



## WHO ARE 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).

## Gaios win big on 'Family Feud'

NOTLers eagerly watch and cheer on hometown family



The Gaios family, Katherine, Walter, Danielle, Sarah (Ryan's fiancée) and Ryan, in their green room during the filming of their "Family Feud Canada" episode. NOTL tuned in as the episodes aired Monday and Tuesday on CBC. SUPPLIED

Jessica Maxwell  
The Lake Report

The Gaios said they didn't realize until after their first episode of "Family Feud Canada" aired that so many people in the community were watching and cheering them on.

The Niagara-on-the-

Lake family won \$10,000 during Monday night's episode but lost on the second night, broadcast Tuesday. Despite that, everyone was on cloud nine and thrilled with the experience.

They met virtually for a video chat viewing party with daughter Hailey in England and twin sister

Danielle, Ryan, his fiancée Sarah at home. Sarah's family even joined in from Calgary. Katherine and Walter sat at home in NOTL watching the episode, wearing their plaid shirts and game show name badges.

Katherine said the name badges are a great me-

mento of the experience and host Gerry Dee autographed their Fast Money card. "Our producer said he only gives an autograph to people he likes."

The parents said they are feel fortunate to live in "such a great, caring and

*Continued on Page 15*



A sign outside Niagara LTC thanks staff. RICHARD HARLEY

## One COVID death at Pleasant Manor as cases start to ease in NOTL long-term care homes

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Cases of COVID-19 in Niagara-on-the-Lake's long-term care homes have slowly started to fall, but facilities continue to take all precautions.

At Niagara Long Term Care Residence on Wellington Street, executive director Chris Poos said several cases have been resolved in the past few days.

The 124-bed home had 56 active resident cases, with 22 resolved, and no new deaths, as of Tuesday. Positive cases among staff totalled 14, with 23 resolved, Poos told The Lake Report. So far five people from the

facility have died from COVID-19-related issues.

The home has also introduced rapid testing, Poos said, which should help manage future spread.

Pan Bio Rapid testing "produces results in 15 minutes, which gives us real-time information to assist us in managing this outbreak, such as cohorting residents."

Poos said emergency medical service will be attending the home on Monday, Feb. 1, to assist in "additional infection prevention and control education" and that Niagara public health officials

*Continued on Page 3*

## Budget: Town foresees surplus, 2.1% tax increase

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents will see a potential 2.1 per cent hike on the municipal portion of their tax bills in 2021 — an increase of about \$30 based on a \$563,000 home assessment.

The town was expected to

approve its operating budget for 2021 at \$13,126,772 on Wednesday evening — a spending hike of \$440,621 from 2020.

The increase to the town portion of the average tax bill is significantly smaller than 2020's hike of 8.7 per cent.

The Town of NOTL also

expects to see a small operating surplus, despite absorbing some major revenue losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

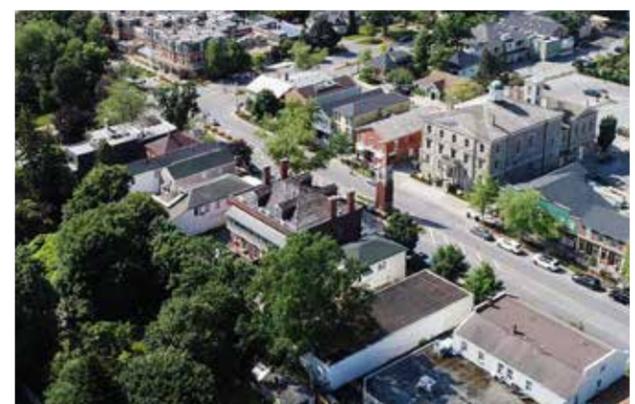
Coun. Allan Bisback, who chairs the town's finance and audit committee, said that total surplus is not known yet.

He said the commit-

tee "pushed back dramatically on some costs" for 2021 and encouraged staff to find some savings in 2020 as well.

"It's what I would call a maintenance year. There's no frills," Bisback said. "Things weren't re-

*Continued on Page 2*



NOTL taxes will rise about 2%. FILE PHOTO/RENE BERTSCH



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# COVID update: Town looks for vaccine rollout site in NOTL

## Niagara-on-the-Lake has 94 active cases, highest ratio per 10,000 population in region

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Niagara Region are looking for a possible location for vaccine rollout in NOTL.

One site could be Centennial Arena in Virgil, chief administrator Marnie Cluckie told councillors during a COVID-19 update Monday.

“Town staff met with the regional staff today to review the location,” she said. “We don’t have any direction at this point, because they just met to review and the region will come back with what they deem is the appropriate site.”

Niagara-on-the-Lake

had 94 active cases as of Wednesday and the highest ratio of active cases per 10,000 population in all of Niagara.

The Niagara region had 1,399 active cases as of Wednesday, with 289 COVID-19-related deaths. Six of those deaths were related to outbreaks at NOTL long-term care facilities.

Cluckie said no COVID-related tickets were issued over the weekend, but last week one ticket was issued “related to someone allowing people into their showroom when this is not permissible.”

She said there have been a lot of questions from the public about construction and what is permissible

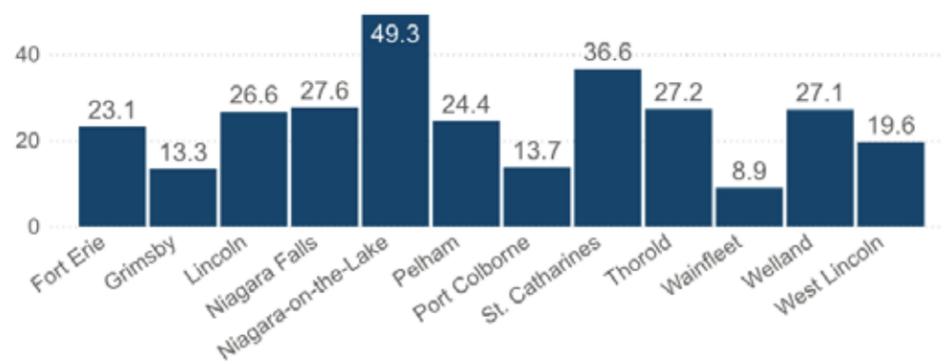
under the lockdown order, though the specifics are “quite extensive and it’s somewhat complex.”

She recommended any councillors getting questions about construction forward the inquiries to Craig Larmour, the town’s director of community and development services, so he can address each situation on a “case-by-case” basis.

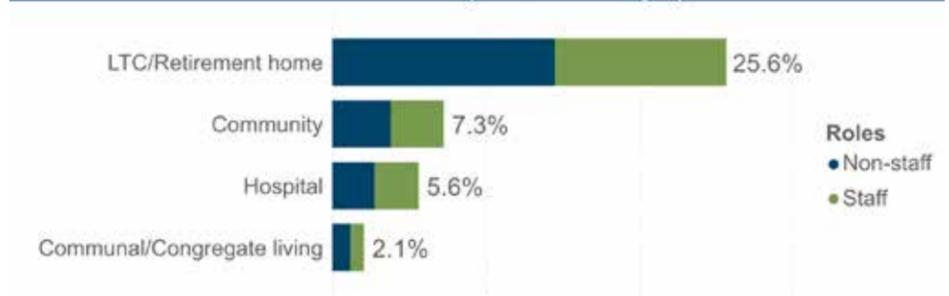
Cluckie said elementary school students could be returning to class Feb. 10, pending decisions by the province.

She reminded residents that anyone looking to report contraventions of emergency orders can contact the town at covidcomplaints@notl.com.

Active confirmed cases per 10,000 population by municipality



Per cent of cases by outbreak category



Top: Niagara-on-the-Lake has the highest ratio of cases per 10,000 population. Bottom: A chart of Niagara region cases shows most are coming from long-term care facilities and retirement homes. NIAGARA REGION PUBLIC HEALTH

# THE BUDGET: Town sees surplus, 2.1% tax increase

Continued from Front Page

duced. We just didn’t add.”

When budget talks began last October, he said committee members knew full well they were working “within a different environment” because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, not knowing what the full impact of COVID-19 would be, they planned the budget normally and then took a closer look after. It was an iterative process. He said it originally was presented as a 7.68 per cent increase (\$978,824).

“And then we started looking at the detail,” Bisback said, adding it looked at that time like the town was headed into a year-end deficit.

Instead, they managed to reduce the increase by more than half and a small surplus is being forecast thanks to staff efforts.

He said the committee decided it would be “a maintenance year” to keep try to keep spending down.

Committee members decided to “focus on protecting all the services for the town, not cutting, but protecting all the core services. And so we actually



Coun. Allan Bisback says he’s impressed the town has managed a surplus amid the pandemic year. FILE PHOTO

pushed back to departments that were asking for some increases and we essentially kept most departments at the 2020 level,” Bisback said.

“So, like parks and rec, we rolled them back to essentially no growth year over year, and we said if there’s going to be any material increase in the operating budget, it had to be things that we’re contractually bound to, we have obligations for and what I would call must-dos.”

He said town staff kept most of their spending low and managed to keep the town operating on a “set-

ting foundation.”

The operating costs of COVID-19 were covered by federal relief funding of \$526,000, which the town received in the fall of 2020.

“The current projection is to come up with a small surplus, which I think is amazing, considering the circumstances,” Bisback said.

Some of the increased costs the town was obligated to pay were staff salary hikes of around 2 per cent.

He said the town’s insurance cost also “went up dramatically,” increasing by \$79,000.

The committee also recommended taking a percentage of any surplus from its supporting organizations, like the library.

“The library this year did a really good job managing appropriately. They watched their spending very, very closely and did a very good job and they’re forecasting a surplus, a material surplus for 2020. So there was a motion that came to the floor at the audit and finance committee to have some of that surplus come back to the taxpayers,” he said.

“The idea was the taxpayers fund the library annu-

ally based on their requests. They spent less in 2020, so can we give that back to the taxpayer.”

While the operating budget normally would be passed in December, he said it took longer this year having to really look hard at the capital budget.

