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Farmers ready to isolate seasonal workers

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The federal government's decision to exempt seasonal farmworkers with valid visas from COVID-19 travel restrictions has been greeted with huge relief by Niagara's agricultural industry.

The region's farms rely on thousands of seasonal workers, who will have to adhere to strict self-isolation procedures for 14 days after their arrival, the government said.

It's not known yet exactly how farmers will ensure their workers are safely isolated. On many farms the workers share close quarters, which presents a serious risk of spreading disease.

NOTL Coun. Erwin Wiens, who is also a grape farmer, said there have been

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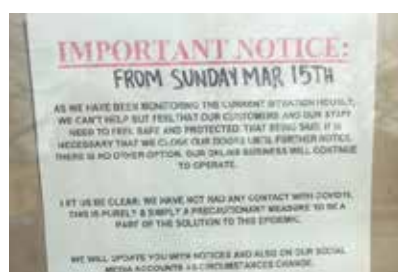
OPINION: Snowbirds, 'get out of the store now'

Syme Jago
Special to The Lake Report

Twice in the past week, I interacted, in a manner, with people who had just returned from stays in Florida and aren't isolating themselves because they "feel fine."

The first case was Thursday at Shoppers Drug Mart

Continued on Page 9



CLOSED for COVID-19



Casualties of COVID-19, Queen Street businesses posted signs on their windows, including a "heartfelt" notice at the Sunset Grill, top. KEVIN MACLEAN

NOTL makes plans for dealing with pandemic

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

In the midst of a state of emergency, NOTL's fire and emergency services

department is working hard to make sure the town is ready for whatever problems the COVID-19 pandemic causes, chief Nick Ruller says.

Ruller, who like many people is at home in self-isolation after returning from a family vacation in the United States, is leading the department from home,

focused on keeping all the usual fire services available while also ensuring the town is ready to respond to

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Fire chief Nick Ruller.



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NOTLers stuck in Peru, hoping for flight home

Being stranded 25 hours from Lima means pair will not be among first to be evacuated by federal government

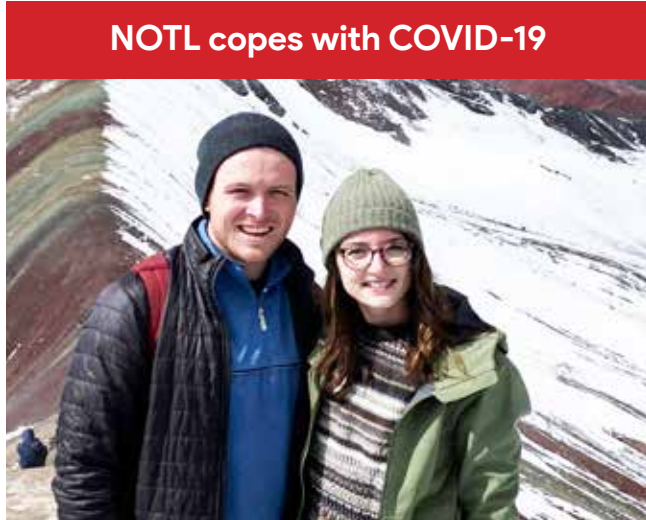
Richard Harley
Editor

Two young natives of Niagara-on-the-Lake stuck in quarantine in Cusco, Peru, don't expect to be on any of the rescue flights Canada is sending to the South American country. At least not yet.

Air Canada is sending three planes to Lima, Peru, but Scott Robinson and Chelsea Widdicombe say they are an eight-hour (or longer) bus ride away in Cusco and don't anticipate being able to get to Lima in time to meet any of the flights.

They must stay quarantined until at least April 1 under orders from the Peruvian government and have been doing everything they can from isolation to advocate for the Canadian government to help get them home.

"Our data shows that there are more than 2,200 Canadians who have requested to



NOTL copes with COVID-19

Scott Robinson and Chelsea Widdicombe are likely stuck in Peru until at least April 1. SUPPLIED

come home, so we hope that there are more plans in the works," said Robinson.

"Chelsea and I are both in Cusco, a 25-hour bus trip away from Lima. All three flights are organized from Lima to Toronto. As of now, those flights are inaccessible to us, and we wouldn't be able to buy tickets."

In an email to The Lake

Report on Wednesday morning, Robinson said:

"The first Canadian repatriation flight left from Lima yesterday afternoon with 402 passengers. Two more flights of the same size are planned for Thursday and Friday. These flights are only for Canadian citizens in Lima, the capital city of Peru. Elderly people, unaccompanied minors

and those with medical needs are being prioritized. A ticket on these flights costs \$1,400."

"This is great news for the 1,200 Canadians who will get to go home this week. Our data shows that there are about 2,600 Canadians in Peru who have requested to come home. The data also shows that about 40 per cent of Canadians are in the city of Cusco (where we are). That would be between 800 and 1,100 Canadians in Cusco (which is a 25-hour bus ride from Lima, and no one can travel that route without government authorization."

"We are waiting to see if the government will announce flights from Cusco. It is looking increasingly likely, as communication from the embassy and the minister of foreign affairs have both concretely confirmed that they are working on arranging travel for citizens in Cusco. The timeline

for that is unknown."

"We grow increasingly concerned that as time passes, the Canadians abroad will become less of a priority. As the situation develops domestically, the focus will shift to the health care system and help for local economies. We hope that Global Affairs can continue to prioritize the repatriation of citizens abroad during this unprecedented time."

The two longtime friends, both 23, met up in Peru on March 12, they told The Lake Report in a phone interview. At first things were normal and they were busy seeing the sights, but everything changed quickly. "March 16 is when everything really shifted for us," Robinson said.

"We were in a town called Aguas Calientes, which is the travellers' town at the base of Machu Picchu, and we had tickets to go see Machu Picchu at about 5:30 in the morning. And at 5:30

in the morning when we were there an official from the ministry of culture came out and said, 'Machu Picchu closed, town closed,' and everything sort of spiralled from there."

Robinson said the president of Peru announced that at midnight the same night the borders would close, all flights would be cancelled and there would be an enforced quarantine.

"As the situation became increasingly more severe, more worrying, we made travel arrangements to try and get home earlier," he said.

Those arrangements didn't work out.

Robinson said they're now staying in an Airbnb complex in Cusco with about 10 or 12 other travellers.

"Everyone in the complex is in the same scenario as us. There's travellers from Canada, Germany, the USA, that all basically have the same story as us."

Farmers not sure how quarantine will work

Continued from Front Page

ideas floating around about how to mitigate the risk, including renting trailers or using hotels that now are closed to the public, but the answer remains uncertain.

"There will be a protocol of isolation," Wiens said. "The federal government is going to give us guidance in regards to that, but we'll follow any protocols that need to be done because the safety of everybody in Niagara-on-the-Lake is important, too."

"I'm not trying to be evasive," he said Tuesday. "We're trying to work out those logistics now."

Right now farmers are just waiting for permission for flights to begin, and though Wiens is feeling relieved, the real relief will be when the workers arrive.

He said he's thankful the government's decision happened early and that there was no resistance along the way.



Town Coun. Erwin Wiens. SUPPLIED

"Everybody knew it was something that needed to happen and so everybody worked hard to make it happen, and that's huge," he said.

Nelson Thwaites, of Thwaites Farms, said his farm is working to train three Canadian teams of about eight people each. The teams are made up of mainly Vietnamese-Canadians, he said, and the farm will also bring in workers from Jamaica.

"At peak season, we will have 120 people," Thwaites said. About 40 to 65 of those are Jamaican and the rest are

local, some having worked for the farm since the 1980s.

Thwaites also isn't sure what the self-isolation procedures will look like.

"Of course (this means) not going into town, to the bank, to the grocery store," he said.

The farm will be getting food delivered, though orders haven't been placed yet because it's not certain when the workers will arrive, he said.

Having workers isolated in houses doesn't make much sense to him, as they'll be sitting around for two weeks and not working.

"I think that it would be perfectly safe for them to quarantine out on the farm. They are away from everyone, they're just by themselves out there. So I'm hoping that will be allowed, and then as far as them going into town, the guys take things like this pretty seriously I think. I think they'll listen to the quarantine rules ... we'll have to lay down the law for them, too."

Anyone who breaks quarantine likely would be sent home and kicked off the seasonal work program, which is a big incentive for workers to take the rules seriously, he said.

