



## As cases fall, care home hopes it has 'turned corner' on outbreaks

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

After 11 deaths in one Niagara-on-the-Lake care home and a spike in COVID cases across

town in January, things are starting to look up, pandemic statistics show.

NOTL's hardest-hit long-term care facility has had a major reduction in active COVID-19 cases and more

residents are about to receive their first or second dose of vaccine.

At Niagara Long Term Care on Wellington Street, where 11 people have died of COVID, executive direc-

tor Chris Poos said Tuesday there are now just three active resident cases and three staff cases.

A week ago, the 124-bed home had 56 residents with COVID and 14 positive staff

cases. In total, the home has had 76 residents test positive since the beginning of January. Over the same period, 44 staff were diagnosed with COVID.

"We are cautiously

optimistic that our home has turned the corner in this outbreak and remain resolute in our practices to ensure the safety of our

*Continued on Page 3*

## Cold weather spurs icewine harvest

First harvest for Brock University students off to late start



Harvesting vidal grapes for icewine under a full moon. SUPPLIED/JEFF LETVENUK

Jill Troyer  
The Lake Report

Grape growers and wine-makers weren't the only ones nervously checking the weather forecast all winter.

Brock University students Claire Findlater and Mario Spinosa were equally atten-

tive to the January temperatures.

The two are the first students from the oenology and viticulture degree program at Brock ever to do an icewine co-op, and this was to be their first icewine harvest, at Pillitteri Estates.

"We were on-call for the

harvest, waiting for the temperature to get to -8 or lower. It's been mild this year, so I was rooting for the cold," said Findlater.

"It was a waiting game."

Conditions for harvesting icewine grapes are typically found by mid-January, or even earlier, but Mother Na-

ture can be unpredictable.

"It was on-again, off-again as the forecast changed at the last minute, but we were all on-call, and ready to go," recalled Spinosa.

Winter finally got a grip

*Continued on Page 8*



Tourists on Queen Street in summer 2020. FILE PHOTO

## Business is tough, but owners, see potential silver linings for tourism

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

While business is slow-ww right now, some Niagara-on-the-Lake owners and operators are hopeful for what the future holds.

Rick Jorgensen, owner of OliV Tasting Room, said while the lockdown is making things extremely tough, the pandemic may bring with it some silver linings.

One is that between the first and second wave, a lot more Canadians discovered Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"To me, that was a positive because when we were open throughout the summer, we heard over and over again that 'This is the first time we've been to this area. We usually go to Nova

Scotia or to the States or whatever," Jorgensen said.

"So, the beauty of it was that we got to expose the area to more Canadians. And, if that carries forward, then I think it'll be a good thing for us."

He said during the first reopening, the influx of Canadians really helped boost some businesses.

When stores reopened, "business ramped up pretty quickly" with visitors coming to the community and area tourism activities, he said.

"Even with the border closed we were recovering quite well. But now it's come to a grinding halt. So, who knows?"

*Continued on Page 11*

## Town of NOTL needs to find additional revenue sources: Bisback



Coun. Allan Bisback. FILE

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake needs to find new ways to boost revenue, says Coun. Allan Bisback.

During a special meeting to approve the 2021 town budget, Bisback, who chairs the town's audit and finance committee, said NOTL has "a revenue problem, not a

cost problem."

Seeing declining revenues, like parking fees, and the uncertainty that hangs over the coming year, the town needs to find a way to "support tax stabilization in the future," he said, rather than cutting services to save money.

One way to boost revenues would be through a municipal accommodation

tax, a controversial tool that many municipalities charge. However, heated debate on a so-called "hotel room tax" and pushback from the tourism sector a year ago forced council to abandon the idea.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Bisback, who supported the tax plan, said it's not a realistic option this year as the sector fights recover from the COVID hangover.

However, increased user fees, in line with increased costs of operating due to inflation and COVID costs, could be in the cards, Bisback said.

"My view is folks need to start understanding that there is a need for increased user fees," he told The Lake Report.

This year town staff reduced the operating costs

significantly to make up for revenue lost due to COVID-19, but that can't happen every year, he said.

"This is not a sustainable budget. This is a maintenance budget," he said of the 2021 fiscal plan. As reported last week, the budget means a 2.12 per cent municipal tax increase, about

*Continued on Page 2*

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# The budget: NOTL approves **2.12% tax hike**

## Major items increasing levy include legal fees, fire department upgrades, salaries

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake officially has a budget for 2021.

The operating budget, approved last Wednesday, comes in at \$37,327,452 and while overall expenses are down slightly (from \$37,453,452 in 2020), there's a 2.12 per cent increase in residents' municipal taxes.

There will also be a 5.04 per cent (\$19,799) increase to the storm water levy for homes in urban areas, for a total of \$456,998.

In total, residents can expect to see about a 2.79 per cent increase on the municipal portion of their tax bills — about \$33 per year based on a home assessed at \$533,482.

While the municipal portion of the budget has gone up, the town reduced the initial increase for the 2021 operating budget by 55 per cent (\$533,000).

Major drivers of the operating budget include staff salaries, wages and benefits (\$13,410,146), insurance, debt acquisition and legal expenses.

According to the operating budget report, "one large legal matter remains outstanding for 2021 with several planning appeals expected to continue. Other large legal matters are expected to be resolved in following budget years beyond 2021."

The three big spends on the operating budget were \$900,000 (\$415,615 of which is loaned from the region) for self-contained breathing apparatuses and an \$820,000 replacement pumper for NOTL Fire Services (full loan) and \$550,000 (full loan) for the Mississauga Street culvert, which is now under construction.

The town will pay \$233,896 in interest on long-term debt in 2021.

Town insurance also increased by \$118,600 for 2021 (\$515,300 total), which town treasurer Kyle Freeborn said has been "a huge impact to municipalities everywhere."

He said that is "generally based more on



NOTL will spend \$900,000 on self-contained breathing apparatuses for NOTL firefighters. NOTL training officer Darryl Janzen with some of the SCBA purchase components. SUPPLIED/NICK RULLER

claims being made by municipalities as a result of climate change, joint liability, class action suits, rising legal costs and a more recent trend of cyber attacks."

He said globally there are "very few" municipal insurance providers.

"And, due to the volatility of the market, at least one useful insurer has stopped underwriting municipalities," he said.

Staff salary costs increased by \$484,900, a two per cent increase.

Other increases included \$118,000 for transit, \$185,000 for a new storage and material transfer yard on Line 5 Road, and \$91,000 for an environmental compliance technician.

In total, the town has budgeted \$500,000 for legal expenses in 2021 — down from more than \$1 million in 2020.

"In 2020, we saw a big increase of a million dollars to the town's legal services budget line," Freeborn said. "However, there's been a number of legal matters that

have been settled in 2020. We're confident that in 2021 \$500,000 will be able to cover the existing legal matters."

In 2020, the town spent about \$720,000 on legal fees, though the final number isn't yet confirmed, said Freeborn.

During the budget meetings, councillors had a number of concerns about various spending projects.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita asked the town to look into the possibility of saving money on replacing the town's fleet of vehicles by purchasing smaller, more "economical" vehicles for bylaw officers and town staff members who don't require big trucks and SUVs.

She said she's seen town bylaw officers driving around in SUVs and wonders if there's another vehicle that could cost less.

Councillors also discussed the fate of the old nurse's building beside the former hospital on Wellington Street in Old Town.

While council agreed there is no significant historical reason to keep or restore the building, there was concern about demolition costs and discussion on whether to spend the money, or spend less on a temporary fix.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor also pointed out the building is being sold and suggested letting the new property owner deal with demolition.

Council decided to move forward with the demolition anyway.

Freeborn said it was a difficult budget year. "It's been a challenging budget, but almost easier to do from a procedural standpoint, because there wasn't much of a change. The largest challenges were dealing with reduced revenue, increased costs and the uncertainty that the pandemic creates."

The town's capital budget, which is paid for by various reserve funds, is \$10,404,287.

The majority of that budget will go toward water, waste water management, road and fire and emergency services.

The total is significantly reduced by

deferred projects.

The town deferred \$11.5 million in capital expenditures beyond 2021 and cancelled \$215,000 in capital projects.

Coun. Allan Bisback thanked staff for their hard work drafting the budget.

"I don't think there's enough appreciation that, as we went through a difficult time since March, that we're going to be able to land this plane with a very small surplus in light of the changing conditions all year. So I do want to take my hat off to staff."

CAO Marnie Cluckie said the budget allows the town to keep core services running and to be prepared for further COVID-19 response in 2021, while keeping the impact to taxes below three per cent.

