



## Where did the vines go?



Scenes like the one above are becoming more common across NOTL, as grape producers cut contracts. RICHARD HARLEY

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Grape farmers in Niagara-on-the-Lake are facing the same trying times as everybody else amid the pandemic and some growers' contracts with wineries have not been renewed.

Matthias Oppenlander, chair of Grape Growers Ontario, said there's been a lot

of uncertainty in the grape business, some of which started before COVID-19.

But the pandemic has added new stress to the situation.

"I know two or three (wineries) that have absolutely no sales right now. That had happened before COVID-19, for whatever reason we're not sure, we're trying to get to the bottom

of this. And then COVID-19 obviously exasperated the bottom line, so there's a little bit of uncertainty in the market for sure."

Several grape growers contacted by The Lake Report declined to talk about the situation, citing fears of "retaliation" and further cuts.

For the last two years, long before the pandemic,

there has been a concern as to how the provincial government's new alcohol sales plan will affect the wine industry, Oppenlander said, and wineries are taking active measures, like by cutting grape contracts, to make sure they don't have too much stock.

The province's re-

*Continued on Page 2*



Coun. Norm Arsenault with the NOTL flag. RICHARD HARLEY

## Your chance to fly the NOTL flag

Kevin MacLean  
Managing Editor

Norm Arsenault wants you to fly the flag. The Niagara-on-the-Lake flag.

Didn't know there was one? You're not alone, but thanks to the NOTL councillor, everyone can soon own one for just \$25.

"The idea came from interest shown on social media and I just decided to run with it," Arsenault said. There were postings online about the NOTL flag over the past week or two and one thing led to another.

He hopes to see the three-by-five-foot blue ensigns flying everywhere around town on Canada Day.

To make it happen, Arsenault found a supplier but needs at least 200 flag

orders by May 24.

That probably won't be a problem: he launched the project online Tuesday and by the next day almost 100 flags were sold.

"On Canada Day, let's celebrate not only Canada as a whole but also Niagara-on-the-Lake by raising the town flag along with the Canada flag," Arsenault said in a social media announcement.

This is not a town project, he emphasized. Arsenault is working with Coun. Allan Bisback and Regional Coun. Gary Zalepa, along with the NOTL air cadets.

All profits go to the NOTL 809 Newark Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron.

Send an email with your name, address, phone number to [notlflagpride@gmail.com](mailto:notlflagpride@gmail.com) to place an order.

## In memoriam: Blanche Quinn did it her way

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Blanche Quinn will be remembered as a Niagara-on-the-Lake legend.

You could write a book about her life — if there wasn't already one.

Among her numerous achievements, she was a World War Two veteran, served a term as a NOTL town councillor, was manager of the Niagara District airport and was the first female zone director of the Royal Canadian Flying Clubs' Association.

She also volunteered for numerous organizations and schools, was a member of the Legion Branch 124, a St. Mark's Church warden, and president of International



Blanche Quinn. SUPPLIED/THE QUINNS

Association of Administrative Professionals.

Blanche died of natural causes Friday at Pleasant Manor in Virgil at the age of 97.

Her family says she was known for her quick wit, dry sense of humour,

and, perhaps most famously, for her frequent letters to the editor to the local newspaper.

Her son Pat Quinn, known as Quinny, said there's no shortage of funny memories of Blanche.

"Pick one," he jests, when

asked to choose a couple of favourites.

The topper, he says, was when she would tell the story of the time she fell out of an airplane.

"It was taxiing down the runway, on the ramp, and her door wasn't closed and she was trying to put her seatbelt on and the door opened and she fell out of the frickin plane," Quinny says.

"It was at the Niagara District airport," his wife Paula adds, and she only fell half out before the pilot scooped her back into the plane.

Another interesting accomplishment is that Blanche did her flight training until she could fly solo

*Continued on Page 11*

## Town says pet grooming essential, but groomers unsure

Kevin MacLean  
Managing Editor

After weeks of forcing pet groomers to stay closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Town of NOTL now says groomers are an essential service under the provincial government's emergency act.

So, you might be able to get your dog's coat and nails trimmed — soon.

However, some NOTL groomers say they received a different message from the College of Veterinarians of Ontario which issued a statement on Tuesday reiterating that groomers are definitely

not considered an essential business.

In its announcement late Wednesday afternoon, the town said, based on its interpretation of the emergency act regulations, "animal grooming may be considered essential where a business provides a service to address urgent care for the benefit of the animal's health and welfare."

However, the town said groomers are responsible for adhering to all provincial regulations.

So, contact your groomer and check our website, [www.niagaranow.com](http://www.niagaranow.com), for updates.



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# Problems for grape growers amplified by COVID-19

Continued from Front Page

view, launched in 2018, looked at rules for how beer, cider, wine and spirits are sold and consumed, allowing sales in corner stores and grocery stores, and creating more opportunities for private sector sellers and distributors.

“Obviously there’s concern. There was concern before, really, because we’ve had the alcohol and beverage review, so we don’t know how that’s going to shake out for the Ontario industry,” Oppenlander said.

He said some of the issues with sales are how many imported wines will be allowed versus Ontario-made wines.

“We’re hoping that through that review that Ontario will be able to get its fair share in the marketplace. Obviously that has been pushed to the back burner right now by the government because of COVID-19.”

Meanwhile, some yearly growing contracts were “cut back” or didn’t get renewed in January or February, Oppenlander said.



Grape contracts are being cut at some farms in NOTL. RICHARD HARLEY

COVID-19 has added new stress to the situation, by delaying implementation of new regulations and severely affecting sales, he said. Winery retail stores have been closed and online sales have been the sole major source of revenue. There are also serious concerns about the 2020 tourist season.

“We’re not sure where the tourist season is going to go,” he said. “If wines sales go down, obviously that directly relates to grape purchases.”

The uncertainty has caused grape processors to be cautious and reduce grape orders.

“Most of the processors, whether it’s a small winery or larger winery, they’re all concerned that they won’t have the wine sales, right? And obviously wine sales translate directly to grape purchases,” Oppenlander said.

He said he’s not sure if online wine sales are going to be enough to support the wineries.

Oppenlander, who owns

Huebel Grapes Estates on Line 3 Road in Virgil, said he’s “not quite sure” how badly his own farm will be affected.

“We’ve got some of our tonnage that’s been reduced a bit. We’re hoping that sales don’t drop too much so that it doesn’t have to be taken any further,” he said.

“We’re all a little anxious because, like I said, we don’t know what’s going to happen out of this crisis. Are we going to come out of this in late spring or early

summer? Is there going to be a tourist season at all? So that could all affect it.”

He said he’s hopeful for a solution.

“It’s troublesome on both parts, for the processors and the grape growers. Somehow we hope that we come up with a strategy to get through this together, with the government as well.”

Part of that solution, he said, is making sure you buy local now.

“If people start drinking local, looking for the VQA, and locally produced wine, that would ultimately help us, help the wineries and help the grape growers at the end of the day,” he said.

Part of the problem if growers lose contracts, is that the crop still needs to be tended, otherwise the vines can be adversely affected.

“Unfortunately vineyards are perennial crops, you’ve gotta maintain them. You’ve gotta prune them, tie them and take care of them for a year. You have to input costs, so I guess they’ll work and see and hope for the best. That’s all you can do, you can’t just take them

out. It takes seven years to get a vineyard into production. Well, it takes three years to get the first crop, but it’s seven years until you really reach the full crop,” Oppenlander said.

“Just like the orchards, you’ve just got to maintain.”

He said local support has been up lately and he’s hopeful it will continue and wine sales will be strong.

“We’re hoping that sales stay strong, we’re hoping that local gets supported, and at the end of the day that will get us through this,” he said.

Some smaller wineries have retooled and now do a lot of online sales “and the consumer has responded well,” he said. “Hopefully they keep on doing this.”

“Coming out of this pandemic, we realize supporting local will help everybody,” he said. “Because every local bottle of wine, VQA bottle of wine, that we sell helps the great cause, helps the economy. I think it’s something like, we sell a bottle of wine, the economic spin off is like \$98, which is huge.”

## Woman **dead** after vehicle goes into Niagara Gorge

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

A woman is dead after a vehicle went through a wooden fence and fell several hundred feet over the side of the Niagara Parkway Saturday.

Police and emergency services were called to the Niagara River Parkway just north of the Floral Clock in Niagara-on-the-Lake just before noon.

Niagara Parks Police, the NOTL and Niagara Falls fire services were on the scene and decided to deploy the Niagara Parks high angle river team to help in the search.

“Upon rappelling into the gorge, a heavily damaged vehicle was found near the bottom. A deceased person was located inside the vehicle,” Niagara Regional Police said in a news release.

The dead motorist was



Emergency crews respond to the scene of a vehicle over the edge of the Niagara Gorge. SUPPLIED

a woman in her forties from the Wasaga Beach area, Niagara Regional Police said Wednesday. No foul play or criminality is suspected.

The police refused to identify the victim, saying, “out of respect for the next of kin the identity of the deceased is not being released.”

NOTL fire chief Nick Ruller was among the first

responders.

“We were called out a little past noon,” Ruller said in an interview.

“Once I arrived on scene, we didn’t have a great vantage point because it’s a pretty sharp drop at that location, so I actually went up onto the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge and was able to get a visual at that point of a vehicle that was several

hundred feet below.”

He said the vehicle was resting against a cable boulder fence that is there to protect the service road for the Sir Adam Beck I power station.

Firefighters then accessed the service road and were able to get to the scene through the Adam Beck power station, using the elevators, he said.

The high angle team also assisted Niagara Parks Police in searching the area “in the event there were any other potential victims that could have been ejected from the vehicle,” Ruller said.