He thinks if workers are out on the farm they'll be segregated better.

"Instead of two guys working on a row, it's one guy ... and then everyone's 18 feet away from each other."

Thwaites said if there is sufficient manpower, he still hopes to have asparagus available at a stand, as the farm has done in past years.

B&Bs face flurry of cancellations

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

Most B&B bookings in Niagara-on-the-Lake have already been cancelled for the next two months, as the impact of COVID 19 spreads through the local economy.

NOTL B&B's are "losing an extreme amount of income, in the thousands of dollars for each place," according to David Levesque, the president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Bed & Breakfast Association.

"It's pretty scary, especially for people with big mortgages," he added. If banks approve mortgage deferrals, that is one good tool, he said. People have to apply and wait several days to hear from their bank.

"I'm waiting to see what the federal government will come up with for solutions. So far nothing they've announced would fit our situation."

In NOTL, Levesque said "there is good, open communication right now, between the BBA, Chamber of Commerce, and the town. We are working together and we all have the business owners best interests in mind."

There are active discussions about "how to make our lives easier, take some of the pressure off, and put tourism first," he said, though he doesn't expect any decisions or announcements before the beginning of April.

Inevitably, this year will be much slower than usual and it's impossible to predict when tourism will return to NOTL, he said. But, "even if we get half of the usual number of tourists over the year, that's still a big loss."

Still, Levesque is encouraging people to make the right decisions for health first and foremost.



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Parking fees, tax penalties **waived** by town

Richard Harley
Editor

NOTL copes with COVID-19

A number of penalties and fees will be waived until June 30, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake announced Tuesday evening.

The decision comes one day after Lord Mayor Betty Disero declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of Tuesday, the town will waive penalty or interest charges related to 2020 property taxes, water charges and accounts receivable; the insufficient funds fee

charged by the town for any returned items; penalty or interest charges on parking tickets from March 15 to June 30; and expired permit parking passes.

The town has also suspended fees for the use of metered parking spaces and penalties for opting out or taking a pause from the town's pre-authorized payment program.

Disero said the town's emergency declaration gives the town the ability to act

more quickly if it has to make decisions, as well as reminding residents how "significant the impact could be on the community" if people don't follow provincial and federal requirements to isolate.

"Because we have so many people returning or coming in to Niagara-on-the-Lake over the next very short period of time, and we needed to get ourselves organized," Disero said.

She said right now the

town is focused on keeping a strong line of communication open with the public, getting ahead of preventive measures and explaining the "significance of what's going on."

Other major issues are how to deal with people who go to essential stores when they should be isolating and how to help ensure farmers are being contacted regarding having a system in place for arriving seasonal workers, on top of getting news systems in place for town staff to handle the constantly changing situation.

NOTL greenhouses **devastated** by mass Easter flower cancellations

Richard Harley
Editor

After mass cancellations for Easter flowers, two Niagara-on-the-Lake greenhouses were busy this weekend doing their best to offset their losses.

Jennifer Thwaites of Thwaites Farms was outside the arena in Virgil selling hydrangeas for European Planters.

She said there was a good number of people out buying flowers.

"It's been good, considering the circumstances. (We're) definitely getting some decent waves of people in," Thwaites said.

"I'm set up here with Dodd's Greenhouses as well. (There's been) lots of support from the community, which is so nice."

Maureen Dodd, of Dodd's Greenhouses, said there was quite a bit of traffic, given that there was little promotion about the sale.

The greenhouses grow flowers to typically start shipping in mid-March, leading up to Easter, she said.

"We're usually sold out by the second week of April, but this year that's not likely to happen," Dodd said.

There are about 20,000 pots of pansies and she expects only half will sell, if she's lucky.

The COVID-19 pandemic



Jennifer Thwaites sells hydrangeas to Tricia and Meladori Weaver on Saturday. RICHARD HARLEY

has taken a toll on farmers "all across the board," she said.

"For the whole industry, I mean many industries, but definitely the growing industry," she said.

Jim van der Zalm, of European Planters, called The Lake Report Friday to talk about the effect the pandemic is having on business.

"We're in the greenhouse industry and we're in an even worse predicament at the moment (than other farmers)," he said. "We have all our Easter flowers ready to be shipped, and they were all presold, and now they're all cancelled."

"It's not just myself, it's other greenhouse growers also, who do grow an Easter crop, and everybody is sitting at no orders anymore,

or pretty low, or we're being told like, 'Hold on, hold on. We don't know yet. We might need them next week.'"

He said the flowers are ready to be shipped, so Thwaites, who is his daughter, and her siblings have been doing their best to get them sold.

"But I mean, you got 15-something thousand pots there. The local people will not be able to consume (that amount). And this is just our business," he said.

He said typically 75 per cent of their product goes in boxes to the United States and the other 25 per cent is sold through local wholesalers up to Toronto and London.

Van der Zalm said typically the greenhouses

are "dead against" selling locally and competing with local flower shops.

"I mean it hurts our local flower shops ... but now it's a situation where it's survival," he said.

Through the years he's only sold to local shops instead of big box stores, he said.

Dodd said it's nice to see the support from people in town.

"The local community support is amazing. We're all doing the best we can, but to help your local businesses is always important for the community, definitely."

She said people are stopping in to brighten up their day and support local growers.

Mother and daughter Tricia and Meladori Weaver said they stopped in after driving by and seeing the stands open.

"The flowers are making us smile with the sunshine, and getting through this tough time of isolation and the virus going around. We're brightening up the house," Tricia said.

"(We're out) just to support the local growers," added Meladori.

Anyone wishing to purchase flowers from European Planters can give Trevor van der Zalm a call at 289-687-0188. For Dodd's flowers, call 905-468-5200.

Town Update Regarding COVID-19

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, under the direction of Lord Mayor Disero and the Emergency Control Group, continues to respond in a well-informed and thought-out manner to address the rapidly changing COVID-19 situation.

The safety, health, and well-being of our residents, businesses, and staff remain our top priority. Please continue to comply with preventative measures, such as social distancing, as laid out by the Provincial Governments and Public Health officials.

Anyone returning to Canada from winter travel must self isolate for 14 days. Cooperation is imperative.

If you are showing symptoms of COVID-19, please do not overload hospitals and health facilities. Call the Novel Coronavirus Info-Line first at 1-888-505-6074. Nurses are available to take your call between 9:00 AM and 8:30 PM Monday to Friday and between 9:00 AM and 4:15 PM Saturday and Sunday and they will direct you appropriately.

Please go to www.notl.com/COVID-19 for regularly updated information and resources pertaining to COVID-19, including a comprehensive list of answers to frequently asked questions. Town staff will continue to assist and serve citizens online and over the phone at 905-468-3266. Phones are answered between the hours of 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM Monday to Friday, and online service requests remain available at www.notl.com.

Notices are also posted on the Town's post offices to accommodate those who don't operate online.

For updates and resources from the Federal Government, please visit www.canada.ca/coronavirus.



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Contributed by Patty Garriock

Success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go.
 – William Feather.



Contributed by Norm Arsenault:

If everyone in Canada reduce their weekly garbage by 1 lb per week, that is the equivalent of removing 18,000 tons of garbage from landfills! In Niagara-on-the-Lake that equates to 9 tons per week.

Editorials

Snowbirds: Stay in self-isolation!

Kevin MacLean
 Managing Editor

Life for all of us has been turned upside down in the past few weeks. And the way we go about our lives is going to continue to change for the foreseeable future. Maybe until June, or July, or ...

By the time you read this, life will have changed yet again and the government might even have ordered us all to stay indoors, no matter what.

Because the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, infections keep rising as more positive tests are announced daily and we all have to do our part – and more – to try to flatten the curve that now is headed steadily skyward.

Kudos to all those in NOTL who are dutifully abiding by the pleas for us to keep a social distance, to self-isolate and to avoid crowds. As we walked our dog along Queen Street

on Monday morning, the handful of pedestrians we encountered reflexively moved to the median or even onto the street in order to keep their distance. That's the right thing to do.

The vast majority of NOTLers are following the rules and to them, we say, "Thanks."

However, some are not. This is especially a problem among those who have just returned from outside the country. Reports of NOTL snowbirds being out and about have been documented on social media and in two concerned letters to the editor in this week's Lake Report.

Travellers who ignore the rules are a huge problem as community spread of COVID-19 continues and more cases come to light of returning travellers testing positive.