She and some councillors called it a "maintenance" budget, "where we preserve our core services, meet existing commitments, stay prepared for potential economic uncertainty and minimize the impact to taxpayers."

Freeborn said the town raising its parking to \$5.25 an hour on Queen Street should "bolster" parking revenues.

The town also used \$128,000 in COVID-19 reserves to offset the general levy, as well as 75 per cent of the town's surplus of \$70,000 — about \$52,000.

The library also contributed 75 per cent of its \$100,000 surplus to offset the tax levy.

Various reserve transfers were also reduced to mitigate levy impact. The transfer to the Dock Area reserve was reduced by \$200,000, election reserve was cut by \$20,400, the street light reserve trimmed by \$17,000.

Should the town have a surplus in 2021, these reserves will be the "first areas prioritized" to receive funding, said Freeborn.

Various studies are still to move forward, including a \$70,000 tourism strategy study.

Freeborn said there are still "many challenges ahead for 2021" and staff will continue to monitor spending as they did in 2020.

## Higher user fees and eventual **accommodation tax** needed, budget chief says

*Continued from Front Page*

\$30 on a home assessed at \$533,482.

"We really do need to turn our efforts to creating new streams and diversifying our revenue streams. We have no money in the bank to support any deficits," he said.

Despite being impressed by the town managing to keep the tax increase low this year and coming up with a small surplus, Bisback said he doesn't believe the town can cut its

way to success financially.

Relying on parking reserves, especially given the uncertain climate around tourism in 2021, is "very high risk," he said.

In an interview Tuesday, Bisback said the town shouldn't be cutting services.

"There seems to be lots of rhetoric on various social media that we should be cutting, reducing. I'm a big fan of being efficient and providing more services, with the same money. I'm not a big fan of

cutting, especially at the municipal level, because when you start cutting costs that tends to over time to reduce service," he said.

"So, I'm a big fan, and I always have been through my whole career, of generating increased revenue, because if you have a fixed cost of providing service, every new dollar you bring in new revenue, a huge portion of it goes to the bottom line."

Everything is getting more expensive, he noted.

"Construction costs are going up, investment costs are going up, we're finding huge cost increases related to COVID on supply chains — steel, wood, those kinds of things — so I think things are going to continue to rise in price."

He said being a tourism-based town, he's in favour of a municipal accommodation tax — part of which would go to supporting tourism and building tourism-related infrastructure, he said.

"There are nearly 30

municipalities that have that in place," he said.

He said the town gets "a lot of pushback" when it increases fees, "but there has to be a point in time that we start looking at bringing fees up, based on the cost of providing more services."

"I haven't got the magic bullet, but we need to start looking at opportunities around generating more revenue," he said.

Disero favours a municipal accommodation tax but not until "we get out of

COVID and the economy starts to recover."

"This is not the year to do it because people are suffering. We have to wait until the economy starts to come back," she said in an interview.

She said she's hopeful for the future.

"I truly believe that once we get beyond this pandemic, we'll start to see a major increase in tourism, particularly from Ontarians within Ontario to different places, Niagara region being one of them."



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# Let us know your **pandemic heroes**

It's been a year now since COVID-19 entered our lives and changed ... everything.

In those 12 months, we've endured good, bad and everything in between.

Looking back on life in the pandemic, we'd like to highlight and pay tribute to some of the hundreds of Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, organizations, companies, entrepreneurs and others who have helped make a difference.

From front-line workers to essential service personnel, your neighbours and family



members, to friends and even strangers, ordinary folks and people with expertise – let's honour and recognize them in The Lake Report.

So, tell us: who are the pandemic heroes you know, have encountered or heard

about? Send us a note nominating them, outlining their contributions, big and small. Include a photo (if you have one), and email and telephone contact information for them (and yourself).

Working together, we will endeavour to share the good news about those who have made a difference in our community this past year.

Please send your nominations by email to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com).

## Mayor hoping positive signs point to safe **reopening** of domestic travel, tourism

Richard Harley  
 The Lake Report

While the future is definitely still uncertain, Lord Mayor Betty Disero is hoping COVID cases continue to drop, allowing domestic travel and tourism to open up more in spring and summer.

As "more and more people get the vaccine" she says there are signs the province will be opening things back up.

"We're starting to see that now, with the province wanting to open up schools, safely. So I don't think it's their intention to keep things closed just for the sake of keeping things



Lord Mayor Betty Disero. FILE PHOTO/RICHARD HARLEY

closed," she said in an interview.

Another positive sign, she said, is that the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario has extended permission for patios, which NOTL has

already permitted until 2022.

"So they're already starting to look at how (to) allow businesses to open up more easily again to get through this summer."

It's Disero's understand-

ing that the provincial lockdown was meant to flatten the curve of a second wave sparked largely by Christmas and New Year's gatherings.

"Probably if we can keep the numbers low, I think you'll see the province starting to open up in a safe way," Disero said.

"As long as people follow the rules and are careful, we should be OK."

She said getting everyone to follow those rules "seems to be the most difficult challenge."

If people had done so and not visited friends and family at Christmas, "we may not have had such a big spike," she said.

## COVID cases **drop sharply** at Niagara Long Term Care

*Continued from Front Page*

residents, their families, our staff, and the greater Niagara community," Poos told The Lake Report.

He said there will be a vaccination clinic this Saturday, Feb. 6, for more residents to receive their "first or second dose of the Pfizer vaccine."

"We are waiting for details on when staff and essential caregivers can also receive it and look forward to the time when all our residents, staff and essential caregivers are vaccinated."

At Radiant Care's Pleasant Manor in Virgil, which had a

smaller outbreak in its long-term care facility, chief executive Tim Siemens said Tuesday there are now three active resident cases. The facility has had one resident death and four residents have recovered, he said.

The home has no staff cases, as six infected employees have now recovered. In the centre's regular housing units, there are no active tenant or staff cases, Siemens said.

Upper Canada Lodge, which is operated by the Region of Niagara, has continued to avoid an outbreak of COVID-19.

Poos said Niagara EMS

visited Niagara Long Term Care Residence on Monday "to provide additional infection prevention and control education."

"Public health has also been into the home and continues to be pleased with our (infection control) practices," he said.

"We remain in regular contact with public health, other health system partners, and our residents, families, and staff regarding the status of COVID-19 in our home."

He said the home is pleased to be utilizing Pan Bio Rapid testing, "which is a great tool in detecting a

possible case of the virus, gives us real-time information to assist us in managing this outbreak."

Infection control measures include twice daily screening of residents and staff for any signs of the COVID-19 virus and regular testing, he said.

"Residents are isolated to their rooms, receiving in-room meal service and are being cared for by staff on contact droplet precautions. We have appropriate staffing levels, and staff are wearing full personal protective equipment at all times, which is well-stocked in the home."

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**NOTL active cases: 54**  
**Region active cases: 963**  
**Region deaths: 332**  
**Region total cases: 8,026**  
**Region resolved cases: 6,731**

\*Feb. 3 data per Niagara Region Public Health



**Contributed by Patty Garriock**  
 "One of the things I learned the hard way was it doesn't pay to get discouraged. By keeping busy and making optimism a way of life you can restore your faith in yourself." - Lucille Ball.

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## Editorial: Let's stop the preamble

Richard Harley  
 Editor-In-Chief

It's been well-documented that Niagara-on-the-Lake council meetings go on and on and ... among the longest in the region.

Recognizing the problem, councillors last fall even looked at making changes to their meeting format, but eventually decided to maintain the status quo.

One reason for these lengthy meetings is it is common for councillors to speak out of turn, bend the rules of procedure by making off-the-cuff statements or ask questions when they're not supposed to.

It often happens dur-

ing question periods, when loquacious councillors offer meandering preliminary statements before getting to the question.

But it's not proper procedure and many times the preamble is simply self-serving politics – pandering to presenters and voters who might be watching.

The thing is, it actually has the opposite effect.

It doesn't show respect, it shows disrespect for the regular proceedings of council meetings.

So, councillors, please cut the preamble.

If it's not a question period, don't ask questions.

If it's not a time for statements, don't lead into your

questions with statements.

There's a time and a place for both, and the rules were established long before we came along.

Further, it is not necessary for each and every councillor to thank each and every presenter — not doing so isn't unfriendly. It's just procedure. And following procedure serves a purpose. It keeps comments and debate to specific times, helps save time in often marathon meetings and can avoid confusion on already complex discussions.

Watching Lord Mayor Betty Disero try to handle people speaking out of turn can be frustrating.