“That search proved to be negative, so there was no one else involved.”

Police said the investigation is ongoing and anyone who may have witnessed the incident or was in the area at the time is asked to call 905-688-4111, extension 2200.

## Tourism businesses plan for **reopening**

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

NOTL’s tourism industry will “follow the lead of the provincial government” and will need to act quickly once tourist-focused businesses have the green light to resume operations, Coun. Wendy Cheropita says.

Cheropita has been in close contact with the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, she told councillors Monday night, and the organization wants the town to “go with the flow” when it comes to reopening the town for tourism.

There are no long-term strategic moves or plans in place yet because there is a lot of uncertainty, Cheropita said, but “once we sort of get through to the point where more of the communities are opening up

and see if there is a second bout of infection, I think we’ll have a better feeling, and then I think that’ll be a great time to be focused on the strategy, understanding then what the whole new landscape is for tourism.”

Businesses reliant on tourism have been badly hurt by the lockdown caused by the pandemic, she said.

“The tourism sector, aside from oil and gas, has been the hardest hit sector during this COVID crisis,” she said.

“Niagara-on-the-Lake has strong tourism assets as we all know and a well-established and highly popular wine industry, but many of the businesses, for the most part, are small and will find it very difficult to recover. And some will not be able to be a part of recovery at all,” Cheropita told council.

  
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# NOTL is 'refocusing' its efforts to manage resumption of tourism

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

## Opening washrooms

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's emergency operations control group has ordered the reopening of two public washrooms in Old Town, after concerns that people "relieving themselves" on parks and private property could create a whole new public health issue amid the ongoing pandemic.

"This is a decision that the emergency team has struggled with over the last week," Lord Mayor Betty Disero told members of council Monday night via live stream, which for the first time included video of councillors from home.

She said the decision to open the washrooms was made to reduce stress on business owners being asked by visitors to use their washrooms and due to "the frequency of visitors using our public parks and property to relieve themselves."

The town will follow strict guidelines from Niagara Region public health to manage the washrooms, she said.

"I spoke with the medical officer of health, explained what was going on here the weekend of May 2 and 3 ... there was some concern that we jumped from one crisis into a different type of public health issue."

She noted that despite the town's best efforts, people are still deciding to come to Niagara-on-the-Lake, and with the nicer weather the problem is likely going to get worse.

The two washrooms opened are behind the courthouse and at Queen's Royal Park.

## Parking ban lifted

The parking ban was lifted in Old Town effective this past Monday morning.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said the decision to lift the ban after only two weeks was made in response to the province opening up retail businesses for curbside pickup and delivery.

"In response, the town is refocusing its efforts to manage the situation, addressing



Town council during a video conference. RICHARD HARLEY

traffic in parks and conflicts on sidewalks in particular," Disero told councillors Monday.

Lifting the ban will help accommodate "additional parking required by stores," she said.

The parking meters also are now functioning and all signs referring to free parking, which preceded the parking ban, have been removed.

Disero said the reopening does present more risk to the public.

"The opening of additional businesses, removal of the parking ban and the inevitable increase of visitor traffic resulting from warm weather will increase the potential contact in the public and corresponding risk," she said.

The town will "rely on the continued co-operation and support of the Chamber of Commerce and business community to ensure proper physical distancing between patrons and pedestrians."

She said she thinks the parking ban was effective while it was in place.

"The parking ban was successful, with only a small percentage of people stopping and parking illegally. While the number of people stopped were in a few hundred, if the parking ban had not been in place, there would have been a few thousand who stopped," Disero said.

Interim CAO Sheldon Randall said parking will remain closed and blocked off at Queen's Royal Park, Ryerson Park and Sunset Point, said Randall.

The town decided it was best to keep the rest of the lots open, he said.

"Our decision is we might as well open up all the parking so we can at least collect

the revenues at this point, so we can limit some of our losses. Because the people coming to town aren't following the rules anyways and they're going to do whatever they can to find a parking spot and not have to pay for it."

## Town maintains gardens

The town will continue to plant bulbs in some municipal gardens, interim CAO Sheldon Randall told councillors.

The program is continuing in a few "key locations" across town, including the flower beds along Queen Street.

The decision was made after consulting with the Chamber of Commerce, he said.

"(The chamber feels) it's key to make sure we continue with whatever we do in the key areas of the town for planting, as a key to the recovery of the town after the COVID conditions or restrictions are lifted," Randall said.

Coun. Erwin Wiens asked if the town might bring back the hanging flower baskets, which were cancelled earlier this month.

"As we try to rebound into bringing our economy back, our brand is being the prettiest town in Canada or North America, and we now see that the tourists are coming back. And we're going to have to try to keep them coming back," Wiens said. "Do we have any resources to make sure we keep our brand as the prettiest town?"

Randall said with things evolving daily, "it changes what our potential costs or savings could be with COVID-19."

**Staff added for gardens, bylaw enforcement, washroom management**

Interim CAO Sheldon Randall said the town is bringing back nine contract staff workers — two for agriculture and planting, four to assist bylaw enforcement at high-traffic parks like Simcoe, Queen's Royal and Ryerson, and three people to help the operations department, particularly in managing the washrooms.

The estimated cost to bring back the nine staff members is \$7,000 per week, plus supplies and vehicle costs.

Coun. Clare Cameron asked to clarify what the roles of the staff assisting bylaw officers would be.

Randall said the duties will be "quite different" than that of regular bylaw personnel.

"They're there to assist bylaw (officers) and also just to keep people moving. And if they run into any issues or concerns, they're to call bylaw or Niagara Regional Police."

On a typical day they will be stationed at the parks, he said.

"If they see people congregating or not practising social distancing, they're going to give them a friendly reminder of what their duties are and their responsibilities under this pandemic," he said.

If people choose not to move along or to practise safe distancing, the worker will call a bylaw officer to follow up with enforcement, he said.

Coun. Allan Bisback asked if it was possible to get the message to Premier Doug Ford that he should tell people specifically not to travel to the Niagara area.

Disero said the town is trying to get Ford to include in his messaging to stay away from tourist destinations as well as cottage country.

"What he's saying is do not go to cottage country or rural areas. He's assuming that everyone thinks of all of Niagara region as a rural area. Although we're not. We're trying to get him to change that ... and we'll continue to try and get that message to him."

The town's message remains the same: stay home, visit later.



As the Province looks to re-open the economy and begins to roll out recovery measures, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake will continue to respond in a timely and well-informed manner.

For the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 related changes, please visit the dedicated webpage and follow the Town on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

[notl.com/COVID-19](http://notl.com/COVID-19)



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**POSITIVE  
POWER**

**Contributed by Patty Garriock**

“One of the most difficult things to give away is kindness, for it is usually returned.”

- Mark Ortman.



**Contributed by Norm Arsenault:**

Make use of your green bin to compost. It's easy and the compost can be reused to improve soil. Paper towels, tea bags, coffee ground, pet waste in compostable bags, brown cardboard, paper bags, egg cartons (all customer small) food products including fish, meat, cake, vegetables, fruit peels...all are compostable. See <https://niagararegion.ca/waste/disposal/default.aspx?c=green+bin>.

## Editorial: Flying the flag for NOTL

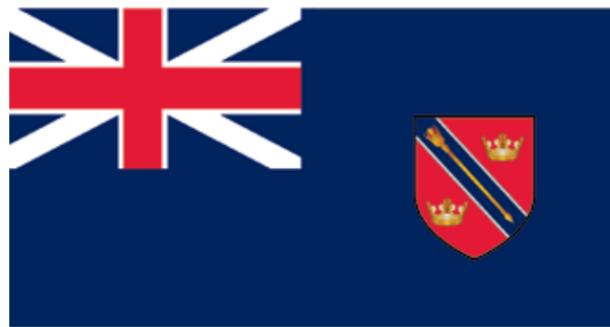
Kevin MacLean  
Managing Editor

Occasionally, some of the best ideas are the simple ones, those hiding in plain sight. The why-didn't-we-think-of-that-before ideas.

They need not be life-shaping, world-changing concepts.

Take Norm Arsenault's wavin' flag idea.

After seeing people chatting on social media about a) the fact Niagara-on-the-Lake has its own flag (like many municipalities), b) that many didn't even know the town has had a flag since 2013 and c) people thought it was pretty cool looking, the NOTL councillor had a brilliant idea.



Why not see if we can find a supplier who can produce the flag so people in town can fly it? Simple.

So, he quietly went about sourcing a supplier and figured out a reasonable cost (\$25 for a three- by five-foot custom-made flag).

Working with fellow politicians Allan Bisback and Gary Zalepa, he took it a step further: helping a good

cause.

They got the NOTL air cadets involved and decided any profits from the sale of the flags will go to the 809 Newark Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron.

It's a wonderful, community-building idea that in this era of COVID-19 is a welcome respite from news about social distancing, case counts and fears of a second

wave.

But there is a catch. Arsenault's supplier needs a minimum order of 200 flags confirmed by May 24. That should be easily achieved. Given the community spirit in Niagara-on-the-Lake, we hope to reach and surpass that goal with ease.

Just send an email with your name, address, phone number and quantity of flags (yes, order as many as you want!) to [notlflagpride@gmail.com](mailto:notlflagpride@gmail.com).

We encourage residents and businesses to consider ordering a flag and, as Arsenault said in announcing this project, fly it with pride on Canada Day – and every day.

[editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)



## More planning needed as town economy reopens

Dear editor:

In the space of a week, Niagara-on-the-Lake has gone from implementing strict measures intended to reduce the risk of local residents contracting COVID-19 to essentially welcoming tourists back to town.

We've gone from closed public washrooms and no parking in Old Town, with signs at main routes into town advising visitors to stay home, and illegally parked cars being ticketed or towed, to Queen Street being open for business and parking.