"I feel fine" or "I just need to pick up a few things" simply do not cut it, especially with online and delivery options available, and lots of neigh-

bourly neighbours willing to help out.

So, snowbirds and others who should be self-isolating, STOP going out and putting others at risk. It's selfish, foolhardy and short-sighted.

Get with the program and heed the message to snowbirds on the sign outside Penner's Home Hardware: "See you in 14 days."

And if anyone encounters these folks out and about, don't default to the typically passive Canadian approach. Instead, be inspired by the Shoppers Drug Mart employee about whom Syme Jago writes this week. That worker rightly kicked a just-returned snowbird out of the store because she was putting everyone at risk.

Let's use common sense, understanding and compassion, everyone. Most people are doing so. But let's call out the bad apples when we encounter them.

editor@niagaranow.com

Welcome, farm workers. And an opportunity for NOTL hotels

Kevin MacLean
 Managing Editor

After days of confusion and mixed messages, the federal government finally announced late last week that seasonal farm workers would be allowed in to Canada to help our farmers and help ensure the security of the country's food supply.

That is great news on many levels. However, those workers are re-

quired to self-isolate for 14 days and there are some deep concerns about how this will happen.

Normally, these hard-working men and women live in close quarters not far from the fields in which they work. Staying in such close proximity to one another should not be an option now and it is unclear at this writing exactly what the government and the farmers have in mind.

Here's a novel suggestion, courtesy

of NOTL resident Ruth Denyer: This is an opportunity for area hoteliers, who have hundreds of empty rooms, to step up and help the agricultural community. Seasonal workers could fill those rooms.

That doesn't solve the problem of getting the workers to and from the fields safely, but it would be an important step in the process.

What say NOTL's hotel operators?
editor@niagaranow.com

Best place for workers to isolate is on the farm

Dear editor:

I read with interest the very long March 20 article ("Border closure 'devastating' for Niagara farmers, Wiens says"), regarding the initial restrictions that would have kept offshore farm workers from entering Canada.

Thankfully the federal government has since announced the workers will be allowed in but didn't initially announce when the procedure would be finalized.

I would like to make the following points:

1. Regarding their 14-day isolation when they do arrive, there is no better place to isolate one's self than on the farm. Farmers can stand back 10 feet or more from their workers to let them know what their jobs will be. Then they can self-isolate as they work in the great outdoors. The farmer can arrange groceries for them. The sad part is that the workers cannot go visit with any workers already here and working. Nor can they, nor should they, interact with Jane Andres until this crisis is over or the workers have completed their 14-day self-isolation.

2. As for the toilet paper issue, it is stated right in our rules that the employer needs to supply the workers with toilet paper. It appears from this article that this is not hap-

pening. I am sure that most farmers have more than four rolls on hand or can now go and buy more at whatever price it is.

3. It is, however, very nerve-wracking to sit back and wait patiently as spring really is coming on more quickly this year than last.

Rather than using all our resources to lament the situation, farmers should be doing what we can through our local farm organizations and the federal government. We as farmers are not the only ones suffering and we should all be focusing on every business situation.

Thank goodness this is not an issue where the offshore farm employees are part of a union. Just think, if farms were unionized in future years, farmers might be looking at food production issues yearly as union leaders try to tell our workers when they can harvest our fruit, not when the season tells us what needs harvesting.

I trust and hope that all businesses and all employees are able to survive this and we can get back on our feet when all is back to "normal."

Susan Pohorly
 NOTL

Returning from vacation? Please stay home 14 days

Dear editor:

While out at a major Niagara-on-the-Lake retailer, I was dismayed and saddened to see a fellow NOTLer, deeply tanned, hug a woman and then hear him say he just got back from the United States.

I am not often speechless, as many people know, but that interaction totally dumbfounded me.

Those of us here in NOTL who have not travelled recently have been distancing ourselves, self-isolating and only shopping for what we need only for some time.

We have not seen our grandbabies for weeks now

and have just glimpsed our granddaughter from our car. No hugs for us. We miss them dearly and would like not to get sick so we can see them in the future.

Please, all of you folks just arriving from the United States, Mexico, Europe, Costa Rica and elsewhere please self-isolate for 14 days. Order your groceries online, ask the pharmacy to deliver your medications.

Or ask a neighbour or friend to shop for you! Please have a care for those who are most vulnerable here in NOTL.

Margot Richardson
 NOTL

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OPINION

Message to readers: Print future uncertain

We all know these are difficult times, for everyone. Staying safe and healthy are paramount.

Here at The Lake Report, our skeleton crew, supplemented by input from loyal readers and a small army of regular contributors, literally has been working day and night to bring you the most comprehensive and relevant news about how NOTL is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you to everyone who has helped out, offered news tips and is doing stellar work in the

community to look after your friends, neighbours – and strangers. We want to continue to tell our community's stories.

While The Lake Report prides itself on bringing you numerous stories every week that you simply won't find anywhere else – in print, on our website niagaranow.com and on social media – no one knows how long we will be able to continue printing the paper edition.

Advertising is the lifeblood of newspapers like ours and with so many

NOTL businesses closed, your paper is smaller.

If printing the paper becomes unaffordable, impossible logistically, or distribution is unsafe because of fears of community spread of COVID-19, we will move to an online and social media platform.

In the meantime, there are ways you can consider ensuring our small business remains strong and able to bring you the news: You could join the scores of NOTLers who have dug into their own pockets and made donations to our

cause. To them, we are eternally grateful.

You can sign up for our daily email newsletters at niagaranow.com and follow us on Facebook. That way you will not miss a thing.

If you operate a business that is still open in the community, let The Lake Report help you reach your audience. We have an engaged and loyal audience that wants to support your business.

But in the meantime, please stay safe, stay healthy and stay in touch.

editor@niagaranow.com

Dr. Brown: How the coronavirus attacks



Dr. William Brown
Special to The Lake Report

Unlike simple cells such as bacteria, viruses like the corona family of viruses, travel light: without help they can't make their own RNA, proteins or generate energy. That means they need a host, and in this pandemic, we're it.

They target the cells lining our respiratory tract from the nasopharynx (sneezing), to the trachea and bronchial tubes (coughing) and, especially, the far reaches of the respiratory system, the alveoli where gas exchange takes place (shortness of breath). Even simple breathing scatters clouds of tiny droplets that can hang in the air for hours.

But how does the virus get into our cells and make copies of itself before killing the host cell? This is important because this is where strategies begin for inhibiting or killing the virus before it gets into our cells. Let's start with normal cells before looking at how this virus highjacks them.

To make proteins, cells evolved a marvellous system. First, the information in the cell's nucleus, which specifies the number and

NOTL copes with COVID-19

sequence for the amino-acid building blocks for a given protein, is copied from the related gene in the DNA to a single-stranded molecule called messenger RNA (mRNA).

The latter then moves to the cytoplasm of the cell where the mRNA's code is read by structures called ribosomes to create a gene-specific protein whose function critically depends on the amino acid sequence and the 3-D shape of the protein. It's a neat system, whose molecular biology was worked out many years ago. Now it gets interesting.

The coronavirus's RNA, once inside the cell, usurps the cell's natural mRNA and highjacks the cell's normal system for creating proteins, to create its own molecular building blocks. The latter include the proteinaceous spikes (the corona) sticking out from the surface of the virus, the glycoprotein shell, which normally protects the virus's RNA and, of course, copies of the virus's RNA. After that those parts are assembled into hundreds, if not thousands, of copies of the virus before finally the cell bursts, releasing the horde of copies into the body.

The viral progeny goes on to repeat the process many times over, and in their wake, create widespread

destruction of the targeted cells and an inflammatory response, which may be as life-threatening as the viral invasion. But how does the virus get into the cell? Here's where treatment comes in.

Each cell in the body has specific molecular identifiers on its surface that act like gates to control access to the vital interior of the cell. The COVID-19 virus's spikes express molecules on their surface which can reach onto, latch onto and open those gates. From that point the virus is free to wreak havoc by taking over the cell's operating systems and cranking out copies of itself. Those same spikes are also armed with other molecules that may mask the virus from the body's immune system – a double hit!

Developing effective anti-viral agents is a matter of identifying those specific molecules on the virus's corona of spikes, responsible for the virus gaining access to the cell's contents and masking the virus from the immune system. Several companies are working on developing such bioengineered antiviral agents but so far, they're in the pipeline and not ready for prime time. Don't look for much help here for at least six months, although with luck, success may come earlier.