He said town staff wanted to examine whether it was possible to complete planned 2021 projects on top of finishing the projects that were put on hold in 2020.

The town’s operating budget will move forward at around the \$10 million range, similar to 2020.

“We haven’t cut capital. We’ve deferred some projects further down the line,” Bisback said.

He said the three major projects the town has to go into debt for in 2021 are the Mississauga Street culvert work being done now and two expenditures for NOTL Fire Services — a new pumper and personal self-contained breathing units for firefighters.

The breathing units are a necessary safety and COVID expenditure, he said.

“Here we had our firemen sharing breathing apparatus. Probably not good in light

of COVID. And so we made a determination we need to fund those this year.”

The committee also did not accept any non-profit organization funding requests this year. Typically the town grants about \$100,000 to various organizations like Music Niagara, Friends of Fort George and various festivals.

“We just said we can’t entertain any of those events at this juncture,” Bisback said, adding the committee recommended setting aside about \$30,000 for consideration if things change.

He said the town also took money back for events that didn’t take place in 2020, like \$42,000 for the Icewine Festival, and put it toward the 2021 levy.

“So, we gave it back to the taxpayer,” he said.

Some organizations will be unhappy, but he said they were “hard decisions” that were necessary to make.

He said there are two “big risks” with the uncertainty of 2021 — parking revenues and town fees revenue.

Parking revenue for 2020 was down year over year by \$800,000, he said, according to the last report.

Most recreational user

fees were also not increased. However, the town did increase development charges and “regular indexing.”

The storm water levy is \$456,998, an increase of 4.5 per cent. The region’s tax levy has not been reported yet.

But Bisback said the town has no control over those levies.

“All we can focus on is the town portion.”

The town secured a \$10 million line of credit with the Royal Bank of Canada in 2020 for emergency purposes, but has not had to use it, Bisback said.

Town treasurer Kyle Freeborn said the “biggest impacts on the budget have been lost revenues, in particular parks and recreation programming and parking. These impacts have been reflected in the 2021 budget by reducing revenues in parks and recreation and re-considering how and where parking revenues are used.”

The town also received \$36,009 to address “transit-related COVID pressures,” Freeborn said.

In 2021, the town received a further \$105,000 from the province through the Safe Restart Agreement.



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# Town says province insists groomers must stay closed

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Despite complaints from many quarters, and some municipalities permitting dog grooming, the province says grooming is still not an essential service.

“Dog grooming continues to be a contentious item,” NOTL’s chief administrator Marnie Cluckie told council Monday.

She said the town reached out to the province for clarity after she and councilors received a “number of questions” about the rules governing groomers.

In the last lockdown it was permitted, but the province amended the rule to say it’s no longer allowed during

lockdown.

Cluckie said the town received a response from the office of Ontario’s chief medical officer, which said pet grooming services are to be closed, except if required “for the health and welfare of an animal” and is to be “provided by a veterinarian only.”

“So while I know some people will be upset about that, at least we have some clarity that it is closed, and the only exception would be if a vet deems it necessary for health and wellness of the pet and they provide that service,” Cluckie said.

“They also said that if this concerns a business, it should be noted that each business and organization

needs to seek their own legal counsel to determine how the various regulations are made, and how they apply to their operations.”

Groomers and vets disagree on the closure, and while municipalities like Niagara Falls are allowing groomers, Cluckie said NOTL will continue to follow the province’s guidelines.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said the town has been enforcing provincial regulations and realizes the decision “has been causing some anxiety among some businesses.”

Town staff always have the health and safety of the community “first and foremost in



Tania Sapielak of The Mutt Hutt says grooming is essential. FILE PHOTO

the decisions they’re making,” Disero said.

Additionally, Cluckie said she also had questions about whether pet walking and pet training is permitted.

The answer is no, except for service animal training, she said.

So, “yes, you absolutely can take your pet out for exercise. However, you are not permitted to walk someone else’s pet, nor can you conduct pet training, except for service animals.”

# Hard-hit Niagara LTC starts rapid testing

Continued from Front Page

have been to the home and approved the home’s infection prevention practices.

The facility is awaiting confirmation of a date for the second vaccination clinic.

“We look forward to the time when all our residents staff, and essential caregivers have received the vaccine,” Poos said.

“We remain in regular contact with public health, along with other health system partners, and continue our ongoing weekly testing for staff and previously negative residents. We are in regular contact with all residents, families and staff regarding the status of COVID-19 in our home, along with twice-weekly family town halls.”

He said infection prevention and control measures include twice daily screening of residents and staff for any signs of COVID-19 and regular testing.

“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 all staff are wearing full personal protective equipment at all times, which is well-



An ambulance sits outside Niagara Long Term Care Residence where five residents have died of COVID-19. The facility has 56 active resident cases this week. RICHARD HARLEY

stocked in the home,” he said.

“We remain very grateful to our families, staff, health system partners, and the community for the tremendous support.”

At Radiant Care’s Pleasant Manor in Virgil, CEO Tim Siemens said residents of the long-term care facility and its apartments have all been given their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

The home remains in outbreak, with one active resident case and three

residents recovered, Siemens said Tuesday. There is also one active staff case and five cases have been resolved.

Those five recovered employees are back to work and we are very grateful for that, he said.

Meanwhile, “Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family” of the resident who died, Siemens said.

Long-term care residents were vaccinated on Jan. 20, he said, while apartment tenants were vaccinated this

past Sunday.

A total of 206 people have received the vaccine, including 185 residents.

At Pleasant Manor, 13.7 per cent of its 41 long-term care residents refused the vaccine and another 1.4 per cent were deferred for a medical reason. At Niagara Long Term Care Residence, 12.2 per cent of its 124 residents declined the vaccine and none were deferred for medical reasons. At Upper Canada Lodge, 1.5 per cent of its residents refused the vaccine.



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## Editorial: Good news amid pandemic

Ricahrd Harley  
Editor

As we are all learning, during a pandemic lockdown, it can be challenging to find things to which we can look forward.

But this week, NOTL residents had the pleasure of cheering on our own local family, the Gaios, during their two-episode run on "Family Feud Canada," during which they took home a hefty \$10,000 prize.

It shouldn't be understated that, in this time, the hometown connection was an excitement so many people

needed. It was quite the spectacle, too, with the family just narrowly taking home the grand prize on the first episode.

Phew! And while it was a bit sad to see them lose in the second episode, their appearance on the show clearly made a lot of people in town very happy.

Kudos to the Gaios for, probably unintentionally, cheering up our community while we're stuck inside.

There also is other good news in that COVID-19 infections appear to be starting to ease off in NOTL's long-term care

homes. After six deaths and two outbreaks, and our town now having the highest ratio of COVID infections in all of Niagara, the town needed that good news.

We hope to see NOTL cases dropping over the coming weeks as those long-term care cases start to dwindle.

And, as we've said before, thanks to our homes for keeping us up-to-date on what's happening.

We're repeating that, because it's important and, too often, executives and communications teams withhold valuable information.

One more piece of great

news this week is that seasonal farm workers are returning again, but this time with much less trouble than when the pandemic began.

We're happy to hear there have been some changes to housing to help protect those workers.

And, though it's early and numbers weren't finalized before press time, kudos to the town's finance committee for taking a hard look at the 2021 budget and coming up with a surplus.

Surely, there are lots of happy residents as a result.

*editor@niagaranow.com*



**NOTL active cases: 94**  
**Region active cases: 1399**  
**Region deaths: 289**  
**Region total cases: 7,547**  
**Region resolved cases: 5,859**

\*Jan. 27 data per Niagara Region Public Health



**Contributed by Patty Garriock**  
 "We have enough people who tell it like it is – now we could use a few who tell it like it could be." – Robert Orben

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### Correction: First name misspelled

A caption accompanying a story in our Life in the Pandemic series on Jan. 21 incorrectly spelled the first name of Cosette Derome. The Lake Report regrets the error.

## Snowbirds using helicopters to flout COVID rules

Dear editor:  
 While I am pleased to see an Ontario company, Great Lakes Helicopter, doing well during this pandemic, I was both alarmed and angered about the snowbirds who are using this service.

It smacks of selfishness and elitism.

While the users interviewed and manager Dwayne Henderson say the practice "doesn't violate

any government COVID rules," I beg to differ. There is a Stay At Home order in effect.

Snowbirds say they will drive "straight through," stopping only for drive-thru food. How can one possibly travel from Barrie, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Montreal, and continue to Florida without bathroom breaks and stops for gas?

I suspect that hotel stays

will also be included for some.

They go on to say that they can isolate as easily in Florida as they can Canada. But what happens to their friends in Florida who may be infected by them?

Worse yet, what happens if they become infected at one of their many stops? They are going to tax a medical system in Florida already on the brink of col-

lapse. Even worse still, is my fear that, if infected, they will be the first to demand that the Canadian government bring them home.

Taming the pandemic is the responsibility of us all. Those who see "loop-holes" are not helping and indeed may be hurting the situation.

*Leslie Moulson  
Virgil*

## Town takes an important first step with diversity survey

Dear editor:  
 I commend the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for taking the first step in seeking public input to the state of "inclusivity and diversity" in NOTL.

I am here now in my 15th year of residency and have come to love my home and the area.

That is not to say NOTL is without the problems that many places in our country face.

I, of white European heritage, was married for 53 years to a black woman who passed away here in our home. She had loving-

ly crafted her garden and had a set of friends who loved her.

However, and unfortunately, I can also describe racist incidents directed at her and us and people with us at various places and times here in NOTL. There was a NOTL Black Lives Matter march in which I participated, and in which others voiced similar experiences.

A town that is so storied, so interesting to visitors from all over the world, should not be almost uniformly white, aged and upper-middle class,

dominated by that mentality. We lack diversity for a number of reasons and we should be planning to better this situation.

I therefore urge the entire citizenry of NOTL to do the survey questionnaire. Go to the town's Join The Conversation page via notl.org or find it directly at www.jointheconversationnotl.org/inclusivity.