Why? The rationale, according to media releases issued by NOTL, is that

Ontario has allowed retail businesses that can safely offer curbside pickup to reopen.

However, the fact of the matter is that even though some businesses in town will be able to meet provincial criteria to open, the higher level of risk that COVID-19 poses for many town residents due to their advancing years – which was the reason for the parking restrictions, closed washrooms and signs in the first place – has not gone away. Nor have Ontario's guidelines advising people to stay at home.

Therein is the dilemma. As tourist-based as NOTL's

economy is, the town still needs to get it back up and running again as soon as it's safe to do so, but without creating undue risks for residents.

However, Ontario's planned and measured approach to reopening businesses, as well as the innovative approaches many communities and businesses are taking to support this, seem a better way to go than the flip-flop measures that have been implemented here.

For example, rather than lifting the parking restrictions on Queen Street, would it make more sense to close it to vehicle traffic

altogether, which would allow businesses to mark off areas on the street for their curbside service patrons to lineup and physically distance safely while waiting to shop?

It would certainly seem to be a better strategy than closing public facilities – which created its own health hazards as some visitors opted to relieve themselves behind bushes and trees.

Let's hope that as NOTL begins to reopen our town leaders take the time to really think through and implement the measures we need to keep residents safe.

**Terry Davis**  
NOTL

## Not following reopening rules could lead to unmitigated disaster

Dear editor:

The recently reported incidences of visitors to Old Town during the pandemic shutdown is a precursor or harbinger of what's to come as Ontario opens up its economy and millions of tourists descend on the Greater Niagara Region.

How we transition and navigate to the new post COVID-19 norm will be critical to mitigate the spread of the virus as

proven to result from overcrowding.

To date, absent any case data from the Region of Niagara, which Lord Mayor Betty Disero has repeatedly requested without success, we have to assume we have been spared a heavy caseload and subsequent deaths.

Residents, and in particular our senior population, are dreading the massive influx of tourists into Old

Town. Sadly, they fear the worst is still to come as NOTL could be a potential COVID-19 hotspot.

As our elected officials wrestle with a staged reopening post COVID-19 what will it look like? Life will experience unimaginable changes, much more than society's after 9/11. References will be made to life before COVID-19 much the same as life before the Second World

War, computers, etc.

Will council be forced by the events of the day to finally address the parking or lack thereof, which we have read about for years? Will Queen Street be closed to traffic with out-of-town parking to open up social distancing? Will the wearing of masks be mandatory etc.?

The challenges are enormous, wide-reaching and lifestyle changing

long term. Our officials must be spending many sleepless nights as they attempt to thread the needle to implement a plan that will no doubt be fraught with unpredictable consequences.

We all must be more vigilant and strictly adhere to the guidelines of government and local officials.

Of course, as the lord mayor previously stated, “We cannot legislate

for stupidity.” We still witness far too many bad actors in our community, like the returning vacationers we read about re: the incidence with the woman and her husband at Shoppers Drug Mart.

Not to follow the guidelines and force a second shutdown is unimaginable and would be an unmitigated disaster.

**Samuel Young**  
NOTL

**Although our Branch is closed during the Covid-19 situation we will continue to provide support to our Veterans and their Families.**

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# OPINION

## Mayor's opinion: NOTL is easing restrictions, but let's keep our guards up just in case

Lord Mayor Betty Disero  
Special to The Lake Report

From the outset of this crisis, my focus has been to protect the health and safety of our community.

When the province declared a state of emergency on March 17, which still stands, we complied with the provincial emergency orders, closing public facilities, including washrooms and outdoor amenities. Parks were open for walking or cycling through, but groups of more than five were not permitted to congregate.

We have tried to assist all NOTL businesses, encouraging people to come in and pick up or drop off what they need, buy local, get takeout from restaurants, pick up at wineries and greenhouses, but during this time, people should not be driving only to hang out or sightsee.

In order to deter sightseers, we used every tool

available to us – signage, parking bans, videos, media interviews and advertisements, and public messages – to ask them to please stay home now and come back later. We're a proud and friendly town and we want to be able to host them in a way that will make us proud and you happy.

While the Heritage District experienced a large amount of traffic on the May 2-3 and May 9-10 weekends (10,452 and 6,336 vehicles respectively) the parking ban was successful with only a small percentage stopping and parking illegally. If the parking ban had not been put in place, there may have been thousands who stopped.

Unfortunately, the stories are true about people using both public and private spaces to relieve themselves. Many visitors arrived expecting access to public and/or private facilities.

When they realized those facilities were unavailable,

some threatened essential business operators and a few made a very disappointing spectacle of themselves.

The province is starting to roll out recovery measures and looks toward restarting the economy. In addition to provincial parks reopening, an expanded number of retail businesses have been identified as essential and are permitted to operate with curbside pickup.

In response, we have lifted our parking ban and worked the Niagara Region health department to safely reopen the Queen's Royal Park and Market Street washrooms as of Friday, May 15, with strict criteria. We must open our washrooms now to avoid a different public health issue.

Changes continue to come our way, but it is not yet time to let our guards down or resume business as usual. While we will follow the province's lead, we continue to ask visitors to please stay home for now and visit us

later.

And, to all of our citizens, stay home whenever possible, walk from home if you can, please keep a distance of six feet (two metres) if you have to go out, and keep washing your hands and refraining from touching your face.

The long weekend is coming and we will do everything in our power to try to manage the potential crowds, but while physical distancing is recommended by the provincial government and essential in helping to avoid the spread of the virus, there is currently no regulation that enables us to enforce this.

Please, let's each and every one of us continue to do our part together.

For the most up-to-date information about how we're responding to all COVID-19 related changes, visit [notl.com/COVID-19](http://notl.com/COVID-19) or follow the town on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

## Pandemic will mean major changes for us all

Dear editor:

Trying to sort through all the details about COVID-19 is a challenge for all of us when there is so much information and misinformation out there.

The great claimer of "Fake News" is one of the sources of actual Fake News: ingest or swallow Lysol? Really?

And then there are the conspiracy theorists who invent their own view of reality, selectively choosing information to make their case, and misrepresenting known facts or fabricating their own. Unfortunately these theories get passed on through social media and appear to be the truth.

One such speculation is that the COVID-19 came out of a lab in China and that there is a grand plan for the country to profit through the sale of needed products throughout the world.

The reality is that China had geared up to deal with the initial outbreak of COVID-19, including

quickly building a number of 1,000-bed hospitals. Included in the build-up would have been production of masks, gowns and other treatment of supplies and equipment.

We need to remember that China is not "all Red" as often assumed about Communist countries. It is both a Communist and a capitalist society, with many entrepreneurs.

Now that the virus is somewhat under control in China, the capacity is available for export. And as always happens when there is a perceived large market, many firms enter the market and overcapacity in the new industry occurs.

We will see the same thing happen in North America with overcapacity and great surpluses once the virus becomes mostly under control.

China is always a fascination for us. China "has a plan" and is aggressively expanding its presence around the world. One thing

it is doing is buying port and other facilities in many countries. Better to buy a country than to go to war and destroy all the facilities and infrastructure through bombing.

And where does China get money to buy up distressed or other businesses? From profits from being the production centre for the world. We are the buyers of Chinese goods and therefore are contributors to their plans.

The current outbreak of COVID-19 is very clearly having a serious impact on the health of both people and the economy. While we are dealing with this as best we can, when and how we will come out of this crisis is still uncertain.

But what is clear is that there will be some long-term adjustments. Whether many learn from the current crises is yet to be seen.

Those whose parents who were greatly affected by the Great Depression, will remember the impact it had on

them and how careful they were afterward about how they spent and saved their money "for a rainy day."

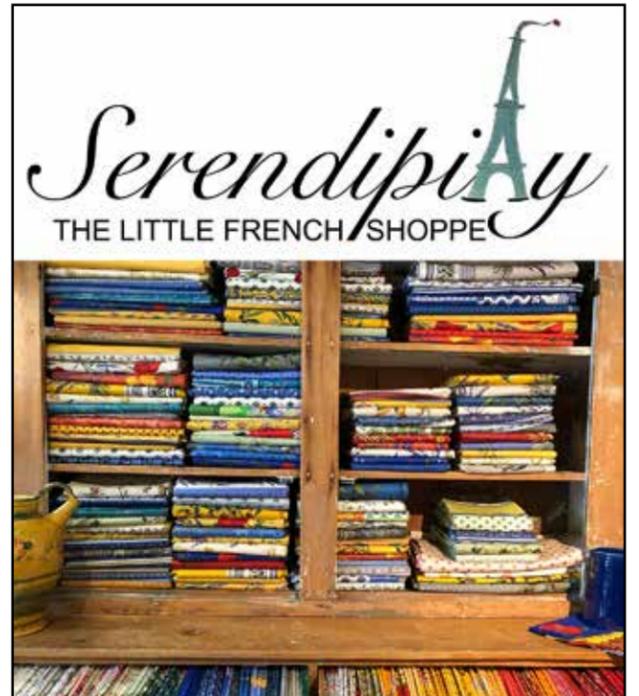
What we have had is not just rain but a storm. The possibility of a rainy day suggested that one should have at least one month of expenses in the bank, preferably three months.

But when you are maxed-out, the only hope is Big Government support. Will lessons be learned or will society go back to believing that you can borrow and consume and live up to the max of your credit score and, in time, give your home to lenders through reverse mortgages to support a perceived lifestyle, hoping that you don't live too long?

As someone once said, this too will pass! Here's to a brighter future.

In the meantime, keep safe and keep well. And as Red Green would say as he closed out his show, "We're all in this together."

