, generally finish-clad with stucco, popped up all over North America.

At the same time, block became a dominate choice for commercial and industrial builds, and it was this that really pushed block out of fashion.

But back in 1911? The Duggan House was truly a "cock-of-the-walk."

## Obituary

### Gordon Brinsmead



BRINSMEAD, Gordon - Gordon Wilson Brinsmead was born in Orillia, Ontario on March 11, 1926, the second son of George Brinsmead and Mary Wilson. Gordon joined the Navy in the Second World War, where he was stationed on a naval tug at Halifax. Upon his discharge from the Navy Gordon moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake, where he

went to work at Shepherd Boats alongside his father, a boatbuilder. On October 6, 1951 he married Joyce Hilda Taverner. Gordon was involved in the sailboat industry as part of Hinterhoeller Yachts and C&C Yachts from the late 1950s until the early 1980s. Gordon enjoyed sailing, and sailed recreationally and as an amateur sportsman for much of his adult life, not only on Lake Ontario, but also on the East Coast and in the Caribbean. After retirement, he took up both bicycling and hiking, spending many days cycling the byways of the Niagara Peninsula, and hiking and doing maintenance on the Bruce Trail. He and Joyce enjoyed travelling, having visited North America from Alaska to Florida, and Nova Scotia to American Southwest. When Joyce became ill, Gordon became her full-time caregiver, and in his eighties he learned to keep house, and also taught himself to cook from cookbooks. Gordon is predeceased by his brother Reginald (Jack), his wife Joyce, and his two oldest sons Stephen (Carol) and Raymond (Robin). He is survived by his children Michael (Jeanne), Sharon (Tony) and Shelley (Howard), as well as eight grandchildren (Tommy, Hilary, Shaun, Ally, Hannah, Tyler, Bethany and Emily) and eight great-grandchildren. Gordon died peacefully on February 16, 2021 at the home he had built in Niagara-on-the-Lake where he had lived for the past 67 years. The family expresses their thanks to Dr. Al-Jarrah, the palliative care nurses, and the personal support workers for their excellent care, kindness and compassion. A celebration of Gordon's life will be held when people can gather in the future. Arrangements entrusted to Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON. As an expression of sympathy, in lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Services. [www.notlpc.com](http://www.notlpc.com)

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)



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