This survey is a step in the right direction. Widespread participation would greatly increase viewpoints and prevent the exercise being just that,

an exercise, instead of the first step to real action for a better, more inclusive and diverse community.

This then needs to be followed by a thorough, objective, scholarly and empirical analysis of the data.

Next there must be a series of public input meetings (perhaps guided by general proposals from the town staff) to what the citizenry sees as the steps that need to be taken for remediation of negatives identified.

*Kaspar Pold  
NOTL*

More letters on Pages 6 & 7

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# OPINION

## Where did the Moderna vaccines go?



Wayne Gates  
Special to The Lake Report

This is an open letter to Premier Doug Ford and Ret. Gen. Rick Hillier, who is in charge of the COVID vaccine rollout in Ontario. I am writing to you to get two essential pieces of information for the residents of the Niagara Region. We are of the understanding that in early January a shipment of the life-saving Moderna vaccine that was destined for the Niagara Region was diverted to another location. To date the people of Niagara have not been publicly told where this life-saving shipment of Moderna vaccines was

sent. I am requesting that you make that information publicly available. Secondly, we would request to know when the residents of Niagara can expect their fair share of the Moderna vaccine as well as future doses of the Pfizer vaccine. Niagara has not been shielded from the tragic outcomes of this virus. We witnessed nearly 80 deaths in long-term care and retirement homes in the three weeks prior to our first shipment of vaccines. As you may know, Niagara has one of the highest densities of senior citizens in the entire country. We know that this disease preys on our senior population and those in vulnerable situations. Simply put, every day the vaccines are not fairly given to Niagara is a day that our parents and grandparents are at risk. I have heard from scores of seniors in my riding who are living at home, isolated,

and in fear of contracting this deadly virus. Neither those residents nor I believe they should be prioritized over our front-line heroes but they do believe that this government should be providing more information about these vaccines. We know that Niagara is not alone in having its vaccines diverted. We have also noted that vaccines have been diverted in Simcoe-Muskoka. In some cases, communities appear to have more information about where their vaccines were sent. We believe this information would be easy to find and produce for our residents and we echo their belief that they deserve to know it. Gentlemen, this period has required a great sacrifice from the Niagara community. News of this nature only makes this process more difficult on residents, especially seniors. Every one of us fully understands

how big of an undertaking this is but we are asking that residents be treated as a partner in this process and that our local doctors' voices be heard. We are not asking for easy news only, we are only asking for clear and transparent updates about our vaccination program. The people of Niagara deserve to be told where their vaccines went and when they can expect to receive their fair share, anything else just compounds the frustration and isolation that people across this province are feeling. Premier Ford and General Hillier, I know how difficult this period has been. I stand ready and willing to assist you in any way that I can and to the fullest extent of my ability. I look forward to working with you directly to get these vaccines into Niagara. *Wayne Gates is the member of provincial parliament for the Niagara Falls riding.*

## Trudeau has mismanaged pandemic response



Tony Baldinelli  
Special to The Lake Report

Nearly one month into 2021, Members of Parliament are returning to Ottawa to focus on needed efforts to eventually overcome the challenges and impact COVID-19 has had on our communities. This past holiday season was unlike any other in recent memory: businesses closing their doors, workers losing their jobs and families being kept apart, as provinces across the country issued lockdown and stay-at-home orders, in

an attempt to manage hospitalizations and protect our heroic health care workers. As I return to Parliament this week, I can assure you that our Conservative opposition will continue to hold Justin Trudeau's government accountable for their mismanagement of Canada's federal pandemic response. Back in March, the federal government was responsible for a nationwide shortage of PPE, while at the same time exporting PPE to China. We were also disappointed to learn the government disbanded this country's global pandemic alert system, just months before COVID-19 struck us. Then, there was the WE Charity scandal in the summer, which forced the Liberals to prorogue Parliament – in the midst of a global and national health crisis of historic proportion. Now, 10 months later, as we mark the one-year anniversary

of the first presumptive case of COVID-19 in Canada, the government has failed to deliver the vaccines needed to combat and beat this pandemic. In fact, this week, Canada will receive no Pfizer vaccines at all. With vaccine supplies delayed and running out, rapid testing devices are still not readily accessible to assist our front-line workers or to the general public. And there is no plan in place to support an economic recovery that takes into account our hardest hit sectors, including travel and tourism, notably restaurants, Niagara wineries, attractions, hotels and accommodations, to name a few. While health care is a provincial responsibility, the provinces can only administer the vaccines that they have in stock. It is the federal government's job to procure these vaccines and to supply them to the

provinces, so they can be given out. Therefore, the blame for a nationwide vaccine shortage lies squarely on the Trudeau government. As of this writing, less than two per cent of the Canadian population has received at least one dose of vaccine. This is far behind other countries, including our neighbours to the south, and it is completely unacceptable. Canadians deserve far better! As your MP, proudly representing the communities of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie, I returned to Ottawa this week to demand better from this government, to demand better from our prime minister and to demand better for you – so we can get our lives back to normal as quickly as possible. *Tony Baldinelli is MP for Niagara Falls riding and the Conservative party's special adviser on tourism recovery.*

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Send a letter to the editor to  
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### We welcome your letters

The Lake Report welcomes your letters to the editor. Please, write early and often. Letters ideally should be under 400 words long. Occasionally, longer letters may be published. All letters may be edited for conciseness, accuracy, libel and defamation. Please include your full name, street address and a daytime telephone number so that authorship can be authenticated. Only names and general addresses (eg. Virgil, St. Davids, NOTL) will be published. Send your letters to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com) or drop them by our office at 496 Mississauga St., NOTL.

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A complaint over a half-sized yellow school bus in a residential driveway sparked a neighbourly dispute. FILE PHOTO

## A reasonable request and reasonable solution

Dear editor:

Re: The Jan. 21 Lake Report story, "School bus in driveway sparks neighbourly dispute."

The school bus was in the driveway in a purely residential area that is not zoned for business.

I understand how a bright yellow school bus with black corporate signage could significantly negatively impact the ambiance of the immediate neighbourhood.

Is it fair to expect neighbours to look the other way because it doesn't bother you personally?

I understand that not everyone has the same

sensitivity when it comes to aesthetics, so for some it may not be a problem but for others it may be quite painful to tolerate.

The town puts bylaws in place for that reason, to allow residents to live in "quiet enjoyment."

If everyone tries to maintain that goal then they would be respectful of their neighbours' feelings and try to accommodate them within reason, of course.

I think that a 14-kilometre drive to start work in this area is a pretty reasonable solution.

**Jackie Bonic  
NOTL**

## NOTL should be a priority for COVID-19 vaccine

Dear editor:

An Associated Press report dated Jan. 21 quoted Amazon executive Dave Clark saying: "Amazon is offering its colossal operations network and advanced technologies to assist President Joe Biden in his vow to get 100 million COVID-19 vaccinations to Americans within the next 100 days in office."

Two previous letters from me (Jan. 7 and 14) outline the urgency in defining and executing the distribution network plan. In NOTL, for example, using our community centre, which has ample parking and can operate seven days per week. In his Jan 21 column, Dr. William Brown made the same suggestion. Nothing has happened thus far.

Our politicians and health team cannot even agree to an announcement regarding the use of our pharmacies. It must be frustrating as hell for the likes of NOTL's Sean Simpson.

Gen. Rick Hillier and company, this is not rocket science. Use some good old common sense and street smarts. Stop procrastinating.

Previously I proposed using Amazon in our distribution – again, a no-brainer. At least it's comforting to know that Dave Clark and I attended the same University of Common Sense. Sadly our Canadian distribution team is not on the

same planet or wavelength.

My sister called me from Northern Ireland: "Have you received both your vaccine shots yet?" My reply: "No, not even my first one and no idea when or where I will receive it." Her response: "If you lived over here, at your age (in my 80s and a pre-existing condition) you would have already received both shots."

Is Canada becoming a Third World country and is it possible the U.S. is getting our 50 per cent reduction in vaccine supply?

Given the high rate of the virus spread in town, and following a priority grouping behind front-line workers, doctors, nurses, long-term care homes etc., NOTL should be ranked a priority area for vaccinations, considering we are both a high-traffic tourist destination and have a concentrated seniors population.

Meantime, perhaps, after all these months I think I have cracked the government COVID-19 code.

Covid cases rise: Move to a lockdown.

Covid cases fall: Remove the lockdown.

Covid cases rise: Reinstate the lockdown.

Repeat the above by region as required. There is no cycle limit on this prescribed solution.

**Samuel Young  
NOTL**

## Online vitriol over school bus complaint was shocking

Dear editor:

This past year has brought out the very best in people, along with the very worst.

One needs to look no further than Niagara-on-the-Lake's community Facebook page, NOTL 4 All, to see this bad behaviour on full display.

The self-righteous keyboard warriors were out in full force in response to The Lake Report's article on a dispute between neighbours over a school bus. ("School bus in driveway sparks neighbourly dispute," Jan 21).

It was absolutely shameful to see hundreds of negative comments accumulate on Facebook over the course

of the day, largely targeting one member of the community.

It felt as though the vigilante mob was looking to drive him out of town. The fact that the moderators have yet to remove these posts (and yet quickly took down photos of a fox after receiving a few complaints), is another issue in itself.

From referring to the gentleman in question as a crook, to telling him to go back to where he came from (where else but Toronto?!) and insinuating that they knew where he lived so perhaps karma was coming his way, the nastiness

and vitriol on display was shocking.

Anyone who dared say that they wouldn't want to have a school bus parked across from their house within the comments was met with the same hostility.

I, for one, would not want to have a school bus sitting across from or next to my house and I suspect if you asked many people in Niagara-on-the-Lake, they might feel the same.

According to the NOTL Facebook mob, this would make me an evil elitist who should go back to where they came from.

This is a beautiful community, but the them versus

us mentality certainly takes the shine off.

As a Toronto transplant (who can trace their family history back to NOTL in the late 1700s), I feel quite fortunate to live in such a special town.