**Bill Garriock**  
NOTL



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# U.S. fighter jets **soar** for front-line workers



NOTL photographer Frank Hayes captured this picture of U.S. Air Force planes flying above Lake Ontario on Tuesday. He was up at the top of the Queenston hill, near the entrance to the Queenston Heights Restaurant. The U.S. Air Force, similar to the Canadian Snowbirds, flew planes to salute the country's front-line workers. The planes in the photo are a KC-135 refuelling plane and an F-35 Stealth fighter jet. FRANK HAYES

## Town's tactics **hurt** small businesses

Dear editor:  
I write to say I wholeheartedly support the sentiments of Earle Vance re: gestapo tactics, ("Pandemic Gestapo tactics are unnecessary," letter, May 7).  
In my opinion, the mayor

and the council have gone over the top in virtue signaling.  
What I don't see in your newspaper is a recognition of the impact these tactics have on the well-being of people who have worked for

years to establish a business and a community, and are struggling desperately to make a living.  
Your editorial in the same edition asking the Niagara Parks Commission to close parking lots adjacent to

wide-open spaces and healthy outdoor activity is absurd.  
We can open garden centres but can't go for a walk in the park. Ridiculous!  
**John Vanzante**  
NOTL



## Old Town parking ban was **unfair**

Dear editor:  
When we moved to the Old Town area of Niagara-on-the-Lake last December, we were so pleased to find a friendly town.  
The COVID-19 crisis unveiled a very different side of this town.

The municipality's parking ban (since rescinded) and enforcement in the Old Town was not fair to people who live within the NOTL boundaries but found it too far to just walk to NOTL parks or the Niagara River. They have as much right as Old Town residents to enjoy it.

In general, visitors from out of town have the right to enjoy NOTL as long as they respect social distancing.

These are the people who are bringing the money in town.

We know that international tourism is not about to pickup anytime soon. Let's respect Toronto visitors. We will need them.

I just read in your newspaper that people are urinating in public spaces because our public washrooms are closed. When you gotta go, you gotta go ... I am not saying it is right, but I can see how someone would come to that.

Town council should think of the future. Instead of giving parking tickets, the town should make sure people respect social distancing and assist businesses to make visitors respect the rules.

**Corinne Olivieri**  
NOTL

## Closing washrooms was **short-sighted**

Dear editor:  
While I am in favour of social distancing completely, I think the actions taken in our town to close all public washrooms were very short-sighted and potentially increased risk to public safety.

Yes, we don't want tourists flocking to Niagara-on-the-Lake and doing all we can to discourage that is welcomed.

However, let's face basic human facts. If a person needs a restroom, that person needs a restroom. By closing all public facilities, the town created a health risk for all of us. I don't think I need to describe what those are.

Further, when this is all over, visitors will remember how they were treated during this era of the pandemic.

Finally, continue to issue tickets, fines, etc. but remember these are human beings you are dealing with and a little kindness will go a long way.

Since writing this note, I have learned the municipality will reopen the public washrooms this Friday. Correcting this mistake quickly will go a long way in protecting our tourist town status in the future.

**Lorraine Horton**  
NOTL

## Bring back NOTL's old hospital

Dear editor:  
In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, I feel the NOTL hospital should be recertified. It could be used for COVID-19 patient beds now and the hospital could be later repurposed for palliative care, hospice and emergency care.

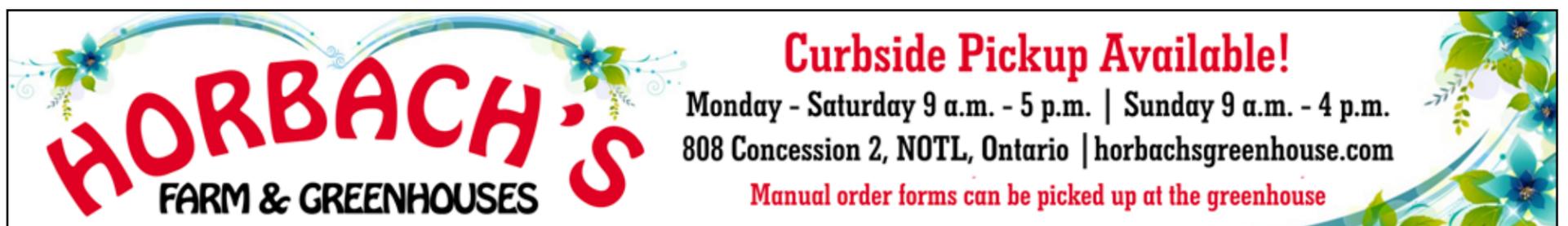
We have an aging population that may wish to care for their "own." For residents and tourists, a viable emergency department is necessary. The EMS is not the only solution for all emergencies. It takes at least a half-hour to bring a patient to a hospital in St. Catharines or Niagara Falls. These hospitals are overcrowded emergency facilities and can be short of beds.

The Montessori School that operates from a wing in the NOTL hospital attests to the fact that this hospital can still be useful. The school would find ample space by operating out of the former Parliament Oak School site if given a reasonable lease.

This piece of land and school are vacant and the owner can be approached.

The NOTL hospital should never been allowed to close.

**Ramune Angela Bell**  
NOTL



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# With lake level peaking, flood concerns **dissipate**

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

Lake Ontario is expected to reach its peak height within days, with the forecasts confirming that there is a very low risk of a repeat of last spring's heavy flooding in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

So residents of NOTL who feared floods again this spring can rest easy, says resident expert Ron Simkus, who closely monitors water levels and reports by a variety of government agencies.

Simkus said his lake level analysis predicts that despite recent rises in water levels, Lake Ontario already

has begun to crest.

"The lake has stopped rising and it is going to continue to fall now," Simkus said in an interview. "Even in the last four days its begun to go down, so I think we can say it's cresting imminently."

The Great Lakes International Co-ordinating Committee's six-month forecast released this month confirms the crest, proving to be more optimistic than prior forecasts for March and April.

As of May 6, Lake Ontario was 133 millimetres lower than it was a year ago, when the lake level rose

due to a combination of heavy rain and high water in both the Ottawa and Niagara rivers, Simkus said.

A recent update from the Ottawa River Regulation Planning Board confirmed that flooding will not be a factor this year, eliminating one of the factors that could cause a rise in Lake Ontario.

For those still in fear of flooding, Simkus reassures residents that the risk is quite low.

"There's always potential that you'll have short-term damage to the shore or flooding. It's possible but not probable."



Sandbags at River Beach Drive in 2019. FILE PHOTO/DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA



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Image Detail: Tom Thomson, Twilight, pre-1914 Collection of Samuel E. Weir ©RiverBrink Art Museum

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NOTL copes w

## The Checkout: Pandemic forces food stores to improve online retailing techniques

NOTL resident John Scott is chair of Niagara College, as well as a former CEO, current board member and retail adviser in the grocery industry. He offers his perspectives from the grocery aisles in the era of COVID-19.

John Scott  
Special to The Lake Report

There's nothing like a crisis to stimulate creative thinking resulting in permanent change in the food retail sector.

The Great Depression led a small-town store manager named Michael J. Cullen to develop a revolutionary shopping model called the "King Kullen Supermarket" on Long Island, which focused on low food prices by assembling as many products as possible under one roof.

In the recession of the late 1980s Sol Price (having sold his supermarket chain in California) started the concept of the "Price Club" (later merged with Costco) the idea of which was to provide wholesale prices to small business and professional consumers.

The same difficult economic period also put wind into the sales of Walmart as that fledgling chain moved into grocery retailing. Each of these new innovations "stunned" the industry but induced welcome and lasting adjustments by literally every player.

So, when internet shopping was first introduced, the industry experimented with a plethora of models but none seemed able to gain significant traction. Europe and Australia performed better than North America, but overall success was sporadic and somewhat sleepy at best.

All of that changed in 2017 when Amazon purchased Whole Foods for the princely sum of \$13.7 billion. Here was an industry interloper – a tech giant – moving into the sector clearly needing a foundation of physical stores but with



Online grocery shopping has become the new normal for many people during the pandemic. PIXABAY

obvious intentions to move to efficient online delivery. Everyone in the sector immediately reviewed their offering and assessed appropriate future options.

If I say online was "sleepy" to that point – I overstate the reality. The amount of business done online at that point was 1.5 per cent of the \$100 billion Canadian industry.

The sticking points were twofold: first, there had been a huge consumer swing to fresh product and since online made it impossible to see or squeeze a product, it created a reticence to the selection of produce or meats; second, delivery times were scheduled at a future date in two-hour "slots" and our mobile society had limited patience in accommodating non-instant delivery.

Despite these issues the industry persevered and several new models were implemented. The most successful wide-scale concept was "click and collect" which has been adopted by a number of chains worldwide and is successfully used by Loblaws and its franchises (including Valu-mart in Niagara-on-the-Lake).

However, there were other sound methods, such as the dedicated "picking" warehouses and delivery used by Grocery Gateway or the massive robotic concept successfully developed by Ocado in the U.K. (and which will soon operate in

difficulty in scheduling delivery was eliminated overnight by the isolation requirement. With no barriers to ordering fresh, together with the new flexibility in delivery times, demand surged.

In late March, the percentage of online grocery sales increased in some areas to an astounding 22 per cent before settling in April to a constant 12 per cent.

Some chains in urban areas temporarily closed a couple of low volume stores to facilitate full-time order "picking" by staff. Others added picking to the responsibilities of newly augmented night stocking crews. The volume became so intense that the delivery slots backed up to as long as 10 days. Sobeys' and Ocado moved up the launch of their new Toronto offering to April. In short, the industry was once again moving quickly to accommodate a changing consumer responding to a crisis.

Through April, the industry found its legs and developed the capacity to respond more quickly to all orders. In addition, consumer habits have evolved and most are now placing large orders less frequently.