Then there's the matter of vaccination. It wasn't very helpful against SARS, a close relative of COVID-19 and we may not know for many months whether an effective vaccine can be mounted against COVID-19. Hence the importance of walling off the virus by separating the vulnerable – the yet uninfected, especially those at high risk – from those carrying the virus.

The latter is tricky because without widespread and timely nose/throat RNA testing, for which this and many other countries, are woefully unprepared, it's hard to prevent the spread of the virus. Social distancing (six feet or more) and hygiene (cleaning surfaces and hands regularly) are, of course, public health staples and may slow the spread of the disease.

The downsides are predictable. Social distancing is hard to enforce without draconian measures (China) and demoralizing if carried out too long as we are, after all, a highly social species. It also destroys economies and jobs on which communities and nations depend. Tough days are ahead even though hope is on the horizon!

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

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Inside look at restaurant amid pandemic

Richard Harley
 Editor

NOTL's Sandtrap Pub and Grill closed temporarily Monday due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It is with heaviest of hearts that we have decided to close the pub until further notice," owners Paul and Matt Dietsch said in a social media post.

"With COVID-19 having a stronghold on our country, we feel like the safest course of action for our staff, customers, friends and community is to close."

On Saturday night, while the Sandtrap was still operating with limited hours for takeout only, The Lake Report got an inside look at how one popular NOTL business was adapting to life in the era of COVID-19.

On Saturday evening, operating on limited hours, Sandtrap co-owner Matt Dietsch is trying to manage takeout calls while also keeping things safe for customers and staff.

Saturday is a busy time for restaurants, normally. But these aren't normal times.

"It's not too bad, it's different," Dietsch says in the midst of the takeout dinner service.

"All the chairs are up. We moved a bunch of the chairs and tables out of here so that people when they come for their takeout can feel like they can get their distance from each other and practise the social distancing part of it, while still being able to at least come out and get some dinner."

Takeout orders have been fairly brisk. "A lot of people are stopping in and picking up stuff for their neighbours. We're offering curbside pickup for people that don't feel comfortable coming in. We're trying to

NOTL copes with COVID-19



The Sandtrap is closed due to COVID-19. RICHARD HARLEY

do as much as we can to still provide our food for service," Dietsch says.

"Last night was our first Friday night being closed, and Friday is, of course, one of the biggest days at the Sandtrap year-round. And it was a pretty busy takeout."

With people coming home from their winters away, and with some grocery stores being "bare bones," it's nice to be able to offer a place for people to get a meal, he says.

"At least they know they can get a hot meal from us if they can't get out to the grocery store."

The restaurant has been trying to provide a safe experience for everyone. "There was a point (Friday) night where we felt like we had too much stuff coming in, so we just had to take the phone off the hook because we didn't want too many people coming in at the same time."

That's because "social distancing is how we're going to fight this and how we're going to win."

Many servers had to be laid-off due to the pub's reduced hours. And no one knows what the next few days hold.

"Every day is a guess, right? What's the press conference from the premier going to be today? We're thankful that we've got great, loyal customers

who want to support us and want to support our staff. We've got 24 mouths that we help feed every week and it was tough — we had to lay a bunch of servers off," he says.

"We've slowly started to call some of them in here and there to help us over the afternoon takeout period, just so that we could run it efficiently and we could get them some hours, and people have been really gracious about leaving nice tips for them. They know that times are tough and they're not getting the hours so they're leaving a little extra something for them."

As far as the community support goes, Dietsch says it's been great to hear from people who appreciate the pub trying to continue operations.

"It's really humbling for us, too, to have kind words from the community, as to 'Thank you for being open. We couldn't get anything to eat and you're basically giving us that option,'" he says.

"We're basically the local neighbourhood pub and Paul and I love supporting the community when the time comes and I think they're just sorta trying to show a little bit of that support back."

He says that so far there have been enough takeout orders to keep the business

going.

"It's enough business to pay the rent and to pay the bills and to pay a few wages. We've got a couple of our kitchen staff that we didn't have to lay off, so that's good."

Revenue is down substantially, to about 55 per cent of what it normally is.

"Fifty-five per cent doesn't feed the mouths, unfortunately, and so far there hasn't been a ton of government incentives that have come available yet," he says.

The phone is ringing off the hook. "This is the witching hour, sort of between 5 and 6. It's dinner hour," Dietsch says.

He can't predict if things will change.

"Every day is a new day, and every day is evolving. If it comes to the point where we feel like it's really endangering our staff and our customers then we'll close the doors."

If the business is forced to close permanently, well, no one really wants to think about that. It would mean tough times.

"Ten days ago, who knew any of this was going to come to light," he says.

His big worry is the pub's staff. "Our staff are our family and we want to be open so that we can feed some of their mouths. It's crazy times because unfortunately what's going to follow this next is probably going to be quite a big recession. And for a town that depends on its tourism, who knows?"

In the community, he urges everyone to do their part. "Wash your hands, wash your hands. Say hi instead of hug. Call instead of visit. All these little things that we can do just to help flatten the curve, as they say."

During this time of uncertainty, please remember to support the local businesses.

RIDDLE ME THIS

I do not speak, but there is no word I cannot make. What am I?

Last Week: If you lose me you may cause people around me to lose me too. What am I?

Answer: Your temper

Answered first by: Quinn Tiller

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Gail Skene, Sylvia Wiens, Lida Kowal, Wendy Bosela, Sheila Meloche, Katie Reimer, Margie Enns, Karen Davis, Susan Davies, Susan Hamilton

Email answers, with your name, to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to win a prize.

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Councillor keeps busy at home during self-isolation

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

NOTL copes with COVID-19



Coun. Clare Cameron is working from home during self-isolation. SUPPLIED PHOTO

Coun. Clare Cameron is adjusting to self-isolation with her family thanks to a positive attitude and a full schedule of work and meetings, albeit by telephone.

Cameron, who also is NOTL's deputy lord mayor, has been in self-isolation since March 16, when her family's new au pair arrived from Germany to begin her role caring for the family's young children, aged 3 and almost 18 months.

By then, those in contact with people arriving in Canada from COVID-19 affected countries had been instructed to self-isolate for 14 days.

"We're all in good health," Cameron said in a telephone interview from her home on Saturday, "and we have everything we need."

She is not having any trouble passing the time while in self-isolation.

"My days go by so quickly. There is so much

information to process, this is not a break in any way," she explained.

There's a lot of communication with council, and updates from Lord Mayor Betty Disero. And, "now that the province has permitted online meetings for local councils, as we're trying to adjust we can still try to advance important business."

In addition to her role on council, Cameron works in IT for the City of Burlington.

"I'm so glad we have the tools to work at home. There's so much communication needed right now.

(Friday), for example, I was on the phone pretty much non-stop from 8:30 to 5 p.m."

As far as activities with her children, "we're playing games, listening to music, having dance parties, doing puzzles and crafts. We do go outside for a walk, keeping away from other people, or maybe kick a soccer ball around. Getting some sunshine and fresh air is so great."

On a more philosophical note, Cameron said, "It makes you realize what is most vital. I really hope people cling to those things that make us feel as normal

as possible."

As for what she misses since starting self-isolation, Cameron said, "I was just thinking about the experience of going to a cafe with a friend, having a coffee and chatting, with lots of other people around. I'm unexpectedly missing the freedom to do that, just to get together with friends. We take it for granted."

Her advice for others during this time? "I would just encourage everyone, if you have a few spare moments in your day, call your friends, family, co-workers, have those conversations you would otherwise have over a coffee or out for a walk."

Cameron's 14 days will be over at the end of day on April 1, but she plans to still stick near home, even then.

"It's so important right now for everyone to stay close to home. It's best (to) stay in as much as possible and follow the advice from Health Canada and the province, going out only for the most essential reasons."

'Zero tolerance' for complaints on 30-person limit

Richard Harley
Editor

People now must line outside the doors of Valu-Mart in Virgil after the grocery store implemented a policy of no more than 30 customers inside at a time, to help prevent the potential spread of COVID-19.

And Valu-Mart franchise owner Phil Leboudec posted on Facebook that the store doesn't want to hear people complain about it.