It sometimes seems she is

running "Disero Day Care," where she has to constantly remind councillors what is allowed and when.

And while she's doing a good job maintaining decorum, she shouldn't have to do it All. The. Time.

Making unnecessary, off-the-cuff comments out of turn is no more acceptable in a virtual gathering than it is during a formal meeting in the council chambers.

If anything, it should be easier to keep quiet. Councillors can just mute their mics.

So, let's move forward with a little bit more respect for the rules at council meetings.

It really shouldn't be that hard.

editor@niagaranow.com



## MP Baldinelli needs to be part of the solution

Dear editor:

I read with interest the opinion piece in The Lake Report from our Conservative MP Tony Baldinelli, ("Trudeau has mismanaged pandemic response," Jan. 28).

Having managed two campaigns for candidates at both the federal and provincial level, and also having tested the waters myself, I have concluded that there are two types of sitting members.

One type sees an issue, does the research to understand the complexity of the problem and presents

possible solutions.

The second type of sitting member, usually in opposition, is content to be lazy in research and is happy to follow the party line as outlined by leadership.

Why suggest an alternative strategy when it is so easy to simply criticize the government in power.

One might now ask what type of sitting member does Mr. Baldinelli wish to be.

Canada was fourth in line to order vaccines from Pfizer and first in line for Moderna.

But once again "my own country first" and patent

agreements to shut out other drug companies led to limited supplies for Canada – and other countries as well.

Indeed, if Mr. Baldinelli wishes to find a culprit in the pandemic he can find it in then-PM Brian Mulroney's decision to privatize a Canadian drug research and production company in the 1990s. It was soon purchased and immediately moved offshore to Europe.

To the present government's credit a made-in-Canada research company – Providence – is moving into a large facility in Calgary which will soon produce a

COVID vaccine as well as others in the future.

The voters of this country deserve more than an "Us vs. Them" and "Gotcha" politics mindset in Parliament.

In this pandemic, lives are at stake. Therefore I would suggest Mr. Baldinelli and others in Parliament become part of the solution as opposed to being the armchair quarterback who is critical of every play that the coach calls yet takes no responsibility for the outcomes.

Michael Eagen  
 NOTL

## Enforce parking rules to solve Ryerson Park traffic problems

Dear editor:

I live on Shakespeare Avenue and did not sign the petition from the Friends of Ryerson Park.

I appreciate that this group is trying to make a change for the better, but I feel they are coming dangerously close to exclusivity with their suggestions to curb traffic.

At a time where we all need to get outside more than ever, you cannot

prevent people from using a public park. I was born and grew up in NOTL and I hope I speak for others when I say ... my NOTL is fun, chaotic and inclusive!

My friends and I love a noisy party, a great concert and sports at the beach. We are diligent about cleaning up and have found that others for the most part are as well.

Chautauqua was built as a cottage community and

while you think you are preserving the quiet atmosphere with your efforts you are in fact trying to change the very nature of the area.

When I was a child I asked my mother why we had to share our town with tourists. She explained: "It is a beautiful place in the world and we have to share. Think of how often we are tourists in someone else's town."

My solution is to enforce

parking (as was well done by parking officers last summer) and put the revenue toward portable toilets. And remember how fortunate we residents are to have beautiful, quiet backyards. Others are not so lucky.

And as a last note, I'll be damned if I will not be allowed to go to the park after 10 p.m.! That's when you get the place to yourself.

Beth Macdonald  
 NOTL

More letters on Page 6

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# OPINION

## ‘The Crown’: History or drama queens?

David Israelson  
Special to The Lake Report



The Crown plays on Netflix. SOURCED

Along with millions of others, I watched “The Crown” on Netflix, but I have a special interest in the newest season’s final episode when Margaret Thatcher resigned — because that’s where I came in.

I mean this literally. I was the Toronto Star’s western Europe bureau chief in 1990 and on my first official full day in London that November, the British prime minister quit.

I was just heading out the door of our flat to go to the Star’s office (at that time) in London’s East End when my wife said to me, “You’d better change your plans.” Changing plans is one thing Mrs. Thatcher and I had in common that day, I guess.

I had to file news stories immediately, so I didn’t get to Downing Street in time to see Mrs. Thatcher whisked away in a limousine, never to return again as PM, a tear rolling down her cheek.

But I did get there in time to talk to some people in the large crowd that gathered on the streets nearby. “I’ve waited more than half my life for this!” said one 17-year-old woman. Mrs. Thatcher had been prime minister for 11 years.

What interests me today is the controversy about “The Crown” over its historical accuracy. Having been there and close enough to get some of the real story, I have

a few thoughts about this.

One is that the series does take a few liberties, but that’s OK. It’s a drama, not a documentary.

The series deals a lot with a few points of conflict that make good drama. There’s the tense relationship between the Queen and Margaret Thatcher and the even more difficult relationship between Diana, Princess of Wales and Prince Charles and, well, just about everyone else in the Royal Family at the time.

We know now that the conflicts depicted in the TV series are not entirely fictional. When she was alive, Diana told us as much, maybe sparing us some of the details but letting the public in on some pretty sensational parts.

Who knows what goes on inside anyone’s marriage, let alone the Royals? All we know is that it took a while for the poison they carried within to seep out. In fact, the few times I saw them in public up close — separately, mind you — they were gracious, friendly and looked interested in the ordinary folks they met.

Perhaps it’s better to just sit back and watch the show and leave it at that.

The Thatcher-Queen conflict, though, while dramatically appropriate, seems less historically accurate. It does appear that there was indeed a complicated relationship between the Iron Lady and Her Majesty, but the idea that the Queen would wade into particular issues seems unlikely.

Getting involved in subjects such as South Africa or economic policy appears to be wishful thinking based on hindsight about what we know now about the evils of apartheid and the harsh edges of Thatcherism.

In fact, when I covered Mrs. Thatcher’s downfall, the British prime minister faced hostility not from the Queen, but from British voters and her own MPs. She had been on the ropes politically for much of the previous year.

She had tried to bring in a local “poll tax” that many people found inequitable and onerous, leading to widespread and frequent protests. Interest rates were at 15 per cent, which sounds crazy now but even then was high compared with Canada.

Thatcher faced open rebellion within her party. I watched her speak at her party conference shortly before she quit and she was defiant and articulate — but there was an air of “sooner or later, she needs to go” in the Tory audience.

“I fight on. I fight to win,” she said in November 1990. A few days later the limo took her away.

Whatever the Queen really thought, it’s noteworthy that she attended Mrs. Thatcher’s funeral in 2013, one of only two prime ministers’ funerals she has ever shown up at personally. The other was Winston Churchill’s.

So yes, there are liberties with the truth in the TV series — imagined private conversations, shouting matches, events out of sync with what actually happened and so on. This does create some reasonable concern in today’s post-truth age.

Facts seem to matter less today. This suggests that “The Crown” will eventually become people’s historical record. People today and future generations will think that whatever happened on the TV show is what actually happened to the Queen, the Royal Family, the PM, Princess Diana and Britain itself.

This is an age-old problem that didn’t begin with “The Crown.” It’s really a communications issue.

It is said that history belongs to the winners, but it also belongs to whoever tells the stories best.

*David Israelson is a non-practising lawyer, writer and communications consultant who lives Niagara-on-the-Lake. Follow him on Twitter @davidisraelson and on LinkedIn.*

## Tough financial penalties will get attention of for-profit care homes

Dear editor:

Before Christmas someone wrote regarding his objection to the recommendation by MPP Wayne Gates that the Ontario government take over the management of nursing homes.

The writer suggested that the key issue is the government is not properly inspecting nursing homes. I disagree with that conclusion.

The media has reported that Roberta Place, a for-profit nursing home in Barrie, has had numerous recent inspections that did not result in compliance by the operator. Of the 129

residents, 128 tested positive and 54 died.

Currently in Ontario, general hospitals, psychiatric hospitals and ambulance services are funded, but not managed by the government. These health services are all not-for-profit and many have unionized staff.

The management of these services do not cut corners to make a profit for shareholders. Could it be that for-profit nursing homes should be spending some of their own profits to ensure that the homes are managed in the best interest of their residents?

At least one for-profit nursing home company increased its dividend by 40+ per cent since 2015. Could it also be that penalties for infractions that inspectors find in for-profit nursing homes are insufficient, or non-existent, to give for-profit nursing homes an incentive to correct deficiencies? Could it be that the profit motive is counter to providing the best care for nursing home residents?