Picking mistakes have substantially lessened and consumer satisfaction appears to be increasing. It's unlikely that the current high levels of online shopping will be sustained after the pandemic but it's equally unlikely that there will be a return to 4 per cent.

Consumers have experienced the offering and they like what they see. That being the case, look for continued adjustments and innovation over the months ahead. After all, the role of our industry is to delight the consumer with the best possible offering at the most reasonable price and we will ensure that objective is achieved in all of our delivery systems.

Have questions about the grocery business? Email editor@niagaranow.com.

Canada in partnership with Sobeys). Also experiencing varying degrees of success were independent services such as Instacart, which purchased from any outlet specified by the consumer (in essence a personal shopping service).

Over the years, the retailers have been working with the fresh product sector to design packaging that preserves and displays freshness and safety in both produce and meat. The purpose was not only portion and in-store convenience but also to enable the consumer to have confidence in ordering fresh branded product online.

It quickly became much easier to order certain brands of tomatoes, berries, strawberries, grapes, beef, pork or chicken by clicking the labelled item rather than taking a chance on bulk. Score one for the industry: impediment number one – how to buy fresh online – was gradually being resolved.

The result of this concentrated effort and significant investment over two years was a paltry increase in online shopping to 4 per cent. Increasingly retailers were seeing online as a necessary incremental service rather than a main avenue of business.

Enter COVID-19. We weren't ready. The systems for online were in place but not geared to handle the sudden deluge of orders.

Issue number two: the

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

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Last Week: The more you take of me, the more you leave behind. What am I

Answer: Footsteps

Also accepted: Time

Answered first by: Margie Enns

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Kathy Neufeld, Howard Jones, Margaret Garaughty, Janice Hall, Sue Davies, Sylvia Wiens, Janice Hall,

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

with COVID-19

## Technology helps RiverBrink stay 'open'

Linda Fritz  
The Lake Report

Although RiverBrink Art Museum has been open to the public since 1981, it is only in the last five years that it became a provincially incorporated not-for-profit organization. Prior to this, RiverBrink was the public arm of the Weir Foundation. It is one of only three public art museums in Niagara.

But what times we are living in. Our institutions, particularly small ones such as RiverBrink, which are so dependent on visits from the public, are having to deal with so many things in new and different ways. Staffing, security and the future are at the top of the list.

RiverBrink is working hard to get ready for a new opening day, which we hope will be soon. In the meantime, staff continue to work to make the collection accessible. They are also creating a new website, rescheduling exhibitions and programs, as well as planning new activities.

Technological innovation is definitely helping to keep RiverBrink "open."

Director/curator Debra Antoncic introduced a new wrinkle to her Coffee with the Curator series. For a few months now, she has invited visitors to join her for in-depth talks and tours of both exhibitions and individual works of art. In April, she held her coffee



RiverBrink Art Museum. FILE PHOTO

time using Zoom technology. With 21 participants, it was a resounding success. Another session was held May 8.

Zoom has proven useful in other RiverBrink pursuits. Earlier this year, the museum requested a feasibility study to examine how best to improve the use of the buildings and grounds. The first draft of the report from Lord Cultural Resources was discussed via Zoom by the board of directors in early April. When the final report is available, the board will again meet to discuss it.

When Samuel Weir left his former home and collections to the public, he possessed more than paintings, drawings and sculpture. His library contains books and materials about art and artists, and it

includes rare materials from early Ontario explorers such as Father Hennepin and George Heriot.

Although the present visual exhibitions are not available electronically, you may want to check out Dr. Earle Waugh's blog. It can be found on RiverBrink's website under the heading "About us." Earle, who in a previous life was a professor at the University of Alberta, has been looking at some of the rare materials in the library. His latest blog is about "The Studio," an art magazine that was published in London from 1893 to 1964.

As well, look for "Weir Collection Wednesday." Debra and the staff are creating YouTube videos that will examine notable works from the Samuel E. Weir Collection at River-

Brink. Each episode will be released on the last Wednesday of the month. The videos will be available on Facebook and Instagram as well as YouTube, and can be accessed from RiverBrink's website.

The gift shop is an important part of RiverBrink's offerings. Thanks to social media, it is possible to follow links from RiverBrink to the web pages of the artists and artisans who normally sell their works at the museum.

RiverBrink also continues to offer opportunities for volunteers. In normal times, they are most often seen at the front desk in the gift shop or assisting at fundraising events. Other volunteers may participate on committees.

One area where volunteers are very much needed is on the board of directors. We would love to hear from potential volunteers who may have worked with other not-for-profit organizations, with galleries or museums or who have an interest in public relations and fundraising. A member of the board recruitment committee will be delighted to talk to you about what possibilities might be just right for you. Please email [manager@riverbrink.org](mailto:manager@riverbrink.org).

RiverBrink Art Museum is located at 116 Queenston St. in the village of Queenston. Phone 905-262-4510.

## Newark Neighbours Food Bank still operating

Laura Gibson  
Newark Neighbours

Although our Thrift Shop remains closed, the Newark Neighbours Food Bank continues to serve those in need. The past couple of months have presented challenges, however, as a result of our dedicated volunteers and the generosity of this community, I am pleased to say we are running smoothly each week.

A huge thank you goes out to all those kind individuals who have sent

us monetary donations or dropped off food for our clients. I would also like to thank our volunteers who have been willing and able to be at the food bank each week to accept donations and provide food to our clients. Make some noise for them!

We continue to be amazed by the generous donations made by groups in our community. Our heartfelt thanks go out to the following organizations for their support:

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Pharmacy, LTD Distillery, Vineland Growers, St. Davids Lions Club, Mr. Furnace, St. Andrew's Church, Kent Farms, Walker's Country Market, The Scottish Loft, NOTL Pickleball Club, NOTL Tuesday Golf Ladies, Stone Road Village residents, Lewiston Rotary Club, Locomotive Market, St. Davids Firefighters, OPSEU Local 215, St. Davids-Queenston United Church and Ekcouture Inc.

Newark Neighbours has also been able to provide

material for groups making masks and donated warm clothing to some of the farm workers in need.

Our food bank is open each Tuesday and Thursday morning from 9:30 until noon. We can accept food donations at this time, however we ask that you still hold on to any clothing or household donations until we are able to reopen our Thrift Store.

Please contact us at 905-468-3519 should you or someone you know need assistance with food.

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**Let's listen to our frontline heroes when they say 'Staying HOME means Saving Lives!'.**  
I also want to say a big thank you to everyone who is working during this time to keep our community safe - we will not forget what you've done for us.

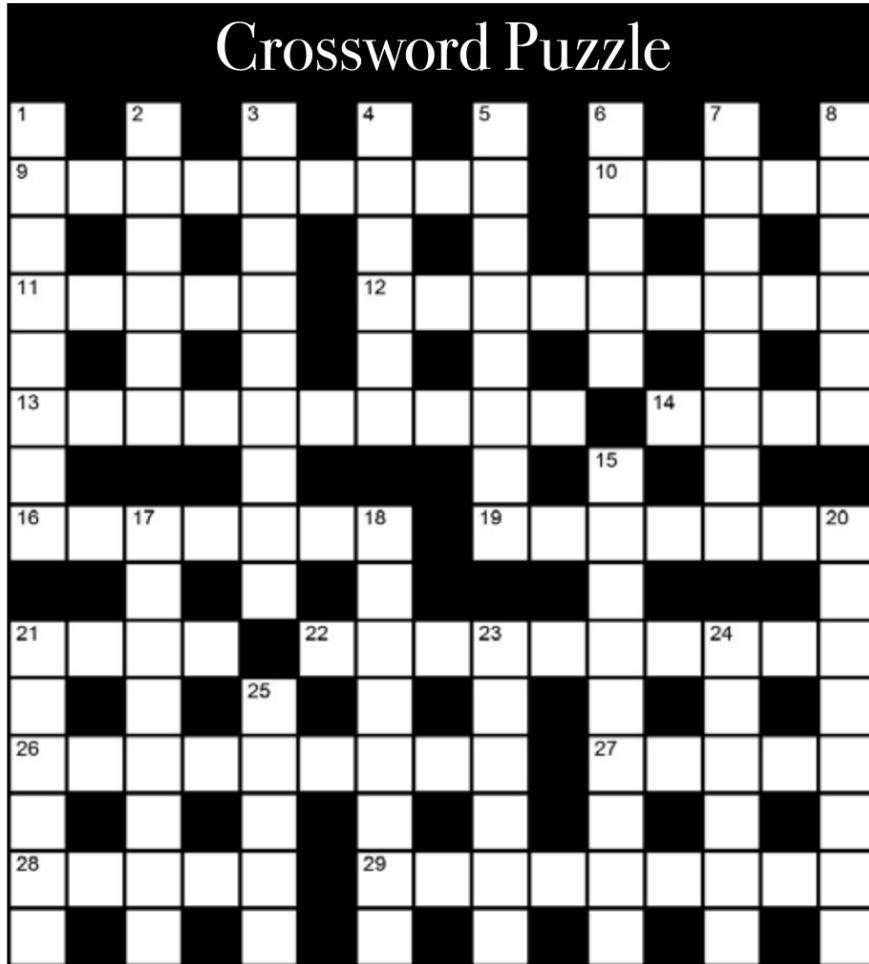
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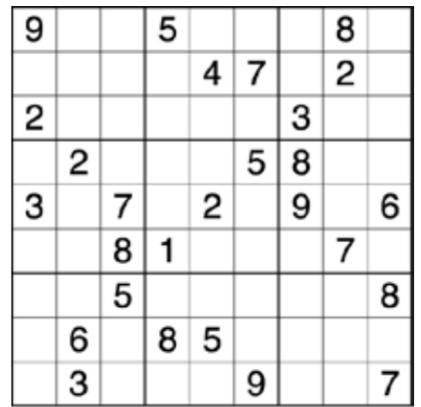
*Have some fun*