"As per guidance from public health, we will be limiting traffic in the store to 30 customers at a time," Leboudec said. "We will have zero tolerance for com-



People distancing while lining up to get into Phil's Valu-Mart in Virgil on Saturday. RICHARD HARLEY

plaints from people who might be unhappy with this limit and who knows (sic) that limit may lower as we go. I will certainly be monitoring what 30 people looks like and go from there."

At Hendriks Valu-Mart in Old Town, a smaller store,

signs warn only 10 people are allowed in at a time.

Leboudec made it clear that anyone who has recently returned from being away should not bother to try to enter the store.

"If you have been away, do not come into the store

if you have not quarantined for 14 days," he said.

"We will be adding more protective measures for our cashiers similar to what was announced by other chains. The biggest things people can do is avoid paying with cash, just don't bring reusable bags."

Cory Abt, a friend of Leboudec who volunteered to manage the line Saturday, said he thinks it's important for everyone to work together in helping prevent spread of the virus.

"Essentially, if everybody does their bit, then we'll get through this much faster and everybody will be healthier for longer."

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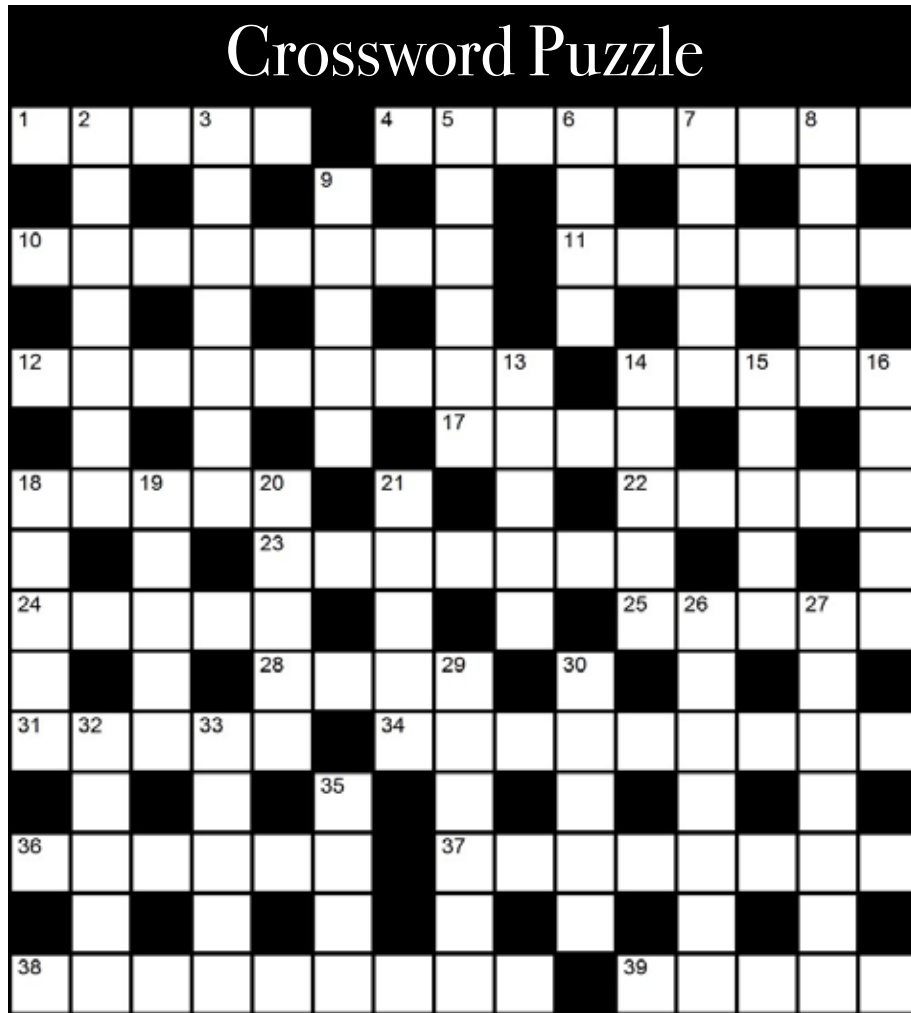
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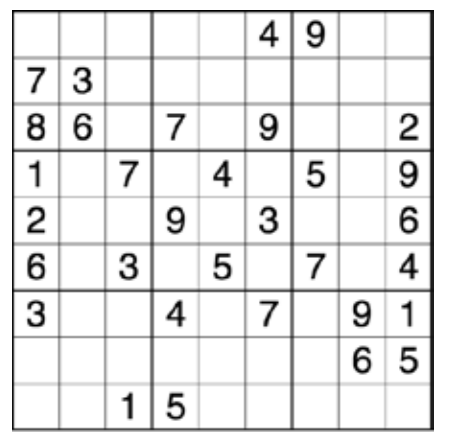
- Across**
- Charges (5)
 - Unwavering (9)
 - Wedding (8)
 - Bicycle seat (6)
 - Tonsorial tidier (9)
 - Yellowish citrus fruit (5)
 - Indian exercise method (4)
 - Type of radiation (5)
 - Sprite (5)
 - Folds (7)
 - Vision (5)
 - Vacant (5)
 - Woodwind instrument (4)
 - Academy award (5)
 - Disgusting (9)
 - Condescending (6)
 - Event (8)
 - Secondary piece of equipment (9)
 - Got up (5)
- Down**
- U S state on the Gulf Coast (7)
 - Aural membrane (7)
 - Minute (6)
 - Too (4)
 - Soft sweetmeat (5)
 - Simultaneous firing of artillery (5)
 - Native New Zealander (5)
 - Raise (5)
 - Pass into disuse (5)
 - State of confusion (3-2)
 - Destitute (5)
 - Zest (5)
 - Sorcery (5)
 - Participant (5)
 - Spanish Mister (5)
 - Bullfighter (7)
 - Lease holders (7)
 - Weirder (6)
 - Contact (5)
 - Operated by sound waves (5)
 - Residence (5)
 - Stains (4)

Have some fun

The Lake Report is looking for puzzle makers who would like to help develop this page. We are seeking both standard and cryptic crossword writers. editor@niagaranow.com



Last issue's answers



Humour: Self-isolating for the second time, no joke

Paul Jacot
Special to The Lake Report

NOTL copes with COVID-19

During this whole pandemic, we must find something to laugh about, a chuckle here and there, anything to break the sometimes morbid state of affairs.

I threw my hands in the air and shouted a few bad, nasty words. There wasn't a soul around. I was standing alone, no jacket, just a dress shirt, (in early March) amid hundreds of empty Buffalo-nian cars in the Buffalo airport parking lot. I shouted so loudly the lonely parked cars were wiping away the tears with their windshield wipers. My car's battery was dead.

I said to my wife and stalwart travelling companion that I would kiss the ground in NOTL when we

got back from our trip of a lifetime cruise (Dubai to Tokyo). Perfect, we got back safely and dodged the virus. We self-isolated in NOTL for over two weeks and then flew to Florida to see our grandchildren who live in Gainesville (Gator and Tom Petty country) to help them during the March break. We had a warm, sunny and enriching visit, and then flew home through Buffalo.

After landing in Buffalo airport (always a great place to fly out of, almost never crowded) I could feel my heart thumping. "Home soon." Not so fast Charlie!

But wait. Hooray, the maintenance people in the parking area gave me a boost and we were able to race home (heresy, not even stopping at Tops or TJ Max).

When finally home, (heart pounding) I left the car running in the driveway, ran to the backyard and kissed the ground and yelled, "Oh, Canada!"

Being away from home amid the crisis makes you tense for sure.

My wife and I are self-isolating (again) at home in NOTL and finding the days like granola bars: some chewy, some sweet. Tips? Give each other space, remember you married like a butcher, for better or for worst.

We will get through this. We will. We need patience and faith in each other to do the right thing.

Are there some positives, silver linings in this serious virus situation? Of course, much more

gratitude for what we do have here in NOTL, acts of kindness in our community being shown (bringing groceries to seniors for example), stronger family and friend ties through FaceTime and texting.

Also, when this is over, you will get to "elbow bump" people again, you will be able to play the party game "Twister," gasoline prices will be much lower, gamblers will have saved lots of money thanks to the casinos being closed and people will be more considerate (hopefully) about washing their hands in public washrooms.

Now, what about a few common nursery rhymes appropriate for the times? Create one yourself and maybe we'll publish them. Here are my attempts:

Little Jack Hoarder

Little Jack Hoarder sat in his corner
Counting his toilet rolls
He got to two hundred, smiled and wondered
"What a two-ply hoarder am I?"