Given that in the past 20 years, the government has transferred its direct management of psychiatric hospitals and ambulance

services to other non-profit entities, the government will not take over for-profit nursing homes. In short, increased inspections and the government takeover of for-profit nursing homes won’t solve the problem.

The most efficient way to get for-profit nursing homes to comply, and overcome the resistance of the industry, would be to pass legislation with monetary penalties and a licence revocation option when non-compliance occurs.

Your move, MPP Gates.  
*Joseph Allevato  
NOTL*

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## On vaccine rollout, let's focus on what we can control

Dear editor:

I sent Dr. William Brown's Jan. 28 article, "The race is on, humans vs. COVID-19," to a friend.

I added a few comments that COVID-19 has no boundaries, but individual countries producing vaccines may be restricting export distribution to countries that don't manufacture their own.

Recent issues that have arisen include the number of doses there are in a vial, who is getting the extra dose and were manufacturers telling purchasers that they were getting vials containing six doses each as opposed to five doses and leaving the buyers somewhere in the dark as to what was being delivered?

And then there is the Ontario government telling us how many doses have been given as opposed to how



PIXABAY PHOTO

many people have actually been vaccinated. I presume the latter is meant to pump up what the government is actually doing.

Until we are vaccinated we can focus on staying home, wearing masks when going out, sanitizing or washing our hands at every opportunity, going to grocery stores alone when

some of us who have partners or spouses have been in the habit of shopping together, etc.

The unfortunate part of all this is the pandemic has played havoc on mental health. In the meantime, let us focus on what we can control. As one political pundit put it regarding the vaccine and this pan-

demic: let's stop acting like children on a vacation trip shouting "Are we there yet? ... Have we arrived?"

The friend to whom I sent Dr. Brown's article responded that there are things outside our influence and things we can control ...

**Gilbert Comeault  
NOTL**

## Choosing a NOTL vaccine site is not rocket science

Dear editor:

Dumbfounded or gob-smacked for my fellow U.K. expats, disgusted and incensed was my immediate reaction to the Jan. 28 The Lake Report article, "Town looking for vaccine rollout site" about the region asking for a NOTL location for mass inoculations.

To the many who have written locally for months with an urgent call for action, plus the litany of negative TV coverage surrounding this subject, it is hard to get your head around and inconceivable that our elected representatives have yet to select a vaccine site.

Several have been sug-

gested, the closed community centre for one. As I have written in the past, how much simpler could this decision be? it is a no-brainer: get off your butts and make a decision. No need to study this to death.

I would hate for these actors to be the ones deciding where to build an emergency medical field hospital in a war zone. The war would be over before they decided. Furthermore, I suggest any couple having a sitdown coffee could list and select numerous sites to service NOTL within 15 minutes max.

So here we sit in NOTL, in early February 2021

with no vaccines or vaccination site. Hell, it could be worse: imagine lots of vaccines and no site.

Are we heading there? Things are a lot more dire than I thought. This propensity for procrastination is of concern on a much broader base regarding residents' concerns.

During my business career I used to preach that there are three types of people. Those who:

\*Make it happen (decision-makers, achievers).

\*Watch it happen (procrastinators who study the simplest decisions to death, governments, politicians).

\*Who are unaware of

something happening (follow-the-flow types, non-contributors).

Our site selection actors are certainly not Type 1.

When we are finally prepared for the rollout, how will we be advised of the following: where to go and day, date and time?

In the U.K. people were advised as follows. A telephone call from their health provider or by mail. Hopefully not by word of mouth and not like one state in the U.S., a seniors lottery for 20,000 vaccines with more than 200,000 registered. Another fiasco.

**Samuel Young  
NOTL**

## MPP Gates plays politics with pandemic criticism

Dear editor:

It is very disappointing to see our MPP Wayne Gates simply playing politics when many are trying their best to find solutions to minimize the impact of a deadly once-in-a-century virus and pandemic.

Under the headline "Ford had 10 months to plan vaccine rollout" (The Lake Report, Jan. 21) our MPP submits an opinion piece to

criticize and cast doubt on the honest efforts of a political foe to manage this crisis.

Ten months ago everyone was focused on how to best minimize the transfer of this new virus, to identify the molecular structure of COVID-19! Vaccines were a dream and nowhere near available.

A prime goal at that time was to motivate the

front-line workers, hospital cleaners, nurses, PSWs, physicians, paramedics, who would be sacrificing their well-being and risking exposure to their family.

Ten months ago, I saw Doug Ford lifting boxes of masks into his vehicle, inspiring front-liners, begging the population to practise social distancing, providing regular updates with his COVID-19 team, setting

an example by wearing his mask, and showing a previously undisclosed political asset – his humanity.

On the other hand, I now see our MPP blaming political foes, offering few solutions, while ensuring frequent exposure of his branding program – a prominent display of a large mustache on his face mask.

**Gerry Hruby  
Virgil**



Work on the Mississauga Street culvert is expected to be completed by April 30. FILE PHOTO

## Ross' Ravings: What's takin' so long with Mississauga Street culvert replacement?

Ross Robinson  
Special to The Lake Report

The detour on Mississauga Street (or should it be Mississauga?) near Queen is certainly welcome news.

But I was shocked, shocked to read the project would not be finished until the end of April. Four months to replace a culvert? With the heavy equipment and talented workers working full-time on this site?

My goodness, am I that out of touch? I jumped on my laptop and did a few searches to see how long it had taken to complete some historically significant projects.

Yikes! In downtown Toronto, the Taj Mahockey, the Carlton Street Cashbox, a.k.a. Maple Leaf Gardens, was built in five months and two weeks. That's a huge building, put up during the Great Depression, but it was ready for the first faceoff and the Highlanders Pipe Band in October 1931. Maj. Conn Smythe must have had the whip out. No long lunches or cigarette breaks on that job site.

In California, the Golden Gate Bridge, spanning one mile across the Golden Gate strait, was built in only four years. Johann Strauss, the proponent and project engineer, wouldn't be stopped by currents or public opposition. This suspension bridge overcame all challenges, and in spite

of the naysayers, in 1937 became an iconic view. Ah, when men were men, eh?

After laying over 5,000 kilometres of steel rail across Canada's vast Prairies, finding a way through our mighty Rocky Mountains, and bridging over a thousand streams and rivers, the Canadian Pacific Railway drove The Last Spike in Craigellachie, B.C., on Nov. 7, 1885. Just four years and a few months! As Gordon Lightfoot sings, "an iron road stretching from the sea to the sea."

Maintenance, a quick trip to romantic Paris. Back in the 1880s Gustav Eiffel, an engineer with a dream, touted a large tower on the Champs de Mars to anchor the 1889 World Fair. Parisians fought this concept, led by the "Artists against Monsieur Eiffel's Tower." This would be a threat against the aesthetic nature of Paris.

The Eiffel Tower was built in 26 months – and 132 years later, is still serving beignets at selfie central.

So, back to our Mississauga Street culvert replacement. As we dream of great hordes of visitors arriving this summer, let us determine to light a fire under this project, get it done and take down the "Welcome to all detourists" signs.

We are so fortunate to live in Niagara-on-the-Lake ... in 2021.

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## St. Davids inventor hopes to **mass-produce** custom plexiglass screens

Julia Sacco  
Special to The Lake Report

St. Davids plexiglass screen manufacturer Leslie Mann is expanding his business by creating custom screens as the pandemic continues.

Mann, who began making screens for small businesses in June, has created a prototype screen for a client operating a wellness centre.

“When she was able to be open but still have restrictions, she needed to separate herself while doing procedures. She had seen someone come up with an idea in the States so she sent me a picture and we worked back and forth and came up with the design,” said Mann.

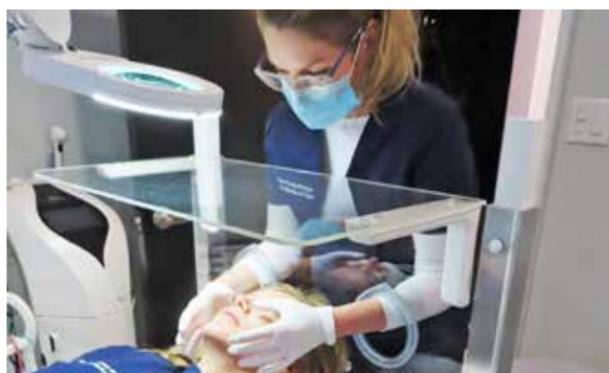
Heather Ravelle, partner and medical esthetician at Cenoté Wellness and

Medical Spa in Welland, said the prototype helps her to perform her job safely but effectively as its arm-holes let her complete treatments and its wheels allow her to manoeuvre around the bed with the patients having their masks off and Ravelle still in full PPE.