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

- Across**
- 9. Radical (9)
  - 10. Accommodate (5)
  - 11.. Find the answer (5)
  - 12. Holy Land (9)
  - 13. Increase in speed (10)
  - 14. Finishes (4)
  - 16. "The great grey-green, greasy --- River" (Kipling) (7)
  - 19. Scholar (7)
  - 21. Possesses (4)
  - 22. Quantifiable (10)
  - 26. Heaven or hell, maybe (9)
  - 27. Sort of line dance (5)
  - 28. Marijuana (5)
  - 29. Dear (9)
- Down**
- 1. Army dining room (4,4)
  - 2. Leaning letter (6)
  - 3. Armed resistance (9)
  - 4. Smoked herring (6)
  - 5. Sporting competitors (8)
  - 6. Silence! (5)
  - 7. Group of spectators (8)
  - 8. Makes over (6)
  - 15. Grease (9)
  - 17. Lack of variety (8)
  - 18. Unequal (3-5)
  - 20. Adolescent (8)
  - 21. E.g. Seville (6)
  - 23. Drowsy (6)
  - 24. Outlaw (6)
  - 25. Experiment (5)



Last issue's answers



# NOTL fire recruits train at old nurses' residence

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake firefighter recruits spent Saturday training at the old nurses' quarters on Byron Street.

Fire chief Nick Ruller said the training, which is the first session since the global COVID-19 pandemic put things on hold, will help prep the recruits to get out in the field.

He said the NOTL fire department has had access to the former nurse residence for almost two years.

The department uses it for recruits and regular firefighters to practise skills, drills and scenarios. They "fill it with theatrical smoke and the crews have the opportunity to go through and perform various search drills and things like that throughout the structure," Ruller said.



Firefighter recruits train at the old nurses residence on Byron Street. SUPPLIED/NICK RULLER

"Because it hasn't been occupied in a while, and it's an interesting layout, it allows us a lot of versatility to change the layouts on the interior and provide kind of a fresh environment every time the crews utilize that space."

He said 15 new recruits were training Saturday.

"They're just coming to the end of their recruit training program, which is about 300 hours," Ruller

said. With eight instructors on hand training them, "This was an opportunity for them to get together, the first time since the pandemic in early March, which ended their regular training schedule."

The recruits are prepping for "live fire" training on May 23 in Fort Erie, "so that they just had a chance to get their hands on all the equipment again, kind of acquaint themselves," he



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said. Though the fire department isn't required to social distance during training, firefighters are taking measures to be safe nonetheless.

"We split them into two groups, with the intent of trying to limit some of their exposure to each other," Ruller said.

They also set up a station for each firefighter and they were wearing surgical masks when they didn't have their self-contained breathing apparatus on.

"And then the usual, you know, hand hygiene and all that good stuff."

Ruller said it's been an "interesting few months" for the NOTL fire service.

"With us specifically it's been challenging at times because the information changes so frequently that we're constantly revising kind of our strategies once we get a little more information what the best practices are based on public health's recommendations."

He said the live fire day will be a "full day" with "Class A" burns, which use ordinary combustibles like skids and straw instead of fuel props.

"It is kind of a preferred

training method from our perspective because it's far more realistic to what would be a typical structure fire, because your smoke that is generated from Class A fuels tends to be a little bit darker, whereas when you're just dealing with fuel burning props there's not a lot of smoke."

The goal is to get the recruits out operating "without restrictions," he said.

"Up until this point they've started to respond to incidents, but we've been holding them back until we complete the live fire training."



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## Letter from the U.K.

### Tea time in lockdown – a cuppa on the doorstep

*Longtime NOTL resident Susan Hall, a warden at St. Mark's Anglican Church, has been unexpectedly caught up in the COVID-19 pandemic while visiting family in Brighton, England. This is her fifth letter home to Niagara-on-the-Lake.*

Susan Hall  
 Special to The Lake Report

Well! What now? To listen to the radio in the last few days one would be forgiven for thinking the lockdown was going to be over on Monday.

However, Boris Johnson allegedly has developed a new respect for COVID-19, since his near-death experience and is rumoured to be in favour of caution. Without an effective vaccine each business that opens up increases the risk of infection taking hold again in society, in turn exacerbat-

ing the health risk for those of us over sixty.

Last night (Sunday) we watched Boris' much-anticipated announcement. The new slogan for the nation is no longer the definitive, understandable "Stay At Home, Save Lives and Protect the NHS" but "Stay Alert, Control the Virus, Save Lives," which does not have the same cachet somehow and certainly lacks clarity.

For this reason Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland decided to stay with the original version, for the time being. People are supposed to go back to work if they cannot work from home but should avoid public transport. That makes commuting to cities, while staying safe, a huge challenge.

This morning people are worried, wondering, "Should I have gone to work or should I stay at

home?" The question facing parents is, "How can we go back to work when the schools are not open?"

There is no, or little, information about the protection provided in the workplace to keep people safe when they return. One positive measure that was announced is the plan to publish the location of "hot spots" of viral activity so people can govern themselves accordingly. But so far this potentially useful information is not available. More information is promised soon.

One interesting question that came up this week was what do all the countries that have handled the COVID crisis well, namely New Zealand, Germany and the Scandinavian countries, have in common. The answer is they are all run by women. Ponder on that at home, a topic that should

generate some lively debate. I have several theories as to why that may be but I don't think it's a meaningless coincidence.

Last week was all talk of V.E. Day. Boris is being challenged to channel his inner Churchill, to guide the nation in navigating its way out of lockdown. In view of that ideal, his recent announcement was a bit of an anticlimax.

Our friendly street was considering holding a street party. However, we are still being strongly cautioned to stay at home and have tea instead. Nevertheless some streets, like ours, held parties on their doorsteps, some draped in patriotic bunting, and keeping within the distancing rules.

**Read the full story online – and discover the special birthday surprise. Go to [www.niagaranow.com/news.phtml/3877](http://www.niagaranow.com/news.phtml/3877).**

## Blanche Quinn was quick-witted and caring

*Continued from Front Page*

— though she only flew once solo, Quinny says.

Blanche spent her retirement years living with Paula and Quinny and her grandchildren Sam, Bailey and Hunter.

Quinny says Blanche was particularly fond of all her grandchildren.

"She would take as many grandchildren as she could up north for two weeks," he recalls. "They'd go fishing and swimming."

She also put on Christmas every year for the family.

"The whole family would gather at the house," he said. "It was always a big party at Christmas — a big turkey, big dinners around the table. A lot of, well, confusion," he jokes.

Paula said just about everyone who knew Blanche was fond of her and her sense of humour.

"She was just so darn funny. Her letters to the editor were hilarious, and that's how she got so popular I think, because people would wait for her to write a letter to the editor," Paula says.



Blanche Quinn. SUPPLIED

"And she had a lot of tragedy in her life, so in spite of all of that, her sense of humour was next to none."

Blanche moved to NOTL in 1945. Her husband Lincoln died in a car accident in 1957, leaving her alone with four children when she was in her 30s. She never remarried.

Blanche's granddaughter Sam Quinn echoed the same sentiments about Blanche's humour.

"I mean how she lived to 97 — that's pretty good genes," Sam says. "She always joked that it was from a 'diet free of men and alcohol.'"

Sam remembers a story

of when Blanche bought her an expensive sweater for Christmas.

"I think it was like 80 bucks," she said. "I just remember my grandma making a big deal out of it, being like 'What? How much?' ... she's like 'what's it made out of, virgin sheep?'"

Sam says she "couldn't have asked for a better grandma."

"I'm lucky that she was my grandma. That's for sure," she says. "Along with my parents, she helped raise me into the woman I am today. I like to think I get my quick wit from her."

Blanche was proud of her accomplishments, say Paula and Quinny.

"She was very, very proud of being with the Canadian Forces during World War Two," Paula said. "She was also very proud about being on town council. I mean I don't think council was ever the same after she was on there."

During her time in the war Blanche was a secretary to a general, stationed

in Toronto.

A book about Blanche, titled "I Did It My Way ... That's Why Nothing Works!" is available to read at the NOTL museum, and highlights many stories of her life in town, as well as a couple of her letters to the editor.

A sarcastic newspaper clipping of one of Blanche's letters regarding the Whirlpool Jet Boats reads as follows:

"Wow — heat up the car and de-nude the chickens, we'll run that rascally jet boat out of town. The rhetoric sounds like the gun fight at the OK corral. Evidently, the company is responsible for soil erosion, global warming and post-traumatic stress."

Blanche's obituary says she "wants either Helen Mirren or Meryl Streep to play the role of her on the big screen."

"Now that's OSCAR material."

The town and legion flags were both at half mast Saturday in honour of Blanche. Her family says a celebration of life will be held at a later date.

*Happy Birthday!*



A very special Happy Birthday to my husband, Ted Garrett, who turns 65 years young on May 16th, 2020!  
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## Flower delivery of kindness

When Laurie Gunton reached out to NOTL flower growers to contribute floral donations to area retirement homes for Mother's Day, they came through with flying colours – and 330 beautiful plants.

As a result, flowers were delivered to Ina Grafton Village, Heatherwood Retirement and the Royal Henley last week.

Gunton, who owns a business called Smooth Move for Seniors, says the stunning flowers were made possible thanks to Seaway Farms (Eileen Pillitteri), Hunter Road Greenhouses (Matt Korevaar), Niagara Flower Growers (Kari and Rick Juras), European Planters (Trevor van der Zalm) and Willy's Greenhouse Ltd. (Jen Graham).