However, I know there is some deep-seated resentment toward Torontonians. All you need to do is check the Facebook page to see the nastiness simmering just below the surface.

Perhaps NOTL 4 All should really be named NOTL 4 Some (but don't even think about joining if you're not from here!).

**Lindsay Moore  
NOTL**

## In any community, we must accept good with the bad

Dear editor:

I read with dismay the story of the Rossiters and their fight to remove a school bus from their vista. Oh dear, ("School bus in driveway sparks neighbourly dispute," The Lake Report, Jan. 21).

City folk move to the country. They move near a pig farm and complain about the smell, they move near a quarry and complain about the blasting, they move near a vineyard and

complain about the bird bangers, they move next to a cold storage facility and complain about the air conditioners.

When we live and breathe within a community, we are part of the community where we reside and should accept both the good and the bad.

Many, many years ago, we moved to Queenston from the city to raise a family. We embraced the community and all that liv-

ing in a small community has to offer – both the good and the bad.

We also have a condo in downtown Toronto where we embrace that community and all it offers as well including the good, which will again be available when COVID is over (the theatre, the music, galleries, museums, dining experiences, unlimited shopping at the St. Lawrence Market, public transportation at our doorstep) – and the bad (the

fire sirens, helicopters, airplanes, pollution, traffic congestion, the city that never sleeps and the unfortunate homeless people who share our community).

It will be a sad day when we are allowed to move into a new community and wipe it clean of all we do not like.

These are our communities – the good, the bad, and the ugly.

**Donna Lynne Fraser  
NOTL**

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## Groomers provide essential service. **Let them open**

*The following is a copy of a letter to Lord Mayor Betty Disero and senior town administrators:*

While the provincial government urges us to support local business and buy Canadian, I am disturbed by the seemingly singular interpretation of a town administrator.

Judging from three January 2021 articles in the The Lake Report and other area media, the small business of pet grooming is shut down here in NOTL because there is “no room for interpretation.”

It appears that our mayor and CAO have become hostage to the decision. It is disturbing, when representatives like MPP Wayne Gates are known to have stated that the decision is a municipal matter. It seems illogical and inconsistent that Niagara Falls is permitting pet groomers to ply their trade while the Town of NOTL is not.

I urge you to speak with Ken Todd, chief administrator of the City of Niagara Falls. Apparently he held a senior staff meeting which came to the conclusion that pet groomers are allowed to tend to pets. Please consult



Tania Sapielak of The Mutt Hutt says grooming is essential. FILE PHOTO

this colleague as to how the meeting of senior advisers’ interpretation came to be.

We need assistance in opening up the way for common sense to prevail in the matter of caring for our four-legged friends. Many persons, as well as pets, will benefit.

I am in my eighth decade and do not have the professional equipment, nor the skill set in order to rid my “best friend” of her increasingly matted hair. It is with increasing pain and discomfort on my physical being

and great distress for my dog having to endure what only a professional can successfully manage. I fear for her physical health and well-being.

Purchasing the necessary equipment supports the large chain pet stores and the quality of products is certainly not that of a professional. I cannot support the small business owner when my municipal government interprets otherwise. We cannot sustain our own mental health and well-being if we cannot sustain the health and well-being of the

persons and creatures that provide the caregiving.

Let me assure you that groomer Liz Chorney, when she was allowed, provided perfect safety regulations – a two chamber entrance-way so that masked owners and groomers do not make any contact.

The very government that expects me to abide with regular inoculations and other rules, may charge me with pet abuse and is also disallowing me the opportunity to provide for the best health care of my dog.

The decision made by the town should reflect the health and well-being of dogs and other pets, their owners and the livelihood of groomers in addition to veterinarians.

Please note that the small region of NOTL appears to have very few dog groomers compared to the number of dogs residing in our midst. The duration of the lockdowns exacerbate the condition of our canine friends. Please allow the businesses of pet grooming to be resumed.

**Nancy Macri**  
NOTL



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# Stop the Spread COVID-19 can be deadly. Stay home. Save lives.



## Letter from U.S.: ‘Lockdown’ means different things to different people

Sonja Schindeler  
Rick Hrga  
Special to The Lake Report

When we decided to take the risk and travel to our winter home north of San Diego, we weren't sure what to be more afraid of – COVID-19 or civil war. Thankfully we have done well with both.

Let's start with COVID-19. The stay home order was lifted on Monday and outdoor dining, limited indoor dining and salons are some of the guilty pleasures that people will once again enjoy.

Previously, although we were “presumably” in a lockdown, we were astounded by the range of interpretations of what “lockdown” means.

Restaurants were closed – unless they chose not to be. People were told not to gather – but made excuses for having their families over for the Christmas holiday. Still, we are supposed to socially distance but ladies will still drive to the tennis club together – masks on.

Honestly, I am most stressed by trying to stay away from people who tend to come too close!

So, combining the pandemic issues with civil war, I recently got into a five-minute conversation with one of the women after an (allowed) tennis match. (Masks on through the parking lot and right on to the court, at which point we are allowed to unmask.)

A staunch Republican but NOT a Trumper, she was venting about how the “numbers” are all suspicious. She argues that many people get tested over and over and over again, and that the systems are not robust enough to identify “unique” individuals.

With no knowledge otherwise I could not argue the point, but I “innocently” asked if more enforcement of masking, handwashing and socially distancing would/could not help to mitigate some deaths.

Her answer was: “We are Americans. We will never go along with the diminishing of our civil liberties.”

Go figure. Thank good-

ness others are a little bit more reasonable. So I backed up another three feet ...

While watching the media reporting around the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 we were checking out property values in our area. Honestly, if Trump had somehow swung a coup there is no doubt that we would be selling.

Hopefully Joe Biden is the right man at the right time. At least the “temperature” has gone down palpably in our area. It seems everyone, regardless of party affiliation, is breathing a sigh of relief.

Many of our dear friends at home have expressed concern that California is such a “hot spot” for COVID-19. California is a very large and diverse state.

You may not realize this, but the state is 1,040 miles from north to south. To put that in perspective, Toronto to Orlando is 1,050 miles. Way too far to believe that something is the same across such a large geography.

We are very fortunate that



Tennis buddies gather “safely” to play a game during lockdown in the U.S.  
SUPPLIED/SONJA SCHINDELER

we are in an area where the impacts of COVID are not as visible. Los Angeles, of course, is getting killed (pun intended), and some of the southern areas of our county – those bordering Mexico – are also suffering due to the socio-economic issues and congestion.

All of this taxes the medical system which is why all of southern California is in the “purple zone.” Purple. Why purple ... why not RED!?

As of Jan. 23 our area is vaccinating those age 65 and older and a lengthy

list of occupations. The next phase will be 50+ and anyone younger with a comorbidity that could result in a stronger reaction to COVID-19.

The highlight of our days has been going to the county website to see if there are any appointments available at the vaccination sites.

The website is very straight forward. It identifies the vaccination clinics and tells you if they have any appointment availability. You choose a location, fill out your personal information and choose an appoint-

ment time. The available time slot(s) are sometimes gone before you submit your form and then you have to start over again.

At the clinic, including a 15-minute wait after the shot, you are in and out within a half-hour.

After striking out previously, on Monday Rick received the first dose of the Moderna vaccine (free, even though he is Canadian). I gave everyone at the clinic my best sales pitch on why I should get one as well, but ... no luck.

And so, I wait.

## Notice of Completion and Submission of Design and Construction Report

### Design-Build for QEW/Glendale Avenue Interchange Reconstruction Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Regional Municipality of Niagara DB 2019-2119

#### THE PROJECT

**Brennan Paving and Construction** and their design consultant **Morrison Hershfield** have been selected by the **Ministry of Transportation (MTO)** to undertake the detail design and construction of the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) and Glendale Avenue Interchange improvements (see Key Plan).

The project includes the replacement of the Glendale Avenue bridge over the QEW and reconstruction of the QEW/Glendale Avenue interchange to a Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI). Additionally, the project will reconstruct the Glendale Avenue/York Road Intersection to a single lane roundabout, and construct a new Airport Road ramp and connection road from Glendale Avenue to York Road/Airport Road intersection on behalf of Niagara Region. A new commuter carpool lot will also be constructed at the northwest quadrant of the new interchange.

The Diverging Diamond Interchange will allow for traffic performance improvement by reducing the number of vehicle conflict points and allowing unrestricted access to the QEW.

#### THE PROCESS

The MTO project has followed the approved planning process for a Group 'B' project in accordance with the *Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Transportation Facilities (2000)* with an opportunity for public engagement. A Design and Construction Report (DCR) has been prepared to provide background information about the project, present the proposed design, describe construction staging, associated impacts and proposed mitigation, and provide an overview of the public consultation that has occurred to date.

**The 30-day public review will start on January 28th, 2021 and end on February 26th, 2021.**

The DCR can be downloaded from the project website at <http://qew-glendale-interchange.ca/>

Upon completion of the DCR review period, the project will be considered to have met the requirements of the Class EA and will proceed to construction.

The projects within Niagara Region (roundabout at Glendale Avenue/York Road intersection and a new Airport Road connection from Glendale Avenue) were assessed in accordance with the approved planning process for Schedule 'C' projects under the *Municipal Class Environmental Assessment* (amended in 2015). This project will fulfill the final phases of the Environmental Assessment process including Detail Design and construction.

The construction phase is anticipated to start spring 2021 and is anticipated to be completed in summer 2023.