Humpty Grumpy

Humpty Grumpy sat in his chair
Humpty Grumpy growled like a bear
For all of the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put his sports on TV again.



Jack and Jill

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch some isolation
Jack came down and broke his crown
Thus ending their staycation.



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Donna Mae Scott OC September 23, 1928 – March 14, 2020 Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario



Born in Toronto to Rex and Olive Scott, Donna died following a stroke suffered on Friday, March 13. She had been drifting into the Alzheimer's world and died suddenly, without pain, without awareness. A good death.

Predeceased by her darling husband Hugh Farrell, the love of her life (March 15, 2017), her parents (her mother was a church organist and choir leader in Saskatoon; her father a pharmacist turned Rexall executive), and son Shane Farrell, she is survived by sons Roderick, Steven and Greg Farrell, grandchildren, cousins and friends from coast to coast.

Raised in Saskatoon and educated at Queen's University, her career began in Toronto at the T. Eaton Company. Then she became a rising star in the publishing world at Maclean Hunter, moving swiftly through the ranks to positions such as Personnel Director; Manager of the Health Centre;

General Manager, Financial Post Conference Division. In 1979 she became Founder and Publisher of Flare, Canada's first national monthly fashion magazine (her brainchild and one of her proudest accomplishments). Later she was the first woman promoted to the senior echelons and became a Vice President and a member of the Maclean Hunter Management Committee, responsible for the corporation's worldwide operations. After 30 years with that company, in 1994 she was appointed by The Right Honourable Jean Chretien as Chair, The Canada Council for the Arts. Following a four-year term, she was invited to be Executive Director, Arts Council of Ontario.

A true pioneer in the business world, she was just about the first woman in everything she turned to. She was what her Order of Canada citation called "a successful entrepreneur and an astute businesswoman". She served both her country and her communities through leadership on various governance boards including Queen's and Brock universities, Salvation Army, Personnel Association of Canada, Magazines Canada, International Canadian Women in Communications, a variety of fashion industry and arts boards.

In retirement after 40 years in Toronto, Donna and Hugh sold their Rosedale home and moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake to a happy and fulfilling lifestyle. She continued her community leadership by co-chairing the local fund-raising committee for the new St. Catharines hospital, founding the Historic Sites Alliance, serving as vice president of the Niagara Historical Society and as a Willowbank board member, and spearheading the campaign to raise money to refurbish the bells of St. Mark's Church (and purchase six more).

In addition to her significant accomplishments, Donna mentored many women and men, inspired others, and was a champion of her friends' talents and accomplishments. She also believed that Canada needed more heroes and even recently wished she could give speeches across Canada championing the heroism of Laura Secord.

Donna had Flare! ... plus a commanding personality and the gift of a presence. When she entered the room, one would know that she had arrived. Never hesitant to point out one's grammatical faux pas or violation of etiquette rules, she also made sure her family and friends knew that following the proper dress code for every occasion was mandatory.

The family wishes to express its deep gratitude to Dr. Karen Berti, Cherry and Hernan Aperocho, Nadja Lepere, Debi Pratt and Hamish Rider for their extraordinary compassion and care for Donna during her illness, and Florence Campbell for her loyalty and endless efforts on Donna's behalf in the last challenging years.

For those wishing to honour Donna's memory, donations to the Salvation Army, St. Mark's Anglican Church or the Friends of Laura Secord would be appreciated. A funeral service will be held after public health officials declare that the pandemic is over. Arrangements entrusted to MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent St. Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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

Newark Neighbours needs these items

The Lake Report

Newark Neighbours is making changes to its food bank hours, and letting people in the community know how they can help keep it stocked for families in need.

The food bank will now be open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. till 12 noon.

The charity said stock is

running low and is encouraging people to help out with the following food donations:

- Peanut Butter
- Strawberry Jam
- Canned Fruit (small cans preferably)
- Canned Stew
- Canned Kidney Beans
- Canned Chili
- Canned Chunky Chicken soup

- Small boxes of salted soup crackers
 - Cereal
 - Flavoured Instant Oatmeal packets
 - Cleaning wipes
 - Toilet Paper
- The organization said people who are healthy can drop-off non-perishable food donations at 310 John Street on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. at the back door.

Avoiding community spread **key concern**

Continued from Front Page

NOTL copes with COVID-19

any pandemic problems.

The major fear, especially in NOTL where many older people reside, is having to deal with an outbreak of the virus in town. So far, no cases have been reported in NOTL.

"Our biggest focus right now is that we want to do everything we possibly can to prevent community spread," Ruller said in an interview Monday.

He lauded "essential service providers in the community," such as the pharmacies and grocery stores, which are "taking extreme measures to do their part and that's incredibly encouraging."

And he encouraged everyone to follow federal and provincial guidelines for self-isolating, hand washing and social distancing,

"In the fire service, education and prevention is the ideal scenario. Emergency response is your last resort," said Ruller. "We want to be overprepared and underwhelmed."

So, a lot of the town's planning is looking at what steps can be taken "to reaffirm what the province and the federal government are urging, which is to isolate

and to take steps to make sure we don't see community spread," he said.

In keeping with that, the town's two deputy fire chiefs are working separately and other teams within municipal departments have been split up, "so that if one or two members have to be isolated, it doesn't affect an entire team."

As well, departments have been doing some cross-training so people can potentially fill in as needed.

Deputy chief Jay Plato is co-ordinating the town's emergency management program and is working closely with interim chief administrator Sheldon Randall out of the town hall in Virgil, Ruller said.

NOTL's other deputy chief, Darren Trostenko, is overseeing "continuity of services" for all fire operations, making sure the department's 110 volunteer firefighters are ready if called upon.

The town's emergency control group, a team of key managers, staff and political leaders is ultimately co-ordinating all the efforts to make certain the

municipality is ready – for anything.

That's a big job. There is a lot of information to process every day and many decisions to be made, Ruller noted.

Right now, "You don't have a week to mull it over and make a decision. For us, it's about a critical risk analysis and cost-benefit analysis of our decisions and then moving forward with them."

Ruller said the community has been hugely supportive of the need to "get ahead of this and get in front of it" and he encouraged people to stay home.

"One of the best things that can happen is, if we want to truly limit any potential for community spread, that is done by staying home."

Ruller and his wife have four young children and they are in self-isolation until March 31.

"But the reality is, you won't see me in the community (afterward). We truly believe that non-essential activity needs to be avoided. I don't want to put my family at risk and, in turn, anybody else's."

It's not a laughing matter to be out and about if you've just returned

Continued from Front Page

in Garrison Village.

I heard an exchange between a customer and a clerk. It seems the customer was asking for something medicinal in nature and said, "I just got back from Florida yesterday ..." at which point the clerk wisely said, "You need to leave the store NOW."

The customer, "Oh, it's OK. I feel fine."

To which the clerk responded: "Please, get out of the store now. You are supposed to be in isolation and you are now jeopardizing everyone in this store."

The woman's indignant answer was, "You could be a little nicer about it."

She left and waited outside.

I was sitting in my car when I realized her husband had stayed in the store to shop and then walked out and met her. They walked home toward the Village!

I wanted to yell at them that I have friends living in the village and would they please stay in their darn house!

Then, on Saturday, we heard about a farm owner who has just returned from Florida and is going to the farm and interacting with all his staff. Both field workers and office staff!

The staff are not happy about it, but need to keep their jobs.

This man lives locally so I am concerned that both he and his wife could

be out and about in town instead of self-isolating.

We've been living in this wonderful, safe little bubble here in Niagara-on-the-Lake where it seems everyone has been doing their bit to protect all of us. But now if the "inconsiderate" among us start coming back from the United States and elsewhere, and doing these kinds of things, what chance do we have?

People need to self-isolate and accept the simple inconvenience of not being able to socialize for two weeks. They could become sick, even if they feel fine now, or they could be carriers.

Snowbirds and others returning to town need to do the right thing.



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Shaw on hiatus, but holding virtual rehearsals

‘There’ll still be theatre. We’ll still be here, we’ll bounce back,’ says artistic director Tim Carroll

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

The show does, indeed, go on.

The creative minds at the Shaw Festival are not about to let the COVID-19 pandemic and the forced cancellation of the first month of the new season stop them.