**There's no better place to advertise in NOTL than in The Lake Report. Here's a testimonial from one of our recent customers:**

"The Lake Report's beautiful full-page ads have helped significantly to drive business to the Olde Angel Inn takeout window. We put in a discount coupon, and received 53 back in the first weekend. The Lake Report has made it possible to spread the word to all our amazing locals during these unprecedented times. I'm overwhelmed to see our customers supporting us and bringing in their coupon from your paper so that they can enjoy an Angel Inn favourite at home. Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to working with you from here on in."

**Kelly Turner**  
Owner of The Olde Angel Inn



## Obituary

# Blanche Quinn

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of "The Great One", Blanche (Gibson) Quinn at age 97. Blanche came roaring into the 1920s on Dec 23, 1922, and lived her life "full throttle". Predeceased by her husband Lincoln Quinn, son Jimmy, grandson Jeffrey and brother Bruce Gibson. Survived by her children John, Judy, Patrick (Paula), grandchildren Jordon, Morgan, Kevin, Samantha, Bailey and Hunter plus 8 great grandchildren. She was so proud of all of you.

Well regarded and celebrated for her indomitable spirit, quick wit and dry sense of humour, Blanche was a proud member of the Canadian Forces during World War II, raised her family in Niagara-on-the-Lake, retired as the Manager of the Niagara District Airport (first woman zone director of the RCFCFA), Town Council alderman, St. Mark's Church warden, IAAP president, Legion Branch 124 member, and volunteered for numerous organizations/schools.

But what she was most known for was her tongue in cheek letters to the Editor of the local newspaper. These letters made her a beloved town celebrity. A book about her colourful life can be found at the NOTL Museum. She wants either Helen Mirren or Meryl Streep to play the role of her on the big screen. Now that's OSCAR material.

A celebration of life will be held at a later date. Memorial donations to the Lincoln County Humane Society.

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



## Church bells ringing thanks

Rick Felton rings the bells at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. The church was challenged by Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary to join their #BellofThanks ringing out our thanks to all the front-line workers during these unsettling times.

Every day at 7 p.m. right across Canada churches are joining in and St. Andrew's adds its bells to the chorus.

Daily from 10 a.m. to noon, St. Andrew's is collecting donations for Newark Neighbours. Every week for the past five weeks a carload of groceries, usually including toilet paper, is dropped off at Newark to help meet the needs of those in the community.

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Left column: Danna McDonough, Dorothy Booth, Margaret Hobbs. Centre column: Pippa De Leonardis, Joan Maida, Holly Anderson, Gina Snary. Right column: Sonja Schindeler, Suzan Roerich, Dr. Karen Berti (one of our heroes).

## Got it on lockdown

The NOTL COVID-19 Lockdown Support Group has been at it again. Everyone was given a plain mask (purchased from a supplier in St. Catharines), and asked to decorate it. These are the results. Left column: Danna McDonough, Dorothy Booth, Margaret Hobbs. Centre column: Pippa De Leonardis, Joan Maida, Holly Anderson, Gina Snary. Right column: Sonja Schindeler, Suzan Roerich, Dr. Karen Berti (one of our heroes).



## Fore! Golf club auctioning season's first tee time to aid Newark Neighbours

With Premier Doug Ford expected to announce that golf courses can open for play this weekend, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club has come up with an un-fore-gettable idea.

The club is auctioning off the season's first, long-awaited tee time to bidders, with all proceeds going to Newark Neighbours.

Once the season kicks off, it is anticipated only members will be allowed to play due to pandemic restrictions. Club pro Billy Simkin circulated the auction plans to members on Wednesday.

"We have decided to use this opportunity to help do some good in our community and will be auctioning off the opening tee time of the 2020 season, with all proceeds to be donated to Newark Neighbours and their food bank. This tee time will be at 8 a.m. on opening day (TBD)," the club said in an email message.

Bids will be accepted until 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 14, and the winners will be announced Friday morning.

## Penner's opens up

Penner's Building Centre is open to the public again.

Store manager John Doerksen says it is nice to be back to serving customers in the store.

"It's good. It's actually very manageable today because there is a lot less phone calls and we're limiting the number of people coming in."

He said during curbside operations, things were extremely busy.

"The last four weeks we

were absolutely slammed, just go, go, go," he said.

"So this is a relief today."

He suspects people were busy doing home projects while isolating.

"Everybody's into gardens this year," he said.

"And a lot of chicken wire. Everybody's into chickens all of a sudden."

"It's been an adventure because every week something new is coming down the pipe," he said, "and the staff have been phenomenal."



John Doerksen, Lee-Anne Cudney, Isaiah Carriere and Cheryl Ingles work the first day open to the public at Penner's since the government closed hardware stores in March. RICHARD HARLEY

## Dr. Brown: Humans are sociable and isolation takes a toll on us

Dr. William Brown  
Special to The Lake Report

I've been described by my daughter as a natural hermit, to which I confess – but only at times. After all, lots of activities that I enjoy, such as reading, writing, sketching or painting or just trying to get my head around some issue, work best solo with few distractions.

In the days when I regularly ran I usually set out well before sunrise, whatever the weather, to put in my hour or so. Sometimes flying was like that – practising takeoffs and landings, some cross-country trips and instrument approaches were usually solo affairs for me.

But from an evolutionary perspective, humans, like most primates, are a highly social species. Those who have studied chimpanzees in the wild, such as Jane Goodall or in captivity, in the case of Frans De Waal, are struck by just how much time chimps spend grooming one another, picking through the fur of friends and relatives for nits and other irksome fellow travellers.

The human equivalent of grooming in chimps is gossip, according to Robin Dunbar, an evolutionary psychologist at Oxford. He also suggests that it was the challenge posed by increasingly large social groups over the course of the several million-year history of our evolution as a spe-



A woman stands alone at Queen's Royal Park. RICHARD HARLEY

cies that was the primary adaptive force behind the evolution of the human brain.

After all, it takes a lot of intelligence to keep track of who's in, who's out, who's a friend, who's not, and figuring out relationships between others in the group.

So, whatever our needs for solo time, we are a social species and the social isolation imposed by quarantining, restrictions on social gatherings and social distancing, wears thin the longer the isolation.

The first weeks weren't so bad – a chance to stream endless movies and programs (40 or more hours per week on average, according to Netflix, through February and March but tapering these days as the novelty wears off).

The same happened with other social media, with heavy use of Facebook, WhatsApp and Zoom, the new boy on the electronic street. Zoom, especially, has been widely adopted as a meeting tool for churches, businesses, schools and social agencies, among others, as a second-best alternative

to meeting in close proximity to others. Mind you, electronic meetings definitely have their places.

Because the school systems in Alaska are poor, my grandson has been home-schooled for several years by my daughter using among other tools, hand-picked Ted Talks and other rich online programming.

And when it came to meet her annual recertification requirements for orthodontics this year, instead of the usual annual trip to some expensive destination location, for the first time because of COVID-19 the mandatory recertification programs were offered online.

The response of so many educational facilities from public schools to universities to the pandemic offers a glimpse into the post COVID-19 period world for education and meetings. Many educational facilities quickly adapted by creating online courses for their students, many of whom had been sent home.

We won't know how well those courses worked for many months to come but it's probably fair to say that many of those online courses will continue in the post COVID-19 world supported by high-quality small group teaching sessions to provide the necessary close contact discussions that are the hallmark of education at its best.

That takes us full circle

back to social isolation and Dunbar. We can certainly learn a lot using courses on the net, and even have church services using Zoom, but it's no replacement for close contact get togethers.

Why? Because much of what goes on in groups is related to our capacities to read the emotions and even intentions of others based on their facial expressions, manner, tone of voice and gestures – the same social intelligence tools our species acquired over hundreds of thousands of years and, so far at least, not replaced by social media. For business maybe, but without a lot more improvements, not ready for primetime social activities.

As many of you know, my wife is in a local long-term care facility because of dementia. Thank goodness that in this lockdown period, Ruth, a social worker, connects my wife with me, our son, daughter and a good friend, Lynn, for a few priceless minutes each week, for which we are very grateful.

But we can't hug her and that's a big difference, isn't it? It's just not the same. That's some of what's missing in these times. Solitary confinement was never a good idea.

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



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# Nurses of Niagara, we salute you.

Leading up to National Nursing Week, The Lake Report profiled three of Niagara-on-the-Lake's nurse practitioners. Read the stories at [www.niagaranow.com](http://www.niagaranow.com)

## Celebrating National Nursing Week

"We are incredibly grateful to our nurses for the impact they have on Niagara Health, as well as the larger Niagara community," says Niagara Health president Lynn Guerriero. "The strength and perseverance of our nurses in helping to keep our community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic is inspiring."



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**The Lake Report**

# NOTL's historic dock area was once marshland

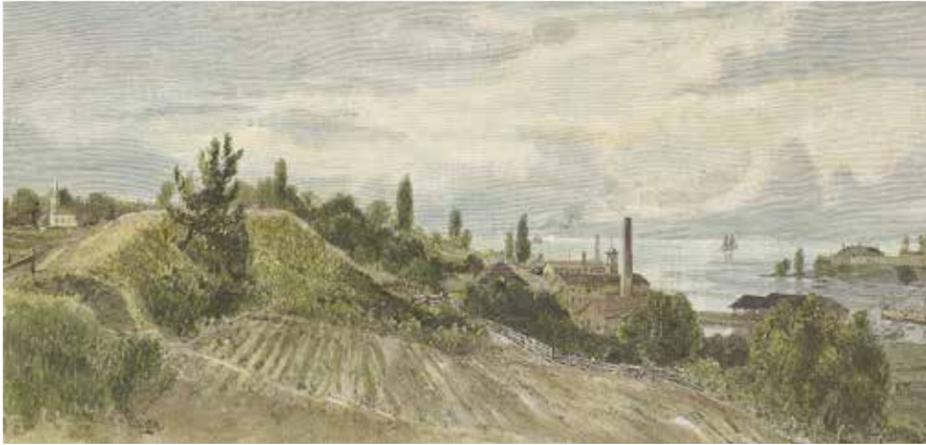
Sarah Kaufman  
Special to The Lake Report

There has been a lot of discussion about the Niagara River waterfront area flooding annually and creating several water issues for residents or businesses in the area. Unfortunately, this area has a long history of flooding every year, dating back to its time as a marshland.