Once she can open her business again, Ravelle hopes they can mass-produce Mann’s prototype design with some enhancements made for the medical field. Ravelle thinks the design could be a game-changer, Mann noted.

“It needs to become more medical, as in built with aluminum or steel, something that’s sterilizing,” said Ravelle.

“(Leslie) is working on the next prototype right now so that until someone can assist me further, like



St. Davids resident Leslie Mann designed this plexiglass screen for a Welland clinic. SUPPLIED

a production company to manufacture them, he is helping me take them to the next level right now and we will see what happens with that,” said Ravelle.

Ravelle’s son, who is a 3D modeller, helped design a model of her desired prototype to show Mann. That dedication to detail and imagery helps him in the process of creating custom works.

The more visual information he has the easier it is for Mann to come up with the design as well as estimate cost.

He has been busy completing other custom works

for locations including pizza places, restaurants, medical offices, reception desk areas and even a church.

“Since people are looking online at what’s available and all those screens are generally sit-at-the-desk type things and mass-produced, I’m catering more toward specific situations where things have to be measured and fabricated to their particular needs,” Mann said.

Mann can be contacted about his plexiglass screens at his website [modelsby-mann.squarespace.com](http://modelsby-mann.squarespace.com), by email at [modelsbymann@gmail.com](mailto:modelsbymann@gmail.com) or 416-315-7086.



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## The Lake Report

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Is there someone in NOTL who has gone above and beyond to help the community during COVID-19?

A good neighbour? Doctor? Support group?

Help The Lake Report recognize our hometown heroes by telling us about them and how they’ve made a positive impact during the pandemic.

Send nominations to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)





Left: Co-op students Mario Spinoso and Claire Findlater work on icewine pressing at Pillitteri Estates. Right: Icewine grapes chilled on the vine and ready to be picked. Bottom left: Co-op students working on the press. They will be pressed again to get every last drop of precious juice. DON REYNOLDS/JEFF LETVENUK PHOTOS

# A late first icewine harvest for Brock

*Continued from Front Page*

on Niagara in the last days of January and the waiting game was over early last Thursday. "We were out very early in the morning, while it was still dark outside and cold," said Findlater. "We got to sit up in the big harvester and it was so peaceful. It's exciting to be part of the harvest!" For Spinoso, "it was pretty cool to see the harvesting being done by machine, I thought I'd be picking by hand! Now I realize why it's done by machine."

He explained the big harvesters allow the grapes to be picked quickly, while the cold weather lasts. Once picked, the frozen grapes go straight from the vineyard to the winery for pressing. Findlater and Spinoso worked on the pressing, which occurs in several steps. First the grapes are placed into a huge stainless steel hopper and from there baskets are filled. The baskets go onto a hydraulic press to extract the juice, which is strained, then destined for stainless steel fermenting tanks. Each grape gives up just a

few drops of the sweet elixir that will become this year's icewine. Both Findlater and Spinoso said they love the hands-on learning opportunity they got during the harvest, especially now that most classes are online because of COVID. "This semester, we're learning about wine processing, so the equipment isn't just on a PowerPoint slide. I get to learn it hands-on here," said Findlater. "At school, everything is theory, like pressing techniques, but here we get to see and do, which

puts it into muscle memory," said Spinoso. For example, he describes the process of icewine pressing: "We use a hydraulic press to extract the juice from the grapes. It's a small amount of juice out of the grapes, but it's so powerful and concentrated, whereas for other wines we use a different technique which just isn't powerful enough." The grapes form a solid puck when pressed, but that's not the end of the process. The pucks will go back into the hopper, then go through a second,

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Student Claire Pathfinder pushes grapes back into the press. Bottom right: The grapes form a solid "puck" after the first

# Week University students

said Spinosa. The process for icewine involves using a basket press for pressure to get the juice from the frozen grapes, followed by a bladder press, and finally a bladder press for icewine.

After the first pressing process, the grapes are broken up and get broken down and even a third

pressing to extract every last drop. No less enthusiastic than the students about the co-op program is Jamie Slingerland, director of viticulture for Pillitteri Estates Winery. "Claire and Mario are both great students who work hard and will have a bright future," he said, adding that most of the wine production staff at Pillitteri Estates come from programs at either Brock or Niagara College. Both students are in their third year of the program and will graduate with science degrees when they're finished. Spinosa plans to return

to his family's winery, Exultet Estates, in Prince Edward County with all that he's learned, while Findlater, from Toronto, hopes to travel to see some old world wine regions. As for the 2020 vintage of icewine, expect it to be both rare and memorable. Significantly less icewine is being produced because of the drop in demand overseas and the absence of international tourists last season. The relatively late harvest means the grapes were dryer, with a lower yield, but that translates into exceptionally concentrated flavours.

## RIDDLE ME THIS

I'm a god, a planet, and measurer of heat. Who am I?

Last issue: Tomorrow I am surely here, yesterday I am found as well. Today I am gone. What am I?

Answer: The letter "r"

Answered first by: Howard Jones

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Susan Hamilton, Sylvia Wiens, Pam Dowling, Catherine Willick, Margie Enns, Sheila Meloche, Elaine Landray, Katie Reimer,

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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# Life in Pandemic: Women get together to walk, talk and laugh a bit

**Editor's Note:** Life since COVID-19 has changed things for all of us. We've experienced hardships, heartaches, and challenges, but also new and sometimes unexpected reasons to be thankful. This new Lake Report series shares some of the stories of NOTL residents as we all reflect on our experience of life in a pandemic.

Judy Mantle  
Special to The Lake Report

Each Friday morning during this COVID winter, a group of women come together to walk, talk, laugh and share.

It's a chance to socialize, get some exercise, maybe forget about the pandemic for a while and see some of the sights that we take for granted around our historic little town.

Our numbers vary from week to week depending on the weather, life and work.

The group includes: Chris Earl, Jane Shrubbs, Janice White, Marg Ketcheson, Margot Richardson, Martha Cruikshank, May Chang, Patty Garriock, Shelley Sansom and me. If more



Some of the walkers pause outside the old NOTL Court House. From left, Chris Earl, Judy Mantle, Shelley Sansom, Margot Richardson and Marg Ketcheson with furry friends Stuart, Jay and Robbie. LARRY MANTLE

than five of us show up, COVID restrictions require that we split into smaller groups to walk.

Of course, not to be forgotten are the dogs who often accompany us: Lala, Iris, Jay, Stuart and Robbie.

Niagara-on-the-Lake is an amazing town and what you encounter while walking is incredible, whether it's

historic sites, great natural views or interesting people.

Here is the itinerary for one of our first walks:

Start at the Queen's Royal Park Gazebo.

Pause at the plaque that recognizes incredible athletes who swam the lake. It's worth noting the number of countries represented and, of course, Vicki Keith's

multiple crossings, one the butterfly and one double crossing.

On we go to nearby Ball's Beach, where the views are great. A conversation with a fisherman reveals a lot about various fish in our river. Depending on the time of year salmon, lake trout, brown trout and bass seem to be the favourites,

We're one year into the COVID-19 pandemic and The Lake Report would love to hear from Niagara-on-the-Lake residents about your experiences and reflections on life in lockdown.

What are you doing to pass the time? What hobbies or pastimes have you taken up?

What do you miss? What has helped you cope? What has surprised you?

It's easy to feel isolated during lockdown. Sharing our stories can help to remind us we really are all in this together.

Please send your submissions of up to 400 words to editor@niagaranow.com.

brave swans, then down past the Admiral's Suite, where a plaque commemorates the Niagara Harbour and Dock Company (1835-1853).

Not far away, at the Pumphouse Arts Centre, take a minute to really look at this beautiful building – and be thankful to the residents who saved it for us.

On to Navy Hall, where a monument to John Graves Simcoe and his wife Elizabeth was erected in 1952. Then head up the hill, along the ever-changing river, you'll find a bench with a simple inscription, BEA.

At this point, you choose, over to Fort George or head southward along the Niagara Parkway to McFarland House. Neither will disappoint.

There are so many routes, so much history, such incredible architecture and, best of all, the time to explore. We need a book on all these walks. Now, there's a COVID-19 project!

Our northern friends will remind you there is no bad weather, just bad clothing.

Keep moving and stay safe.



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# Business owners see potential pandemic **silver linings**

Continued from Front Page

He said he thinks next summer will be similar to 2020 and doesn't expect the border will be open.

"Nor do I think we want it to open, just because of the level of infection in the States," he said.