#### COMMENTS

Interested persons are encouraged to review the DCR and provide comments by **February 26, 2021**. The Project Team will respond to all comments generated during the 30-day public review. Outstanding concerns are to be directed to the proponent for a response, unless the outstanding concerns are regarding potential adverse impacts to constitutionally protected Aboriginal or treaty rights, in which case Part II Order requests on these matters should be addressed in writing to the following:

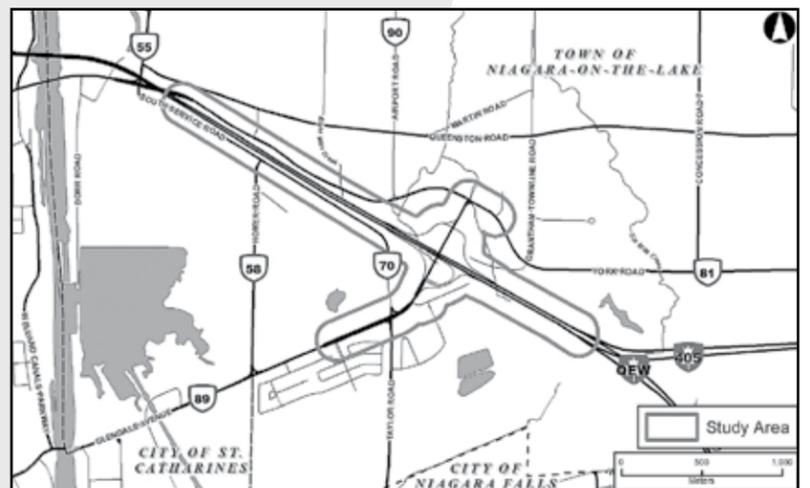
#### Minister Jeff Yurek

Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks  
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3  
e-mail: [minister.mecp@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.mecp@ontario.ca)

and

#### Director, Environmental Assessment Branch

Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks  
135 St. Clair Avenue West, 1st Floor  
Toronto, ON M4V 1P5  
e-mail: [EABDirector@ontario.ca](mailto:EABDirector@ontario.ca)



To obtain additional information or to provide comments please contact the Project Team via the “Contact” link on project website or by contacting one of the following individuals:

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

If you have any accessibility requirements in order to participate in this project, please contact the Project Team members listed above.

# ‘The season is starting and we’re prepared for it,’ Wiens says as **farm workers** return

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Seasonal farm workers are arriving in Niagara-on-the-Lake again and things are going a little more smoothly than a year ago.

Coun. Erwin Wiens, a grape farmer, told council Monday night that workers started coming in, mostly from Jamaica and Mexico, in January through Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program.

He said workers have to take the same COVID precautions as anyone else entering the country.

“They have to test (negative) 72 hours prior to leaving their home country, just like every other traveller,” he said.

“And then once they arrive here, they have to quarantine for 14 days.”

He said there are also more COVID precautions



A seasonal worker prunes grape vines. FILE PHOTO/RICHARD HARLEY

in homes and on the farm.

“There’s new rules that were implemented by the health department back in November, December. And that has brought in the six-foot distancing and (fewer) people per house,” he said.

“And also, there’s been some federal funding in

regards to (personal protective equipment) and that sort of thing.”

While workers are beginning to arrive now, “the influx will start” in February and last until about April, with about 2,000 workers expected, he said.

“Right now it’s on

track,” he said. “The season is starting and we’re prepared for it.”

There have been “some issues with Trinidad and Tobago and immigration” but as far as Wiens is aware, it won’t affect any Niagara-on-the-Lake workers, as none are coming from those areas.



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## We want to know ... Who are your **PANDEMIC HEROES?**

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)




# Tough times for NOTL businesses but they're still open



Left: Maple Leaf Fudge owner, John Koldenhof, is confident his store will survive the pandemic. Right photos: Many businesses across NOTL have signs up letting people know they're still open.

Tim Taylor  
The Lake Report

A year into the COVID pandemic, some NOTL businesses are doing just fine, thank you, while others are just trying to hold on.

The businesses that rely primarily on town residents for their livelihood, like Hendriks' Valu-mart in Old Town or Pet Valu in Virgil, are weathering the pandemic downturn well, if a little wounded.

Carol Thibault, owner of Pet Valu, puts it this way: "We're doing OK. We're fortunate because pets are family members. And they need to eat. People cherish their pets so they're making sure they are being well cared for."

"There's obviously been a disruption to our business as usual. But our community has been wonderful, supporting us and all the local businesses."

Tony Hendriks, proprietor of Hendriks' Valu-mart, says his business this year is just about the same as January last year.

"Obviously, we have zero tourism right now," he says. "But we're serving more locals who did

not go away this winter. We actually have more customers."

"They're not shopping as regularly, trying to stay home more and shop less, but on balance we have the same number of customer visits in a week."

Businesses relying on the town's three million annual visitors are having a more complicated time successfully navigating the pandemic.

Take John Koldenhof, owner of Maple Leaf Fudge.

"We miss the buses," Koldenhof says. "We miss the tourists. We miss the Shaw Festival."

Koldenhof has been making fudge in Niagara-on-the-Lake for over 40 years and is proud of that longevity. He points to a black and white photograph of his father and Prince Philip hanging near the entrance to the store. It was 1967. "Prince Phillip is eating fudge and (now) he's 99!"

"I'll get through it. Rent relief helped for five months and the employment subsidy has allowed me to bring back some staff."

The store has a modestly growing online business and some curbside and local delivery sales.

"But I'm going through my own money. I'm 68. It's hard. I'm burning my retirement."

Irish Design, a Queen Street fixture for 34 years, sells authentic Irish clothing and more. Proprietors Maureen and Paul Dickson took the opportunity during the first lock down to upgrade their point-of-sale system and build a whole new website.

"The new website has been our saving grace," says Paul Dickson. "Up to that point our online capacity didn't really show sales results. Our online business has quadrupled."

Dickson's crystal ball says the local business world will start to open up again in March.

"We're not quitting. We are a little more focused on the things we do right and the things that maybe we didn't do right."

Beau Chapeau Hat Shop opened its doors in 1997 and almost immediately became an early adopter of e-commerce.

The shop buys mostly from overseas, so it has been difficult to balance back orders and keep small stock levels.

"We want to succeed along with everyone else," says owner Kevin Neufeld.

**“Let's face it, 18,000 residents just can't take the place of three million visitors.”**

EDUARDO LAFFORGUE  
PRESIDENT  
NOTL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

have a social media presence. Twenty-commerce. Chapeau a database-based contacts. Neufeld paid our r

The company is trying to keep the whole time. "Our sta

ing, problems. We would not have survived. They are incredible."

And Neufeld is not shrinking. In the spring, the entrepreneur is planning his business, taking over Culinary Creations next door.

"We're excited. We're going to expand our footprint by late spring."

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small businesses, and the need to cut suppliers healthy. with our suppliers. "They don't safety net." plus years of e- has given Beau a healthy subscriber — almost 15,000 "That saved us — ent." npany has managed re employees the e.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce president Eduardo Lafforgue said he believes only the return of the visitors will help the local business community truly emerge from the depths.

And it may take a long time. "If we open (the border) in April this year, which may or may not happen, the latest data suggests we won't return to 2019 levels of business until 2025," Lafforgue says.

"Let's face it, 18,000 residents just can't take the place of three million visitors."

According to Lafforgue, one bit of optimism is the nature of the town's tourism business.

"Our tourists generally come from shorter distances. We are poised to recover earlier than long haul destinations particularly that depend on international travel."

He has another optimistic note. Although some businesses are closing, he's aware of at least three of his member businesses that are growing or opening new outlets in town.

One of those is Budapest Bakeshop. Anett and Todd Kane opened their shop in 2019, not a year before the pandemic closed

everyone's doors. Originally from Buffalo, the couple and their two kids sold everything to open the business selling specialty Hungarian chimney cakes from Anett's old family recipes.

After less than two years, they see so much in Niagara's future they are moving to larger, more efficient space, in the former Starbucks on Queen Street.

"We've been very lucky," says Todd Kane. "In our first year we saw the strength of the tourist business. Then, with COVID, we were able to really get out to the locals all around the region."

"We offer something that is completely different. Once word started to get out the locals just started to come. They came when the tourists weren't here," he says.

"Right now, we're in the store with a four-year-old and an eight-year-old doing online school, packing up for the move. We are really excited."

It's Paul Dickson of Irish Design who paints perhaps the most optimistic picture: "Retail in Niagara-on-the-Lake, based on what we have here — the history, the theatre, the wineries and hotels — will bounce back. We're a great little community."

## RIDDLE ME THIS

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

Last issue: I have a heart that never beats,  
I have a home but I never sleep. I can take  
a man's house and build another's. I love to  
play games with my many brothers. I am a  
king among fools. Who am I?

Answer: King of Hearts

Answered first by: Margaret Garaughty

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Susan Hamilton, Pam Dowling,  
Margie Enns, Jody Stranges,  
Wade Durling, James Langendoen,  
Katie Reimer, Elaine Landray, Sylvia Wiens,  
Gerhard Driedger, Sheila Meloche

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# Driver finds home for bus thanks to Lais Hotels executive

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Kathy Latour has a new place to park her school bus close to home, thanks to the generosity of Lake Report readers and a NOTL hotel company.

Latour, a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident and school bus driver, was recently forced to stop parking her half-sized bus in her John Street driveway after her neighbour Jim Ros-siter called her employer to complain.

After reading the story in the office last Thursday, Bob Jackson, chief executive of Lais Hotels Properties Ltd., contacted The Lake Report wanting to connect with Latour to offer the use of a company lot down the street.

“We were just chatting about it in the office and someone else suggested, ‘Listen we’ve got space, why don’t we just let her park here?’ and I thought, ‘Great,’ which is when I reached out to (The Lake Report),” Jackson said in an interview.

While he’s aware the story generated a lot of com-



Kathy Latour, left, is grateful to have a new spot to park her bus close to home after a neighbour’s complaint led to her being forced to stop parking it in her driveway. FILE PHOTO/RICHARD HARLEY

munity interest, he said the company really is not looking for any publicity.

“We saw someone that we thought we might be able to help out, and it looks like we can, so that’s good. So hopefully things die down on that side,” Jackson said.

“We obviously look at The Lake Report and you

get those interesting kind of neighbourhood stories. We’re a neighbour, too. I know we’re a business but we all share the same space, so we’re glad to help.”

Latour said she’s grateful to Jackson for the offer, which makes things a little easier for her. It’s “a wonderful neighbourly solution.”