Prior to the 1830s, the area from King Street to just past the current Navy Hall was a marsh that flooded annually, creating a haven for mosquitoes and the like.

The mosquitoes in the woods of early Niagara were bad enough but this marshy, even swamp-like area, was even worse!

Joy Ormsby, former town historian, found in her research that there was a local belief at the time that there was a heavy "vapour" that exuded from the marsh which produced ague, a



Sketch showing the low-level land given to the Niagara Harbour and Dock Company, 1831. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NOTL MUSEUM

form of malaria. It caused periodic fits of shaking and high fevers.

Many members of Lt.-Gov. John Graves Simcoe's entourage complained about the area and early settler Hannah Jarvis of Queenston even wrote in her journal (a link to which you can find on the museum's website) that several families would catch a fever from it and would be confined at once altogether.

Peter Russell, also a for-

mer lieutenant-governor and administrator in Niagara, mentioned that "all his servants were sick with ague and his sister, Elizabeth was obliged to cook dinner." It sounds like Peter was not a fan of his sister's cooking!

Many locals at the time believed the best remedy was a teaspoon of Peruvian bark (from the Cinchona tree) in a glass of brandy. No doubt the spirits offered some temporary relief, but it was likely the quinine in the

tree bark that really did the trick – it is a medicine used to treat malaria. Later in the 19th century it was realized that it was the mosquitoes, not the vapours, that were to blame.

There was very little development in this area due to the marshland. This is likely why even the great Elizabeth Simcoe decided to stay in her tent on the high ground rather than live in the Navy Hall buildings when she first arrived.

Taking a look at early maps or drawings of Niagara you would see the marshy land described. Even driving along the area, or down the river by boat, today you can easily see the incline to the high ground around the dock area of town.

It wasn't until 1832, when the Niagara Harbour and Dock Company acquired the land, that the area began to look more similar to what we see today.

The company pumped out the marshy water with a steam engine and later dredged the land to create a basin that would be excavated 18 feet lower than the water of the Niagara River. Local papers of the time claimed the dredging costs to be about 1,000 pounds.

This new basin would provide winter refuge from the weather and the ice of the Niagara River for ships on Lake Ontario.

The Niagara Harbour and Dock Company would not only build several of

Lake Ontario's early ships but also provided docking, wharfage facilities and repairs.

A number of its account books still survive and are held in the museum's collection. Due to a number of factors the company failed in the 1860s. Our upcoming exhibition, titled All Along the Waterfront, will include more on this company and this special history of our community.

A local newspaper, the Gleaner, said it best in 1832: "Whatever may be the profits ultimately to the Company, it will be a benefit and an ornament to this delightful town; the marsh which was a nuisance will thus be converted, part to a fine basin for vessels and the remainder a fine dry place to build stores or dwelling houses."

*Sarah Kaufman is managing director/curator of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum.*

# Pandemic led to NOTL's first proper hospital

Sarah Kaufman  
Special to The Lake Report

Prior to the 1920s, Niagara-on-the-Lake did not have a proper hospital.

During the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918, an emergency hospital was opened at a private residence owned by an American named William G. Gray of Connecticut.

The house, at 83 Gage St., was likely a summer residence for his family but at the time of the Spanish Flu outbreak they had moved to England and it was left vacant.

It was used by Dr. Rigg and several volunteer staff to treat the sick until the Spanish Flu had passed. Following the First World War, each community received a certain amount of funding from the leftover wartime fundraising of Victory Bonds.

There was a lot of debate in Niagara-on-the-Lake about what the community should do with this money. There was obviously



The Spanish Flu pandemic led to creation of NOTL's Cottage Hospital. KEVIN MACLEAN

a strong case for a new hospital as the Spanish Flu had demonstrated to the community, and to many communities in Canada, the need for proper medical facilities.

It was obvious to many Canadians in 1919 that the state of health services in Canada was in need of serious upgrades. The funding ended up going toward the memorial clock tower

and cenotaph on Queen Street, which commemorated the men, mostly local although some not, who died in the war.

In 1920, after a considerable fundraising drive, 175 Queen St. became the site for the local Niagara Cottage Hospital.

Its last resident was Dr. Hedley L. Anderson, who was one of the town's leading physicians. At the

time of its opening, the new hospital had six small wards.

A baby was delivered on its opening night, perceived by some as a good omen. The building served in this capacity until the hospital on Wellington Street opened in 1951.

*Sarah Kaufman is managing director/curator of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum.*



## Asparagus galore!

Thwaites Farms opened its asparagus stand on the weekend, selling out of the #2 grade bunches before Monday. The stand saw a steady stream of customers yearning for that first taste of NOTL's spring harvest. Top: Colin Patey buys fresh asparagus. Bottom: Nelson Thwaites, Corbin Thwaites and Marykate Kazragis work the stand.



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## Innovation in Wine Country: Part 4

# Ravine's new event centre ready – and waiting

**Editor's note:**

We launched our series on Innovation in Wine Country in the days before COVID-19 changed the landscape and life as we know it. Many of the stories focus on innovation and expansion in the industry, which come at a cost. For two NOTL wineries, plans for payback on recent investments have been derailed since the pandemic torpedoed the tourist season.

Jill Troyer  
 The Lake Report



COVID-19 is keeping Ravine Winery's new event centre empty - for now. SUPPLIED/PAUL HARBER

Just days before COVID-19 started creeping into our collective consciousness, Paul Harber, proprietor of Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery in St. Davids, couldn't contain his excitement as he looked ahead to the summer season on the horizon, and the brand new event centre recently opened and all ready for business.

Less than a week later, he had closed the restaurant, retail and event centre operations and laid off most of his staff.

Temporarily shutting down the business due to the pandemic "was the hardest day of my career.

My heart goes out to our employees," he adds with heartfelt emotion.

The brand new event centre is 4,000 square feet indoors, with a 2,600-square-foot terrace outside. Floor-to-ceiling windows on three sides overlook

Ravine's gently sloping vineyards, taking advantage of the iconic view.

The new space has already hosted conferences, weddings, anniversaries and community events.

"We were counting on

bookings through our spring and summer season to help pay for the investment," Harber explains.

The bookings were there, but now the events aren't happening.

"We haven't seen cancel-

lations, instead people are postponing their events, and pushing them into the off-season," he says.

Ravine is offering takeout meal packages in the meantime and wine production continues. The winery's new

charmat method sparkling Rose was recently released.

"We're operating with a skeleton staff of 13, compared with the 88 people normally working at this time of year," Harber says. "Everyone is wearing four or five hats, doing whatever needs to be done."

The federal wage subsidy program "has really helped us," he says.

"It's a scary time, in uncharted waters. No one has been through anything like this before, no one could plan for this," he laments.

As the Victoria Day long weekend in May rolls around, the restaurant normally sees 300 people a day, compared to 300 people a week during the off-season.

"We have five months of the year to make 12 months work, so losing two months or more is devastating."

But Harber refuses to be discouraged, saying "you have to stay positive, and appreciate the blessed community we have, on a daily basis."

NEXT: Pillitteri Estates Winery, normally bustling with hundreds of tourists a day at this time of year, looks to online sales and exports to help it weather COVID19.

# Sunnybrook's dream is delayed

Jill Troyer  
 The Lake Report

This May long weekend was supposed to be an auspicious date for Sunnybrook Winery on Lakeshore Road in NOTL.

It was the target date to welcome the public into the new retail space, to enjoy craft ciders and charcuterie boards. Instead, the building is shuttered and completion has been stalled.

"We stopped construction in late March, because of COVID-19 restrictions," according to Sunnybrook owner Richard Liu. "We

just have some finishing touches and landscaping left to do."

The new building towers two and a half storeys high and the tasting space features full-height windows on three sides, overlooking the orchards behind.

"We were going for a design of a minimal modern arts style, simple, with interesting angles," Liu explains.

Beyond the new retail area is the cavernous expanse designed for increased production. "We'll have five times more capacity for production here,"

says Liu.

Rows of shiny new tanks loom over the concrete floor. "We've installed 12 new tanks, giving us eight times the capacity of our existing tanks."

Liu plans to resume work on the new building now that construction restrictions have been lifted and he's aiming for July to have everything completed.

"It's a huge investment overall," he acknowledges, so the delay in opening and the current uncertainty is difficult.

"What's going to pay for this building is people buy-

ing pints in here," and that's now delayed indefinitely. "It's tough to say what July and August are going to look like."

In terms of COVID-19's impact on the existing business, overall revenue has dropped by 52 per cent, although Liu notes that sales to the LCBO, which account for 30 per cent of his overall revenue, are stable.

The federal government wage subsidy helps, he says, adding, "We're really lean right now, and we're trying to boost online sales. They've been stronger than I expected, but still are just



Sunnybrook's addition. JILL TROYER

a fraction of our normal sales."

Liu takes a pragmatic view of things.

"It is what it is. If everything can open up, great. But I'm mentally prepared

for the likelihood it's going to be a really weird year."

Once tourism does resume, whenever that may be, Liu is hoping the 30 new parking spaces will all be full, all the time.



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