Still, he said, it bodes well that Canadians were coming to the area.

"And that was without some of the major attractions like the Shaw or even Fort George," he said, adding he thinks the wineries played "an important part" in bringing people to NOTL.

"They managed their visitations very well, I thought, and were still able to conduct tours. The tour companies adjusted and adapted and that really helped the local businesses."



Rick Jorgensen, owner of OliV Tasting Room, says he's hoping NOTL's exposure to more Canadians last year will help boost tourism in 2021. RICHARD HARLEY

Of course, the success of spring and summer 2021 will depend largely on what happens with the provincial lockdown.

"Up until the second wave we were doing OK.

But now with this latest lockdown, it's pretty tough," he said.

Meantime, Jorgensen has concerns about the town discouraging tourism.

"It has become really

kind of a tourist-unfriendly place. I hope that won't carry on into the future, that people will understand why, and will forgive the town when they are able to travel again, but we'll see."

Bob Jackson, chief executive at Lais Hotels Properties, said he saw the same thing during summer 2020, with a lot more Canadians coming to town and staying at the hotels.

He suspects if things open up this year, it will be similar, with Canadians looking to stay within southern Ontario.

"I think that there's going to be a lot of pent-up demand in the market. I think Canadians in general will be at least, at first, probably somewhat hesitant to travel very far," he said.

"So those two things combined could make for a very good season, depending on the timing of how everything is rolling out as we head into summer. So there is optimism."

Like every other business, he wants to be open.

"We're starting to see some positive signals out there in terms of cases coming down and hopefully that continues so we can start opening up. Our main thing is our team members and it's been a struggle for everybody. We want to welcome people back, get everybody back to work."

Jorgensen said for now businesses are just trying to keep their ships afloat.

"We're trying to stay alive like everybody else and we'll see if we can and hopefully we will. It'll take a few years for things to get back to normal," he said.

But if the reopening is well-managed, he is confident businesses will bounce back, as they did after the first wave. "We were able to recover faster than I thought we would."

## Struggling shops could use **more help** from the government, Jorgensen says

With rent subsidies changed, government pandemic aid programs aren't as helpful as previously, says Rick Jorgensen, owner of OliV Tasting Room.

"We were one of the lucky ones. Our landlord was really good and participated in the first rental rebate," he said in an interview.

"But now we're into the second wave and it's really confusing how (the government is) doing it because now it's on a sliding scale ... it's

really kind of after the fact."

With the new rent subsidy, businesses have to pay rent upfront and "hope to get something back," he said.

"And I don't know if people are going to be able to survive that."

He also echoed the complaint of many other business owners: If Costco can open for 300 people, why can't his small business open and manage the number of customers?

Jorgensen said small busi-

ness owners are better able to control who comes into their stores.

"We can control our own premises. And we did throughout the summer. We would limit the number of people that could come in and we would basically in between customers shut and lock the door. You can't do that at a big box store," he said.

He also takes issue with box stores being able to sell items that other stores can't.

"I feel for some of the businesses on Queen Street who were selling clothing or those kinds of items. And yet, a Walmart or any other big box store was allowed to sell that. It doesn't make sense. They'd be better off to shut down the big boxes and let the small retailers stay open."

Technically his store is a market and would be allowed to open, but he has decided to stick to curbside operation for now, partly due to the

size of the store, which can't hold many people, and the lack of people on the street.

"We have to limit the number of people that come in to the store anyway and there's not enough foot traffic to warrant the labour expense," he said.

"What we're doing now is curbside service for limited hours, a few times a week. And then we're offering local delivery within Niagara-on-the-Lake so people can call, make their order and we'll

deliver it to their residence. Or if they want to go for a walk and come uptown, we'll arrange for curbside pickup for them."

While the support of local residents is gratifying and helpful, it simply isn't enough to pay the high commercial rents charged on Queen Street, he said, which is about \$100 per square foot. For many businesses on the street, that's between \$10,000 and \$15,000 per month.

## Police arrest Mississauga man, 30, in alleged NOTL **sexual assault**

Staff  
The Lake Report

Niagara Regional Police have arrested a Mississauga man in connection with an alleged sexual assault in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Sughney Jariwala, 30, is charged with one count of sexual assault related to an incident in May 2019.

The victim is a woman in her twenties.

Police did not provide any further information

about the incident or where it occurred.

Police are asking anyone who may have information about the case to contact 905-688-4111, extension 1009533.

Police encourage any other victims of sexual assault to reach out for assistance by either reporting the incident to police or calling the Niagara Regional Sexual Assault Centre at 905-682-4584 for support.

## GoFundMe for cat **rescued** from roadside

Staff  
The Lake Report

A GoFundMe campaign is raising money for an injured cat named Hazel that was rescued from the side of Ricardo Street near Queen's Landing Jan. 26.

Hazel was dropped off at NOTL Cats Rescue, a non-profit organization that helps felines in need.

"She was scanned but has no microchip," the fundraiser by Elizabeth Pilzecker says.

Postings have been made on various Facebook sites and with the humane soci-



Hazel the rescue cat. SUPPLIED

ety but no one has claimed her.

"Her back legs are very weak and she can barely walk. After X-rays and sedation at the vet, she still needs more tests to treat her injury. Thankfully, she has no broken bones, but badly bruised internally. She is on

pain medication. Any donations toward her vet costs would be greatly appreciated."

When reached by The Lake Report, Pilzecker said she believes Hazel had a home, "because she's friendly, she's lovable."

"But no one's coming

forward."

She said NOTL Cats Rescue usually rescues about 80 to 100 cats. In 2020, it helped 88 cats.

Often pets are unclaimed because someone has decided they don't want the cat anymore.

"Sometimes the cats truly are lost and other cats (people) just don't want them," Pilzecker said.

She reminds cat lovers that there is no shortage of cats up for adoption from NOTL Cats Rescue.

As of Wednesday evening, the GoFundMe had raised \$795 of its \$1,000 goal.



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**Across**

- 1. Frequently (5)
- 5. Divest (5)
- 8. Sag (5)
- 10. Spanish fleet (6)
- 11. Israeli currency (6)
- 12. Bring together (5)
- 13. Dwelling (6)
- 14. Kine (Arch.) (6)
- 15. Moor (5)
- 17. Contaminate (6)
- 18. Resist (6)
- 20. Minor actor in crowd scenes (5)
- 21. Sliding compartment of furniture (6)
- 23. Capital of the Bahamas (6)
- 25. World's largest democracy (5)
- 26. Regular customer (6)
- 28. Departs (6)
- 29. Rotten (5)
- 31. Capital of the Philippines (6)
- 32. Scandinavian kingdom (6)
- 33. In what place (5)
- 34. Tale (5)
- 35. Small salamanders (5)

**Down**

- 2. Alien (9)
- 3. Scrutinise (7)
- 4. Central Chinese desert (4)
- 6. Crown (7)
- 7. Standard of perfection (5)
- 8. Wife of your son (8-2-3)
- 9. What shrinks do (13)
- 16. Behaved (5)
- 19. Declaration (9)
- 22. Soldier (7)
- 24. Type of twin (7)
- 27. Behind (5)
- 30. Junkie (4)

### Crossword Puzzle

|    |    |  |    |  |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |    |
|----|----|--|----|--|----|----|----|----|---|----|---|----|
| 1  | 2  |  | 3  |  |    | 4  |    | 5  | 6 |    | 7 |    |
|    |    |  |    |  | 8  |    |    | 9  |   |    |   |    |
| 10 |    |  |    |  |    |    |    | 11 |   |    |   |    |
|    |    |  |    |  | 12 |    |    |    |   |    |   |    |
| 13 |    |  |    |  |    |    |    | 14 |   |    |   |    |
|    |    |  |    |  | 15 |    | 16 |    |   |    |   |    |
| 17 |    |  |    |  |    |    |    | 18 |   |    |   | 19 |
|    |    |  |    |  |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |    |
| 21 |    |  | 22 |  |    |    |    | 23 |   | 24 |   |    |
|    |    |  |    |  |    | 25 |    |    |   |    |   |    |
| 26 | 27 |  |    |  |    |    |    | 28 |   |    |   |    |
|    |    |  |    |  | 29 |    | 30 |    |   |    |   |    |
| 31 |    |  |    |  |    |    |    | 32 |   |    |   |    |
|    |    |  |    |  |    |    |    |    |   |    |   |    |
| 34 |    |  |    |  |    |    |    |    |   | 35 |   |    |