She said she’ll still need to drive to the parking lot near the Pillar and Post.

“I still have to get in my car to go down there every day because I have really bad knees and I can’t walk that far.”

She said Jackson told her she can park her vehicle on the property in between shifts, too.

She said she met Jackson to thank him and found out they have some geographic history in common.

“I went down and introduced myself to Bob and turns out we’re both from Sault Ste. Marie. He was born there and I lived there for 36 years. So, yeah, it was kind of neat. The northern experience.”

She said she still needs to get the OK from her employer DanNel Coach Lines. “But not until school goes back,” she said.

She anticipates there won’t be an issue. “It’s a commercial parking area, so there cannot be any problem.”

“It’s not locked up in the company’s yard every night. So, it will present its own set of problems but hopefully, nobody will bother it.”

Jackson said he told her to get in touch whenever she’s ready and school starts again.

Latour said she’s been encouraged by the public support she received.

“I think that’s pretty marvellous that the community is standing together,” she said.

“I really appreciate that the article brought so many people together, even just with their comments.”

In the meantime, she said she’s received offers from neighbours to build her a school bus ornament for the yard.

“Two people have offered to build me one,” she said. “You know, life goes on.”



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Melina Morsch, owner of Fox Den Yoga, with one of her friendly yoga goats. SUPPLIED

## LIFE IN THE PANDEMIC

# Frustration – but also resilience and hope

Jill Troyer  
The Lake Report

Stopping, starting and stopping again.

That's been especially frustrating for Melina Morsch, owner of Fox Den Goat Yoga, which runs a thriving business in NOTL, mixing goats with yoga, to the delight of her smiling clients.

Her business was growing so successfully that Morsch had ambitious expansion plans in play last March. Then boom, "everything came to a full stop" with the COVID-19 restrictions.

"I was investing in my business, building a new barn, buying more animals and a trailer," she said,

adding "the expenses and overhead don't change. The goats still need food, board, equipment and veterinarian care."

Morsch weathered the first lockdown and when she was able to start her sessions again in June, it kicked off "a fantastic half-season," she said.

But when October rolled around, Morsch shut down voluntarily.

"I realized participants were coming from all over the GTA, which was in red zone restrictions at that time, and in good conscience, I didn't want to attract them here."

Fox Den would normally operate all winter and, in the past, winter weekends

have consistently sold out.

As an entrepreneur, "there's an adrenalin rush when your business is doing well" and Morsch misses that, along with the energy and interaction with her clients.

During the latest lockdown, she's using the time to "sit down and strategize and do some analysis," she said. "Until now I've been chasing the business as it grew, so in some ways it's good to be able to rest and draw back from the cycle."

It also gives her more time with her sons, Jacob, 12, and Colin, 11, who are doing school online. The hardest thing for them, she said, has been losing their sports.

"My boys were very ac-

tive in sports, hockey and volleyball. They were hanging on to that like a lifeline, but it's cancelled now."

So, like many, Morsch is looking ahead, hoping for a return to sports and school for her boys, and a restart of her business.

"I'm already getting inquiries for spring and summer. There's lots of interest."

Like many NOTL businesses, "We're all poised for the next season to do some catch up. We will get through the tunnel, we just need to support each other," she added.

"I am 100 per cent confident NOTL will bounce back good and strong."

# Town to allow patios to remain until 2022

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

The Town of NOTL is allowing temporary patios to remain in place until 2022.

The patios were permitted last summer to help businesses that had reduced seating indoors due to the global pandemic.

Town chief administrator Marnie Cluckie put forward the recommendation to allow the patios for another year Monday night, on the condition that each owner continued to provide third-party liability insurance that names the town as an



Customers dine on the temporary patio at Firehall Flame restaurant. FILE PHOTO/RICHARD HARLEY

additional insured party and that owners waive any responsibility should the patios become damaged by snow removal equipment.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita

said she thinks staff made the right call in allowing patios to stay.

"This will certainly make a number of patio owners very happy and I think this is a really good

decision for our community and for our business community."

One patio, however, was deemed by town staff to be a problem for snow removal and has been removed. It was outside of Stage Coach Family Restaurant at the corner of Regent and Queen streets.

"Staff are now less concerned with the remaining two patios and the ability to remove snow on Queen Street," Cluckie said.

She said staff looked again at the other patios and determined there is no hazard to pedestrians, but there is potential to damage the patios.

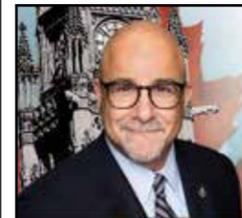
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## Who are your Pandemic Heroes?

Help honour them by letting us know your NOTL Heroes and how they've made a positive impact during COVID-19. Send submissions to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)



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Keeping it  
**Green** 

# A new administration of **climate hope?**



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

Kyra Simone  
Special to The Lake Report

The United States ushered in a new era of environmental protection with the inauguration of President Joe Biden. As the U.S. aims to reduce emissions, the rest of the world also looks ahead to tackling climate change.

During the pandemic, there has been less media and policy focus on other global issues while protection against COVID-19

is our priority. This has unfortunately been true for the climate crisis.

Carbon emissions were slightly lower in 2020 due to reduced air travel and vehicle use. However, quarantine measures only decreased global emissions by about seven per cent compared to 2019.

In his first days in office, Biden took several concrete steps toward reduced emissions and green energy solutions. Along with revoking the Keystone XL pipeline permit and temporarily halting oil and gas leases in the Arctic, Biden ensured that the U.S. will rejoin the Paris Agreement.

**WE ALL AGREE:**  
The Paris Agreement is an international treaty with 190 participating countries. These nations account for more than 95 per cent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

So, nearly all nations worldwide are committed to reducing their emissions and regularly reporting on progress. Through the agreement, nations also work together



Marching for climate action in 2019. KYRA SIMONE

to prepare for adverse climate change impacts, especially with regards to food production.

At its foundation, the Paris Agreement aims to prevent warming of Earth's atmosphere beyond +2°C to reduce the severity of future climate impacts. This threshold is in reference to pre-indus-

trial temperatures.

**GETTING WARMER:**  
Earth's livable temperature is a result of the greenhouse effect. When energy from the sun reaches us, greenhouse gases like water vapour and CO2 trap heat in our atmosphere.

Human activities, especially burning fos-

sil fuels, release carbon dioxide (CO2). Before the industrial revolution in the mid-1700s, worldwide emissions were between 3 million and 7 million tonnes of CO2 per year.

Today, we emit more than 8 billion tonnes of CO2 each year: a thousand times more than pre-industrial emissions!

There is a solid consensus among scientists: 97 per cent agree that human emissions drive climate warming. The level of agreement is even higher among researchers with relevant expertise in climate science.

**CLOSE TO HOME:**  
Although we are not as hard-hit by extreme weather and rising sea levels as coastal and island nations, we already experience the day-to-day effects of climate change.

Including Niagara-on-the-Lake, more than 400 Canadian municipalities have declared climate emergencies. In light of this declaration, the town also appointed an environmental advisory committee to advocate

for sustainable shifts and tackle this global issue on a local level.

Myself and other members of the committee will certainly keep the climate crisis in mind as we advise town council on ways to reduce emissions and encourage sustainable energy solutions.

Under the Paris Agreement, Canada is also committed to reducing emissions. However, the actions taken and policies planned so far may not be sufficient to meet these targets.

To help Canada achieve these goals, citizens can sign petitions and email their representatives. We can pay attention to the agenda for local government meetings, or follow related initiatives through organizations like the David Suzuki Foundation, 350.org, or Change.org.

As concerned citizens, we must urge our MPs and councillors to take concrete action to reduce emissions and elect representatives that reflect these values.

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Eduardo Lafforgue sorts through the fire damage after a blaze tore through his home Jan 8. RICHARD HARLEY/FILE

## Chamber president praises NOTL firefighters for quick action during blaze

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Eduardo Lafforgue, president of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Niagara, thanked the town's volunteer firefighters on Monday during a meeting of council.

Lafforgue's house on

Anne Street was badly damaged by a fire Jan. 8, after a truck caught fire in his neighbour's driveway and the flames spread to both homes.

He said the house will need to be torn down.

"I would just like to do a public recognition for our firefighters," he said. "It was very, very, very scary

and very, very difficult, but I was impressed and amazed by the professionalism of our firefighters."

Lafforgue personally thanked chief Nick Ruller and deputy chief Jay Plato.

"Thank you so much for your professionalism, for your kindness. You kept me updated all the time of what was happening, of

what was going on. And just seeing you working up there in the roof was amazing."

It took only five minutes from the time he called 911 "and they were already on the roof."

He said he will be putting their names forward as local heroes for the town's heroes project.

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## Gaios give NOTLers something to cheer for while stuck at home

Continued from Front Page

supportive community."

"It was just so cool that so many people were watching that don't even know us," the mother of three said.

Katherine said she even stayed up until 1 a.m. that first night, answering messages and liking comments from friends, family and others in the community they had never met.

"They were just saying the kindest, nicest things," she said.

In an interview with The Lake Report Tuesday, Katherine said her husband, who operates a tender fruit farm on Concession 1, was even recognized for his game show debut by a cashier at Valu-mart.

People watching along at home were paying attention to every answer and even commented about specific answers on some Facebook posts.



The Gaios at CBC during filming. SUPPLIED

"Walter's now Mr. Saturday Night," she said.

In the final or "Fast Money" round of Monday's episode, the Gaios had the chance to win \$10,000.

Walter and Danielle competed in the last round where teams have two chances to compile a total of 200 points.

One family member goes back backstage while the

other has 20 seconds to answer five survey questions. The score for each answer is based on how many people gave the same response for that survey question.

The second family member then comes out and has 25 seconds to answer the same five questions, but with different survey answers. Scores are tallied

at the end of each player's turn.

Danielle finished the first round with 107 points and then it was Walter's turn. He only needed 93 points to take home the win.