Thanks to enterprise and ingenuity, Shaw actors are holding virtual rehearsals, working with coaches online and preparing props and costumes at home.

“It’s been very inspiring to see how much everyone’s coming together, even apart,” Shaw artistic director Tim Carroll said in an interview Monday.

“Lots and lots of rehearsals are happening online and people getting together on Skype and talking through their plays.”

There was even a cast run-through of one of this season’s big shows, “Charley’s Aunt,” using the Zoom conferencing app.

“People are showing the most extraordinary kind

of wartime resilience and spirit.”

Of course, there’s no telling when this season will start. It could be months away, but Carroll said the Shaw is planning for every eventuality, even if it means a truncated season.

In the meantime, he revealed the company is hoping to get “a little bit of content out” via Instagram and Facebook over the next week or so, “if we can sort out the necessary permissions.”

The Shaw, for now, is continuing to pay all staff and the idea for using technology grew out of the company’s desire to be able to “hit the ground running” once the season is able to resume.

The rehearsals initially started in small groups, keeping their social distance, but now the interaction is all being done remotely, said Carroll.

“There’s been an enormous amount of inventiveness from everyone in the company about how to carry



Cast of Charley’s Aunt in a Zoom rehearsal. Top row: Kate Hennigar (assistant stage manager), Diane Konkin (stage manager), Claire Jullien, Rong Fu. Middle row: Peter Fernandes, Marla McLean, Tim Carroll (artistic director and director of Charley’s Aunt), Cameron Grant. Bottom row: Sarena Parmar, Rick Reid, Neil Barclay, Mike Nadajewski. Solo: Patrick Galligan. PHOTO BY DIANE KONKIN.

on with the work of building things, making things, fixing things, designing things, planning things.”

While the season was about to launch in April when the plug was pulled last week, there was still plenty of work to do.

“There’s a huge amount that was going on both for the last few stages of the

shows that were about to open, ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Charley’s Aunt’ and ‘Prince Caspian,’ but also the second wave of shows, like ‘Playboy of the Western World’ and ‘Sherlock Holmes’ were well under way as well,” he said.

“In some cases, they were already on to the third wave of shows, like ‘Assassins,’

so the factories were humming at high capacity when the hammer fell.”

Having to rely on technology for virtual rehearsals is no substitute for having actors together in the same room, but the cast is adapting.

The run-through of “Charley’s Aunt” was “rather lovely,” Carroll said. “Of course, when you have a bunch of creative people like that you have all sorts of opportunities for them to get silly and inventive.”

Before the final act, he challenged the cast to see who would be the “champion of the camera,” which resulted in “people making strange flying entrances from offscreen and putting silly backgrounds up. One of the guys was playing the scene with his phone on which he had the headshot of the actress he was supposed to be playing the scene with. So, he was canoodling with her headshot on his phone.”

One difference for Carroll personally these days is

he’s spent a lot more time than usual checking in on company members to make sure they’re OK.

But the biggest change for the artistic director is “I’m having to live in the present instead of the future. Normally, at this time of year I have rehearsals, which are a nice distraction for me from my main job, which is thinking about 2021. This has really forced me back into the present day” because there’s no point doing anything on 2021 until the current season is sorted out.

“This is just a time when there’s no point in feeling sorry for yourself. You just have to say there are people with bigger problems and our job is just to do whatever we can to keep people safe and get the country through this in the best shape it can be,” he said.

“And then ... there’ll still be theatre. We’ll still be here, we’ll bounce back, but we want to make sure the community we serve bounces back, too.”

Expert advice on **talking to kids** about COVID-19 pandemic



NOTL resident Dr. Robin Williams, is a member of the Order of Canada and Niagara Region’s former chief medical officer of health. She chairs the Early Years Taskforce of the Canadian Paediatric Society, which asked her to prepare a letter for parents on talking to their children about COVID-19.

Dr. Robin Williams
Special to The Lake Report

These are scary times, no matter your age or your country. We are all in the battle against the pandemic caused by COVID-19. Each day, we weigh the some-

times confusing advice from political leaders, public health and medical experts, the media, and our own friends and family.

Although we are learning daily more and more about this coronavirus, the illness it causes, and the resources we need to fight it, there is still much we don’t know. And that is unsettling.

Our kids’ and grandkids’ worlds have been turned upside down. Their daily routines are disrupted, family vacations have been cancelled, and their “jobs” (school and preschool) suspended. For many, their parents are now working from home, and it seems everyone is worried about the future. How do we even begin to talk to our children and reassure them?

Here are a few suggestions to help build the resilience that we all need to get through this:

1. Be reassuring. As a parent, it is normal to be anxious about the uncertainty that lies ahead, both with regard to our collective health and the economy. These concerns are real. But reassure your children that many doctors, nurses and scientific experts around the world are working as hard as they can — right now — to keep us all safe and healthy.

2. Bring children into the conversation. Kids watch and observe their parents and caretakers: They watch your face, hear your tone of voice and overhear your conversations. You know your children and their temperaments best. Listen to them and talk with them about the current situation in age-appropriate language. Help them to understand, verbalize and organize their own feelings around the pandemic. Be curious about what they are thinking and feeling.

3. Help them sort facts from fiction. Find out what your children know and understand about what is happening. Correct any misinformation about “this new germ.” Be honest, but positive. Reassure them fewer kids are becoming ill, and when they do, the illness is not as severe. Let them know the illness is much more of a concern for older people or people who are already sick, which is why everyone needs to take precautions.

4. Help children have some control. Children need to feel in control and empowered to protect themselves in whatever way they can. This includes: appropriate, frequent handwashing (show them how and when); sneezing into their elbow, then washing their hands afterward; Social distancing (explain what that is, but assure that it is

not the same as “emotional distancing”); Helping to wipe down and disinfect surfaces. This reinforces their understanding of how this germ is spread through droplets.

5. Be mindful of media. Be especially thoughtful about exposure to television and media. Model good media consumption habits. Don’t have a steady stream of TV/news running in the background of your family life. Screen time for kids will no doubt be increased during home quarantines, self-isolation and “sheltering in place.” This is an opportunity to watch together, to be thoughtful about media choices, and to explore media that are recommended for kids, including podcasts.

6. Be creative and grateful. There are silver linings to being together as a family in whatever form that is. As you settle in to this “new

normal,” you can strengthen existing connections with family, friends and neighbours. Encourage your collective creativity and foster a sense optimism and resilience. Talking with kids and showing them how to support and thank people on the frontlines of health care and other public services (as well as essential services like grocery stores), is a lesson in civics.

There will be many opportunities to continue the conversation with your children over these next days and weeks. Aim to provide them with realistic reassurance. Times will be tough, but life will go on. It always does.

For advice about helping families and children through this pandemic, visit the Canadian Paediatric Society’s Caring for Kids website at www.caringforkids.cps.ca.



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Flooded with pandemic calls, region opens coronavirus hotline

Gary Zalepa
Special to The Lake Report

As public concerns developed over the COVID-19 pandemic, Niagara Region offices began to receive about 750 calls daily compared to the typical 100 on a normal day.

Public health and emergency services staff acted fast to establish a call centre to meet the volume of calls, including training 50 family nurses to help out. That has reduced wait times to 10 minutes from three hours.

Additionally, staff launched an online chat feature and can now effectively manage 112 calls per hour or 1,700 daily.

The result has been the creation of a central COVID-19 information line for Niagara operating seven days a week – and this was all accomplished in just four days.

You can reach the COVID-19 information centre at 905-688-8248 ext. 7019.

The global pandemic is evolving quickly, as the entire country deals with the reality of social distancing, self-isolation and economic shut down. Niagara residents need to know your federal, provincial and local governments are co-operating fully to ensure that efforts are co-ordinated, ensuring public safety is paramount.

I want to thank all our public servants, providing professional, fact-based recommendations in a stressful environment. Thanks also to all our front-line emergency



Photo illustration. ORIGINAL PHOTO BY RENE BERTSCHI/SKYVIEW ARTS INC.

workers, community care, health care, and all employees who are serving our community needs and protecting the most vulnerable.

Since last week the region in partnership with all Niagara municipalities enacted the Regional Emergency Operations Centre and the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre. These actions are part of Niagara's previously approved Business Continuity Plans. The emergency operations groups meet daily, including weekends.

The focus now is on COVID-19 virus community impacts and co-ordinated responses with the federal and provincial directives that are coming out daily.