Last issue's answers

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M | A | R | T | I | A | N | D | E | S | C | E | N | T |
| S | O | Q | A | X | O | Y |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| S | T | U | N | U | N | F | R | I | E | N | D | L | Y |
| R | I | A | A | L | Q | U |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| S | O | N | G | S | T | E | R | E | Q | U | I | N | E |
| N | H | I | O | E |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| S | A | N | T | A | C | L | A | U | S | R | A | V | E |
| U |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| S | T | I | R | I | M | P | O | S | S | I | B | L | E |
| O |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| A | M | U | S | E | S | S | M | O | U | L | D | E | R |
| O | E | L | H | C | A | L |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| B | O | T | T | L | E | N | E | C | K | M | E | E | T |
| D | T | P | D | E | I | S |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| W | Y | N | E | T | T | E | P | R | E | C | I | S | E |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 7 | 5 |   |   | 9 |   |   |   |   |
| 9 |   |   | 5 | 8 |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   | 6 | 3 |   |   |   |   |   |
| 6 |   |   |   |   |   |   | 8 |   |   |
|   | 1 |   |   | 5 |   |   | 7 |   |   |
|   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |   | 2 |   |
|   |   |   | 2 | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   | 7 | 5 |   |   |   | 1 |
|   |   |   | 8 |   |   | 5 | 9 | 3 |   |



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# Let us begin together

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# Dr. Brown: Consciousness, awareness and complexities of the brain

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.

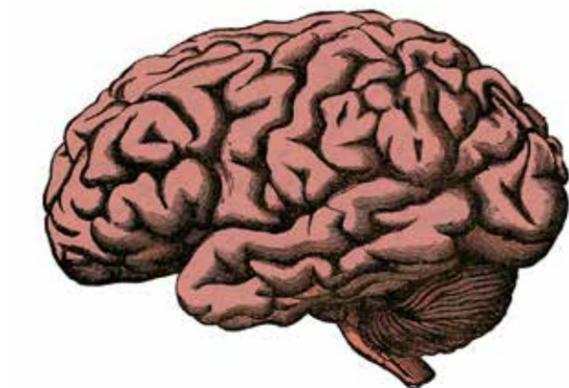
Dr. William Brown  
Special to The Lake Report

The nature of the consciousness and awareness remain what Winston Churchill so aptly described in a very different context, a “riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.”

But as mysterious as both may be in the minds of philosophers, neuroscientists such as Francis Crick and Oliver Sachs and the odd physicist – including Erwin Schrodinger and last year’s Nobel prize winner in physics, Roger Penrose – a more profitable way for me to tackle their nature is to begin with what I’m aware of now as I write this piece and some illustrative clinical cases.

Fortunately, we’re aware of the tiniest fraction of what’s going on within and around us at any given moment.

For example, as I write this, I’m aware of little more than my left hand steadying the pad of paper before me, while the black ballpoint pen in my right hand creates



PIXABAY IMAGE

strings of words across the page, a vague sense of reading what I’ve just written and sometimes periodic pauses to think before moving on.

But for the rest – the familiar humdrum background sounds from the fireplace, the workings of my innards as they go about their business of keeping me and my brain alive – I’m mercifully unaware. Except of course for the occasional shenanigans of squirrels that sometimes catch my attention.

It’s an example of selective attention and just how capable the brain is at focusing on the interest at hand, while ignoring the rest.

Sometimes, we’re unaware for other reasons. My father was unaware of his

left face, arm and leg following an ischemic stroke, which involved his right (non-dominant) hemisphere in the parietal region.

There was no weakness or trouble walking except when he was faced one day with the need to climb over a low rail fence on a country walk. There was no trouble lifting his unaffected right leg over the fence first, but unaware of his left leg and thus the need to lift it over the fence to move on, he was stuck, unable to go on and frustrated. It was only when I pointed out that his left leg needed to be lifted over the fence that he was able to do so and move on.

When his attention was drawn to left arm and leg, sensation was normal. But touched on both sides simultaneously, he always ignored

the stimulus on the left side. The same was true for his visual fields.

Stimulated on both sides with my wiggling fingers, he ignored the fingers on the left side. But stimulated only on the left side, he readily picked up the stimulus. That’s an example of sensory extinction, to touch and sight, to simultaneous stimulation on both sides and an example of how lesions in the brain may distort our awareness.

Then there’s the matter of patients who survive severe brain injuries due to trauma, a major stroke or severe hypoxic brain injury. Some waken from their initial coma but fail to show any response to stimulation of any kind – a state aptly called “wakefulness without awareness.”

Or so it seemed despite many attempts to connect with these patients in some meaningful manner. Then teams at the universities of Cambridge and Liege assessed groups of these patients using functional MRI, a technique that measures cerebral blood in real-time.

The results were stunning. In response to instructions such as, imagine walking through familiar rooms in your home or swinging a tennis racquet at a ball

or navigating your way through a familiar city, the brains of several patients, otherwise “unreachable” using conventional methods, lit up in the appropriate regions of their brains in a similar fashion to healthy controls.

The findings clearly showed that in some fashion, some of those patients were aware. That was amazing and a startling example of how standard assessment techniques used in intensive care units and recovery rooms may miss awareness in patients.

In the United States similar observations were made using artificial intelligence to analyze the surface-recorded electrical activity of the brain in patients in response to similar types of stimulation.

These few examples highlight why the brain is such a challenging frontier for science. The brain contains roughly 100 billion nerve cells, many of which connect with many thousands of other local, regional and distant nerve cells, all of which makes the brain a formidable organ to study and understand.

But as you will see with the upcoming series on the brain, despite much effort by some very clever scien-

tists, the physiological and anatomical basis of consciousness remains a huge mystery and will probably remain so for the foreseeable future – if only because the brain remains one of science’s last and most challenging mysteries.

Some scientists such as Steven Weinberg, the Nobel laureate in physics, claim that understanding the brain may be beyond the cognitive reach of humanity. By the way, Weinberg feels the same way about some of the most challenging and intractable problems in physics. He may be right.

Which brings me to the upcoming series on the brain, which begins online on March 3 at 2 p.m. and runs for seven weeks. This series is necessarily selective and explores the evolution of the brain, tools for studying the brain, the physiological properties of the nervous system from simple to complex, facial recognition, memory and speech, consciousness and wraps up with an item I’ve called Minds at Work in the Arts.

Then to top it off, David Elkins joins the series for week seven on a subject he knows well – meditation – and a worthy end to the series.



## Students get glimpse of new nursery expansion

The Niagara Nursery School captured “a very special moment” last week of students checking on the progress of the school’s new expansion at the NOTL Community Centre.

“They were so excited to see the framing of the walls being installed,” said Candice Penny, executive director of the school. The school is still raising funds to help with the project costs. Donations can be made at: [www.niagarannurseryschoolsexpansion.com](http://www.niagarannurseryschoolsexpansion.com)

## Museum lecture highlights ‘shame’ of abortion in the Victorian era

Julia Sacco  
Special to The Lake Report

The first instalment in a new Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum virtual lecture series highlighted the turmoil that women and doctors faced over abortion more than a century ago.

“An Atrocious and Abominable Offense” was broadcast online last week and led by Amanda Balyk, who researched the subject while completing her master’s degree in history at Brock University.

Balyk took the audience through various cases reported in The Lancet medical journal between 1860 and 1870.

Each case highlighted

the problems women and their doctors could face after having or conducting an abortion in that era, but not for the reasons one may expect.

Balyk made clear that doctors were “not interested in the morality of women receiving abortions,” but rather their “self-interest drew from the desire to protect their self-proclaimed honourable profession.”

“Between 1850 and 1870 mostly anonymous medical men used The Lancet to emphasize their anxieties around ‘quack’ medicine, untraditional medicine. That included abortions,” said Balyk.

“Physicians were concerned about the necessity

for a register for identifying what they considered legitimate trade and practice. Newly registered physicians increasingly targeted those quacks, threatening their newfound legitimacies.”

As well, Balyk said during this era women did not necessarily feel shame or judgment from society for having an abortion, but rather were shamed by doctors writing in The Lancet.

She showed how shameful language was used by writers in The Lancet to gain control over so-called quack doctors. As well, the shaming often was used when abortion was conducted under certain circumstances, such as late in a pregnancy.

Balyk’s unique knowledge



SUPPLIED

of the subject provided viewers with a new perspective on the history of abortion and perhaps changed the way some view its seemingly inherent taboo.

The next presentation in the series, highlighting the museum’s War of 1812 collection, is Wednesday, Feb. 10. Anyone interested in attending can register via the events page at <http://www.nhsm.ca/events/index.html>.