"It all happens so fast, you blurt out anything," he said. "If you've ever watched past episodes, some of the answers come out of people's mouths and you're like, what!?"

When Dee asked him, "What night of the week do you never make plans," Walter had "Hockey Night in Canada" on the brain when he answered, "Saturday."

"At least I was in the ballpark, I named a night of the week," he said.

That answer ended up being the two points that made the difference.

"Thank goodness there were two people, if we didn't get those two people, we wouldn't have got the

200 right on the nose," Katherine said.

"Just the way it all happened with the sudden death, Katherine came through and saved our tail. She got us to that point and ending up with 200 right on," said Walter. "It's very unlikely that happens."

He said it was nice to think that people probably never laughed as much as they did Monday night in a long time or at least were able to forget about a bit of what's going on in the world and enjoy the episode.

Remembering those moments during the recording and watching the finished episodes were funny to relive, said Katherine.

"I'm glad they kept in moments like Walter's Saturday night answer," she said.

"It was really funny at the time and, I mean, part of us were kind of cringing inside

because we were like, 'Oh my gosh Walter, why would you say Saturday night?'"

"But then Gerry just made fun with it and then it was just like, what are you gonna do? Let's just have fun with this."

When the episode was filmed back in October, after winning on their first appearance on the show the five contestants grabbed a bottle of champagne and ordered pizza to their hotel room.

Katherine said they spent the night regrouping and talking about the surreal experience.

"It was a really amazing moment to just soak it all in and just be like, what the heck just happened? That really happened?" she said.

The Gaios plan to use their winnings for a family trip to visit Hailey in England (once travel is allowed) and plan to give some to charity.

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# The race is on, humans vs. COVID-19

*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 race is on and it's by no means certain who is going to win. At this point, the virus seems to be pulling ahead for two main reasons.

First, the pandemic is now raging out of control in many countries, including Canada, the U.S., U.K. and Brazil, among others. Last year's late surge was signposted in the new year by record daily death tolls and huge numbers of moderate to severe symptomatic affected patients that threatened to overwhelm health care systems from California to Ontario.

It was the perfect storm: a product in North America

over 30 other countries, including the U.S. and Canada. It also may have played a role in the burgeoning number of cases in Ontario and forced a lockdown. Had the lockdown been imposed even a week earlier, it might have saved many lives – a brutal lesson hopefully learned.

Which reinforces the second point: the virus has not been idle. All viruses mutate and this one has had plenty of time and huge numbers, to do so, what with a worldwide playing field, millions and millions of vulnerable humans, and no effective way to keep potentially dangerous variants, such as the U.K. and South African mutants, from crossing borders.

Mutations are common in nature, the inevitable result of copying errors when in this case, COVID-19's

changes in the genome made the virus roughly 50 per cent more transmissible in a virus that was already easily transmitted, possibly made worse by recent hints that this mutant may be as much as 30 per cent more deadly.

And a mutant strain in South Africa ((501Y.V2) turns out to be even more transmissible compared to the U.K.'s – and like the UK mutant, it also may be more virulent. Yet another mutant recently recognized in Brazil was suspected when some who had had an earlier proven COVID-19 infection, proved susceptible to a second infection, the virus driving the latter apparently having acquired the capability of getting around the antibodies produced in response to the first in-

And that's the great concern isn't it – that this virus might escape one or more of the vaccines in our current crop and that patients who were infected at one time – symptomatic or not – might face a new, novel variant.

If that happened, some vaccines might have to be changed, literally on the run as Moderna a few days ago suggested, to keep up with the mutations by incorporating the mutated version of the RNA in their vaccine.

The same is probably possible for the other vaccines from Pfizer and AstraZeneca and others in the works. So far, fortunately, early evidence suggests those vaccines would be effective against the U.K. variant. But

horror movie or novel.

To avoid the looming nightmare there are several steps that need to be taken now.

1. We need to immunize as many as possible as soon as possible, not only to protect those at risk but to shrink the global playing field for the virus.

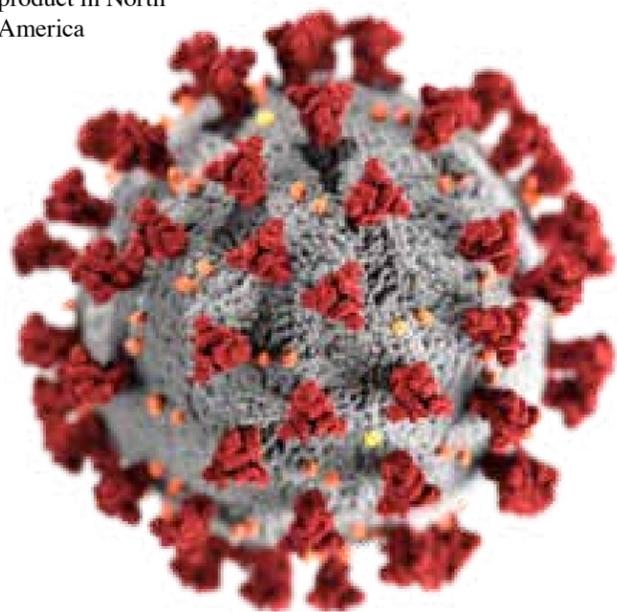
2. Think globally, after all this is a global problem and won't be solved within national boundaries any more than climate change will be.

3. The public must understand the nature and magnitude of the challenge – yet many for political, cultural or religious reasons (or in some cases wilful ignorance), treat standard health care measures such as

cal companies, health care planners and governments are flying blind in managing the pandemic and keeping vaccines up to date.

We must have real-time intelligence on potentially worrying changes in this virus's genome from around the world and freely share what's learned with others. Remember, this virus knows no borders.

5. Governments at all levels need to be far more forthcoming with their goals and strategies. They must respect and treat the public as essential allies, as indeed they are. Information shared with the public should be as clear as possible without in any way dumbing down the message. That's always been a real



of Thanksgiving celebrations, widespread refusals by many to socially distance, wear masks and avoid social gatherings outside of established social bubbles throughout the U.S. election, Christmas holiday celebrations – and something we didn't count on.

In the U.K. a highly transmissible variant (B.1.1.7) emerged that within weeks threatened to become the dominant strain in that country and forced PM Boris Johnson to enforce an earlier-than-planned national lockdown.

Within a few more weeks this variant had spread to

genome is copied trillions and trillions ... and trillions of times.

With so many copies, sooner or later slip-ups occur – perhaps a substitution, deletion or addition of one or more bases or the transposition of chunks of the virus's genome to other locations in a genome almost 30,000 bases long. Most copying errors are neutral, that is they have no effect on the behavior of the virus's genes and hence proteins and behavior. But some confer an advantage on the virus.

That's what happened with the U.K. mutant. The

fection. That's an example of what's been called "immune escape."

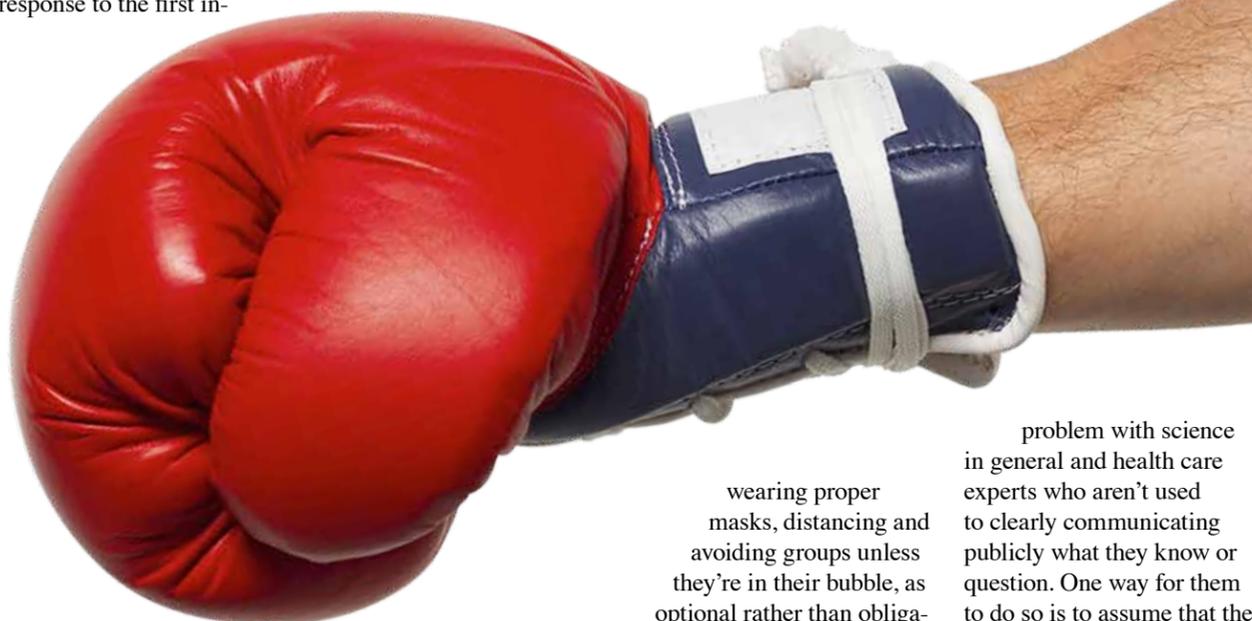
The latter phenomena is a great concern because it suggests the molecular targets on the virus, which created the initial immune response, might have changed – perhaps a change in the shape or electrical charge of one or more of the spike proteins – which somehow might conceal the target from the body's immune system.

That could be a real problem for the RNA and DNA vaccines, which were designed to target very specific proteins in the spikes of the coronavirus. If those targets were somehow cloaked by the mutant versions of those spike proteins, some or all of those vaccines might not work or work as well as now.

at this time, the jury is out about whether they protect against the South African variant. The companies say yes, but some independent scientists aren't so sure.

That would be a nightmare – a continuing arms race between emerging viral mutants and virologists to keep vaccines up-to-date – to say nothing about the nightmare of getting the updated vaccines manufactured in high enough volumes and the logistics of getting the vaccines into arms.