About 75 per cent of regional government services are essential, including caring for 900 long-term care residents, over 11,000 Niagara residents who receive much-needed pay benefits and the thousands of residents receiving housing or housing benefits.

Plus there are all the public works assets to maintain and operate.

Regional staff are being asked where possible to refocus their work to support these essential services, based upon roles needed, skills and urgency. Arrangements have been made for people to work from home as much as possible, keeping staff healthy for continuity of essential services.

On March 18, the Niagara Economic Rapid Response Team was setup by Niagara's mayors and the regional chair. Their function is to support local businesses affected by COVID-19. We have four ways that business can seek help: contact ERRT@niagararegion.ca, visit its website niagaracanada.com/services/business-support, take the ERRT survey, and follow the group on social media.

Council has also approved plans to conduct meetings remotely during this period of a provincial state of emergency. When council met, social distanc-

ing was respected by locating councillors throughout the council chambers; the province passed enabling legislation the next day.

Regional council also gave powers to the regional chair and CAO Ron Tripp to do what's necessary to ensure adequate resources are made available for the region's essential services.

All regional facilities are now closed to public access, but many essential staff are working at the facilities.

Five regional council members are in self-isolation due to travel. Council's next meeting is March 26 at 6:30 p.m. Councillors can participate remotely or in person with social distancing precautions in place. That agenda is primarily concerning prior municipal business from recent standing committees, all of which occurred prior to the pandemic. All council meetings can be viewed via live streaming or via recordings on our website.

Managing the health and well-being of Niagara residents is our primary concern. Supporting local business in these uncertain times is also a focus of the region's attention.

Please adhere to the directions of all levels of government. Practise self-isolation if you have travelled or feel unwell, seek medical assistance as directed by health authorities and take care of your neighbours and family members. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any concerns or questions.

Gary Zalepa is regional councillor for NOTL. gary.zalepa@niagararegion.ca

ATTENTION

You are not alone

Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service is servicing clients with life-limiting illnesses. We are bringing much needed Mobility Equipment Aids and Prescriptions to our vulnerable clients, as well as doing grocery pick-up (pre-ordered and paid) and wellness checks. Visits can be made by Skype and FaceTime. We are also offering bereavement telephone support. Our organization is here to say "You are not alone." Our Services are FREE OF CHARGE to anyone experiencing a life-limiting illness.

If you or a loved one are experiencing a new illness or are in a self-isolation situation, please reach out to see how we can help.



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The Lake Report's printer sources 100 per cent of its paper fibre from industry leading paper mills, which use quick-growth, sustainable, renewable plots of land, rather than clear-cutting forests.

The ink is also vegetable-based.



Be a friendly neighbour

Here's a card you can cut out and give to your neighbours who may be in need during this time of crisis due to COVID-19 (novel coronavirus). The Lake Report encourages neighbours to help each other, while also taking necessary precautions to avoid spreading the virus.

Hello! If you are self-isolating, I can help.

My name is: _____

I live locally at: _____

My phone number is: _____

If you are self-isolating due to COVID-19, I can help with

Picking up shopping Posting mail

A friendly phone call Urgent supplies

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Long-planned adventure ends with **unexpected twist**

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

When Graham and Angela Lindfield tell the tale of their retirement adventure on board their 32-foot Grand Banks trawler “Lady Morgana,” it will have a surprise ending, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

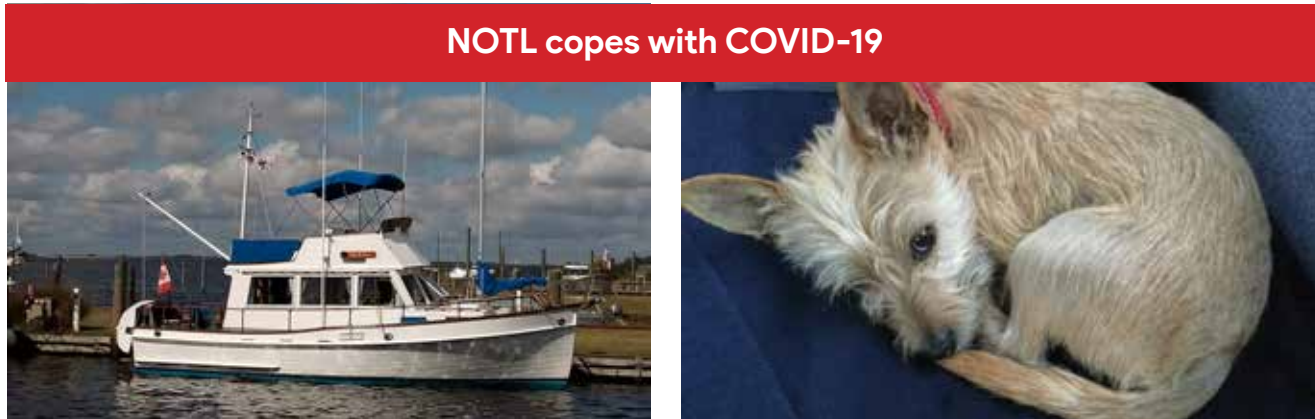
The NOTL couple bought the boat, built in 1973, three years ago, and Graham, an engineer, worked on it for countless hours to get it shipshape for their big trip.

It was a retirement goal, to take a long trip together, all the way down the east coast, from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Florida, and back.

“We were so excited,” said Angela. “We did smaller trips first, as a test run. We’d never been on such a big trip. The idea was truly amazing.”

The two, with dog Nora in tow, left NOTL in September, making their way steadily south, through the Intracoastal Waterway, all the way to Nettles Island, in the Florida Keys.

All went as planned: Graham and Angela left the boat in Florida and flew



Left: Graham and Angela Lindfield’s trawler Lady Morgana at Belhaven, N.C., en route to Florida. Right: Pet Nora on board Lady Morgana. SUPPLIED PHOTOS

home in mid-December to celebrate Christmas with family, before returning to Lady Morgana at the end of January.

They started heading north, aiming to arrive at the New York canal system when it opened in mid-May, and make their way home by June.

Enter COVID-19.

“We were in touch with our kids as things started to develop. When we heard schools were closed, we knew it was more serious than we had realized. Then on that (March 16) Prime Minister (Justin) Trudeau told Canadians to come home,” Angela recalled.

“At that point we thought, ‘Well, we still have health insurance and we’re pretty isolated on the boat, we’re in good shape, so we can still return as planned.’”

Events began to accelerate from that point.

“We arrived at our next marina, in Titusville, Florida, on Wednesday. We fuelled up, went to our dock and tied up, and registered at the office,” said Angela.

“Back on the boat, checking in online, we saw a post on Facebook by a group called Trawler Life, saying that Fort Pierce marina had decided to close. We’d just been there a few days earlier.”

“That was the game changer,” Angela said, remembering the moment.

Calling around to the next few marinas on their itinerary, they all said they were open.

But one said it was “day to day, so we knew things were shifting, and there were going to be ripple effects.”

Climbing back off the boat, they went straight back to the office to ask if they could stay for a month. The first answer was no, but then there was a cancellation, “so we took that slip, and paid for a month.”

Things were moving quickly now.

They walked to the Enterprise office and rented a car for a week, “put the boat to bed, made sure she was safe, and packed up,” she said.

The next morning was Thursday, March 19.

At 5 a.m., with pet Nora bundled into the back seat, they joined the stream of vehicles with Quebec and Ontario licence plates heading north on the highway.

“It was very surreal. There were cars, trucks, trailers and motorhomes all heading north,” said Angela.

“Highway signs said things like, ‘Stay Home, COVID-19 Kills.’ On the

radio we heard that there was a huge increase in gun sales. I really didn’t want to be there!” she added.

After one night in a hotel, where they disinfected every surface with Clorox wipes, they got home, aware they would have to self-isolate. Their daughter had left groceries for them on the back deck.

“We felt so thrown into this. Just a week earlier, everything seemed fine,” Angela said.

“In the end, everything panned out a lot better than it might have been. We’re home safe, the boat is safe, and we have what we need to stay home as long as we need to.”

Since arriving home, all the marinas in the Florida Keys have closed, as well as many more in South Carolina, New Jersey and New York.

In the days ahead, Angela plans to keep in touch with her grandchildren on FaceTime, coming up with some games and activities they can do together to help keep them occupied while school is out, and to stay in touch while self-isolating.

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