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# EXPLORING PHOTOS

WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## The Coasting Party

We finally got enough snow for the young and the young at heart to enjoy some outdoor activities! Hopefully you had a chance to head out on the toboggan hill like this crew did in St. Davids in February 1910. The large toboggan in the middle looks to be holding seven kids! It may be less when they're heading down the hill but wow, I don't think they "make 'em like that anymore." The hill in this photo shows "The Coasting Party," as it is labelled, and is possibly located at the bottom of the escarpment near Concession 2 and York Road.



## Different by design

Brian Marshall  
Columnist



Perhaps reminiscent but definitely unique.  
BRIAN MARSHALL

A few days ago I was lucky enough to be a participant in a Zoom call with three folks who represent a wealth of personal experience in both historical and current Niagara architecture.

We had been brought together on an undertaking in social entrepreneurship, but our conversation led us to a tangential discussion around the need for proper architectural guidelines.

There was consensus regarding a guideline's benefits to government, builders, architects and property owners, but we wondered why this type of document was so uncommon in On-

tario while very prevalent in the U.S. Might it be feasible to simply adopt one of the very thorough American documents here in NOTL?

Aside from any question of copyright, there are a couple of reasons why this would not be possible.

First, built architecture is a reflection of the prevailing socio-political-economic and political mores of the people who live in a particular community or region. This not only influenced which architectural styles were "acceptable," but often the design expression of

those styles.

As an example, the staid, conservative Georgian of Niagara stands in sharp contrast to the more flamboyant, decorated Georgian of the American colonies. Further, economic conditions often dictated the feasibility of constructing a particular style: the severe impact on Niagara of a late 19th-century recession completely precluded the very expensive construction of any Richardson Romanesque residences.

In short, over time, these regional differences combine to produce unique urban landscapes.

Second, up until the North American-wide developer-fuelled homogenization of the late 1950s, there were distinct differences between the residential architecture of the U.S. and Canada.

While the Americans moved from Georgian to Federal and Early Classical Revival in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Canadians built austere

Georgians, Roman-inspired Neo-classical and Regency homes. Later, the very common Edwardian home built in Canada during the early 20th century is largely absent from the American urban landscape.

In short, architectural guidelines (encompassing heritage) must be specific to the community reflecting the actual built environment and acceptable integrative parameters thereto. However, this statement does not imply a town must fund an undertaking to re-create the wheel. Using Caramel, Calif.'s, guidelines as a template, the Town of Qualicum Beach (B.C.) developed its community-specific vision and development criteria at a fraction of the cost.

It can be done cost effectively. It should be done to safeguard the community's vision of its town. It must be done in order to create a liveable town that successfully marries our irreplaceable heritage with 21st century requirements.

## Obituary

### Shirley Anne McBride



MCBRIDE, Shirley Anne - It is with great sadness that we announce the unexpected passing of Shirley Anne McBride (née Marcell) on January 25, 2021, at the age of 73.

Shirley is predeceased by her father Lawrence and survived by her mother Margaret; her husband of 52 years and the love of her life, Michael; siblings Dale Marcell (Donna); Linda

Jones (Darcy); Barbara Tops (Wim); her children, Jason and Marci; her beloved grandchildren, Abigail, Emily, and Jack. She doted on the various pets that she acquired over her life—cats, dogs, and, especially, birds, including her dear Rosey Bourke, Rosie.

Born in New Westminster, British Columbia, Shirley spent most of her childhood in B.C. After marrying Mike and starting a family, she embarked on decades of international travel—Mike's work took them across North America and then to Singapore and Japan. Shirley embraced every adventure, and in each new place, created a loving and beautiful home. In each new place, she developed and cultivated her passions for art and antiques, for home decor, for gardening, for cooking and baking, for current events, but especially for people. In each new place, she forged friendships that lasted the rest of her life. Shirley's generosity and devotion to others—her family, of course, but also friends, neighbours and complete strangers—were endless. After Marci had Abby, her first daughter, Shirley became, in effect, a mother again, and helped Marci raise her.

In the last decades of her life, at a time when most other people start to slow down, Shirley only sped up. She and Mike settled in Victoria, B.C., where they opened New England Square, a store specializing in heritage American furniture. A few years later, they relocated again, to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, where, over the course of a decade, they turned the Merlot House Bed and Breakfast into one of the town's most cherished B&Bs. Shirley formed a personal connection with every single guest, making her home their home no matter the length of their stay. Her blueberry scones, lush, ever-evolving gardens, and warm hospitality, brought people back year after year.

Cremation has taken place. A celebration of Shirley's life will be held at a later date. Arrangements entrusted to MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake. 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)



Pauline Reimer Gibson  
Audiologist

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*Add a side of Guinness gravy, curry sauce or grated cheese for \$1.50 or make it a poutine for \$3*
- Homemade English Sausage Rolls... \$12
- Potato Skins ..... \$14
- Chicken Wings ..... \$15
- French Onion Soup ..... \$8
- BBQ Bacon Wrapped Scallops ..... \$16
- Crab Cakes ..... \$15
- Deep Fried Pickles ..... \$9

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- Angus Burger ..... \$14  
*(lettuce, tomato & pickle)*
  - The Red Eye ..... \$16  
*(fried egg, bacon, cheddar & hot sauce)*
  - Olde Smokey ..... \$16  
*(bacon, KC BBQ Sauce, crispy onion, cheddar & chipotle mayo)*
  - Bacon Cheese Burger ..... \$16  
*(cheese, bacon, lettuce, tomato & pickle)*
  - Beyond Meat Burger ..... \$16  
*(lettuce, tomato & pickle)*
  - Bacon Portobello Mushroom ..... \$16  
*(bacon, mushrooms & Swiss cheese)*
- EXTRAS: Sautéed onions or mushrooms on a burger +\$2

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- Cheesecake of the day ..... \$8
- Bread Pudding ..... \$8

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- Chicken Fingers ..... \$15
- Steak and Guinness Poutine ..... \$17
- Reuben Sandwich ..... \$17
- Meat Loaf Sandwich ..... \$16
- Turkey Club Sandwich ..... \$16
- Chicken Caesar Wrap ..... \$16
- Buffalo Chicken Wrap ..... \$16
- Shepherd's Pie Poutine ..... \$16

EXTRAS: Gluten-free bread +\$2

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- Award Winning English Style Fish and Chips ..... \$18
- Baked Chicken Curry ..... \$18
- Bangers and Mash ..... \$16
- Shepherd's Pie ..... \$16
- Steak Guinness and Onion Pie ..... \$17
- Liver and Onions ..... \$17

EXTRAS: Mushy Peas +\$3

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  - Garden Salad ..... \$11
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Add an Angel Growler and a bottle of House Red or White for just \$30

### WEEKLY SPECIALS

Daily Lunch Special (served 12pm - 4pm) ..... \$15  
*Chef's choice of soup and sandwich of the day*

MONDAY: Buck-a-Cluck ..... \$1 Wings  
*Minimum of 10, celery, carrots, and blue cheese included*

TUESDAY: Pick-Up Deal | 15% off pick-up orders  
*(cannot be combined with any other offers)*

WEDNESDAY: BOGO BURGERS! ..... Buy 1, Get 1 Half Price  
*Buy any house made burger and get the second half price*

THURSDAY: Liver & Onions ..... \$15  
*Served with mashed potatoes, peas and carrots*

FRIDAY: Fish Fri-Yay ..... \$16 - 1 piece | \$24 - 2 pieces  
*Haddock served with fries, homemade coleslaw, tartar sauce, & lemon wedge*

SATURDAY: Baked Chicken Curry ..... \$16  
*Served over basmati rice, fresh cut fries or half & half*

SUNDAY: Roast Beef Dinner ..... \$20  
*Slow roasted beef served with peas, carrots, parsnips, Yorkshire pudding, and mashed or roasted potatoes*

All prices plus HST.

VISIT OLDEANGELINN.COM FOR FULL MENUS

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PIE EVEN BETTER?  
A GREAT PINT!

ALL OF ANGEL'S DRAFT BEERS NOW AVAILABLE FOR TAKE-OUT.  
FROM \$22 FOR 64OZ GROWLER.

NOT IN THE MOOD FOR A PINT?  
BOTTLES OF HOUSE WINE AVAILABLE  
FOR TAKE-OUT FROM \$25.



BRING IN THIS COUPON FOR  
15% OFF TAKE-OUT ORDERS

(Excluding alcohol and specials)

'PROBABLY' THE BEST  
TAKE-OUT IN THE WORLD

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