And what about clinical trials? They would need to be nimbler than even the stripped-down phase 2 and 3 trials needed to get some of the initial vaccines approved. It all reads like the perfect script for a seasonal



wearing proper masks, distancing and avoiding groups unless they're in their bubble, as optional rather than obligations to the community. Far from optional, those simple measures work and must continue by all – vaccinated and unvaccinated. That obligation to protect others will continue probably well beyond vaccinating 70 to 80 per cent of the population because until the virus is effectively corralled worldwide, mutants may arise, spread and cause renewed surges, possibly necessitating updated vaccines.

4. Do what the British have done from the outset and continue to do so well: sequence the virus's genome in roughly 10 per cent of all positive cases compared to less than one per cent in the U.S. and fewer still in Canada. Without regular sequencing of the genome of the virus, virologists, pharmaceuti-

problem with science in general and health care experts who aren't used to clearly communicating publicly what they know or question. One way for them to do so is to assume that the public is as intelligent as the messengers, even if not so familiar with the language of the experts. Drafting opaque government standard-issue documents is not helpful.

The next few months will test whether we, our health care system and federal, provincial and local leaders, are up to the interdependent challenges of vaccinating everyone, caring for those who are ill (whether from COVID-19 or other health problems) and helping those who face social and economic challenges.

This must happen while doing our level best to keep up with a changing virus and acting accordingly. In past times, other generations faced equally daunting challenges and proved they were up to the job. Will we?

## Who are your Pandemic Heroes?

Help honour them by letting us know your NOTL Heroes and how they've made a positive impact during COVID-19. Send submissions to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)



Firefighters



Teachers



Essential workers



Front-line workers



## Part of Mississauga Street **closed** for culvert replacement

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake through its contractor CRL Campbell Construction Ltd. is working on the removal and replacement of a road crossing culvert on Mississauga Street between Johnson and Gage streets. The work is scheduled to be completed by April 30. RICHARD HARLEY

## Niagara College **partners** with Radiant Care

Supplied  
Niagara College

When Marie Vincent Enclonar starts her clinical placement at Radiant Care Tabor Manor this month, she'll be familiar with the long-term care home.

That's because Vincent Enclonar, who is enrolled in Niagara College's one-year personal support worker (PSW) program, has already spent part of her studies at the St. Catharines long-term care home thanks to a partnership between the college and Radiant Care.

The St. Catharines campus of care for seniors donated space specifically for college students, including Vincent Enclonar, to complete their lab work in their first term of studies and get acquainted with Tabor Manor staff before completing the practical, hands-on component of the PSW program with residents in Term 2.

"It's nice we're in that setting. I'm familiar with Tabor Manor so doing the clinical placement, it will be easier," Vincent Enclonar said.

The partnership between Niagara College and Radiant Care was forged in 2019 after Tabor Manor opened new, state-of-the-art long-term care rooms that saw an older part of the facility mothballed.

Tim Siemens, Radiant



Niagara College students with Radiant Care CEO Tim Siemens at Tabor Manor. SUPPLIED

Care's CEO, approached the college about converting the excess space into a rent-free living classroom where students could train for work in a fast-growing profession.

Three former resident rooms were renovated and set up like current lodgings. Students use mannequins in this living classroom to practise critical skills, including how to safely lift and transfer residents to do bed changes before working directly with residents.

In addition, they learn the soft skills of establishing dynamic relationships with residents, and providing care in a loving and compassionate way, Siemens explained.

"The best lab is one set up in a real environment. A graduating PSW must have long-term care placement and must have community placement and Tabor Manor is positioned really well that they could do both on site," Siemens said.

"Campuses of care in Ontario are set up very well to engage in these partnerships with academic partners."

The partnership, he noted, isn't just a boon for students. Such initiatives provide a pipeline of future employees to Radiant Care, which will see its staffing requirements grow in the years ahead.

Last fall, the province approved 38 new spaces, in addition to 81 previously allocated new beds and 41 upgraded spaces, to create a 160-bed home at Radiant Care's Pleasant Manor site in Virgil. Radiant Care will need to hire about 100 additional PSWs over the next few years to meet the demands of the larger campus of care, Siemens said.

Niagara is home to 31 long-term care homes that will also require a stable and reliable pool of PSW candidates from which to hire, he noted.

In addition, Radiant Care will hire more registered

nurses, registered practical nurses and dietary aides.

"What are we doing locally to increase the supply and what are we, Radiant Care, doing in concert with academic partnerships to affect the supply side?" Siemens said.

"The partnership with Niagara College and the living classroom is exclusive to the PSW program, but our relationship extends beyond the classroom to those other job categories."

Such partnerships are becoming more common, and increasingly important, noted Carolyn Triemstra, the college's dean of community and health studies.

"We really want to get students out there and supporting the community, and to help with the health care crisis and health care needs," Triemstra said.

"It's quite an amazing story because certainly there are other colleges that have relationships with living classrooms. The synergies between Radiant Care and Niagara College are really in line. They're local and have the capacity to support students."

And they get students excited about their future careers.

"It makes me feel more encouraged to do well in my studies," Vincent Enclonar said. "I'm looking forward to working as a PSW."

## Obituary

### Donna Lee Ure



Donna Lee Ure passed in peace on Jan. 11, 2021 at Upper Canada Lodge.

She is survived by two adoring children, Ian and Lindsay, their spouses and her grandson Halo.

Donna was born in Stettler, AB on June 5, 1944, the second youngest of four children. From a young age it was obvious that she was as clever as she was compassionate and charmed

most with her spunky smile. After graduating high school, Donna attended Nursing school at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, where she met her lifelong friends while living with seven of them in a house. We still refer to them as 'the nurses.' Making lifelong friends was just one of her many talents. Following graduation she and the love of her life bought their dream home on the Shores of Sylvan lake Alberta. Donna and her husband Doug were teaching at Red Deer College before both travelled to San Francisco to continue their education. This pattern of working followed her into her professional life. Donna was a hard-working pragmatist who believed there is nothing more practical than a good theory. Her commitment to theory and practice influenced everyone and everything she did. Soon the desire to see the world took over and they left Alberta, and began their lifelong journey together to work, to travel, and to educate. In the summer of 1986, Doug and Donna travelled with her two young children to Niagara-on-the-Lake, where they have lived ever since.

Both worked at The Niagara Institute where they developed an international reputation in the field of leadership development. There, Donna rose to the position of Director of Programs before leaving to work as a consultant full time alongside her husband, and building Ure & Associates together. Doug and Donna celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 2019, having married on a sunny day during the summer of love in 69. She is survived by Douglas, and her two adoring children, Ian and Lindsay.

We have lost a wife, a mother, a best friend, a sister. A foxhole buddy. We feel immense gratitude for every day we got to spend with her, every lesson, every smile, every shot in the arm. Every hug. Every conversation. We loved her and we will cherish our memories of her above all else. We have received an outpouring of condolences; one that the young spunky girl from Alberta would be proud of.

She would have shown us the smile and nodded her agreement that it has been a life worth living most definitely. Thank you to everyone who will continue to remember the woman she was!

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## Richard Livingstone

Richard Livingstone ploughs with horses in Homer, 1912-1920. Homer was first settled in 1795 by Loyalist William Read, who established a church there. Originally known as Upper Ten Mile, it was given the name Homer by the post office in 1859. An important stagecoach stop in the 1800s, over the years Homer has had one store, a school, several hotels, restaurants and a racetrack. The third Welland Canal in 1931 tore the village in half. The 1939 construction of the QEW saw business pick up, only to virtually disappear in 1963 when the Garden City Skyway was completed. Today, among the few remnants of the village are St. George's Anglican Church, now in its fourth location, the original cemetery and the Homer Bridge (Queenston Street) over the canal.

**ARCHITEXT**

## Not so long ago

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

Sometimes I think it's easy for us to forget that, not so long ago, Niagara-on-the-Lake was a quiet little town surrounded by farms and orchards. Vineyards were a rarity and grapes were associated with jam, not wine.

I was reminded of this fact recently when a life-long resident of the town stopped by our Centre Street project to have a chat and check on our progress. He had been a childhood acquaintance of Trudy Roberts, whose parents owned the house in the 1950s, and he recalled those days fondly. During our conversation, he mentioned Centre Street was then still a gravel road and, just across



1956 Centre Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake.  
ST. CATHARINES MUSEUM ARCHIVES

Mississagua Street, he remembered an old barn that had survived until well into the 1960s.

"The town was a pretty sleepy place," he said. "Before the Shaw and the wineries, we were just a bit of a backwater. Oh, we had some Yankees that would come up during the summer, but most of the time you'd only see faces that you knew. It was a good place to grow up in."

His comments turned my mind back to my first visit to Niagara-on-the-Lake in the early 1970s.

After retirement, my aunt and uncle had purchased an American Foursquare on

Mary Street as their "forever" home and proceeded to restore and renovate it in a fashion that would encompass my aunt's diminishing eyesight. While my uncle made significant contributions to both the Friends of Fort George and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, my aunt (a gourmet chef) devoted her time supporting St. Mark's Church and creating gastronomic experiences twinned to the early Niagara wines.

I so clearly recall that first visit to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

It was like visiting a microcosm caught in time. All that Ontario had lost,

in the drive to modernize the urban landscapes, had survived in this town. While there were a couple of small gaps from an architectural style perspective (Richardson Romanesque and Italianate), among Old Town, St. Davids, Queenston, Virgil and the lands between, Niagara-on-the-Lake represented a virtual treasure-trove of Canadian architectural history.

Fifty years later, we live in a threatened heritage landscape. Developers populate the town with bland, non-descript homes, significant architectural statements are compromised by questionable additions, Smart Centre-inspired commercial builds are popping up along Niagara Stone Road and historic farmhouses (and barns) are abandoned to lapse into disrepair.

I say again, it is passed time for clear, unequivocal architectural and heritage guidelines for the entire Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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