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Niagara-on-the-Lake's first independent newspaper

November 19, 2020

New COVID restrictions could be 'crippling' for region's restaurants

Disero unsure if 'heavy hand' of region rules is appropriate in NOTL



Chris Rigas stands in his mostly-empty restaurant Old Firehall on Tuesday. He had one table of two. RICHARD HARLEY

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

New COVID-19 rules across the province, along with additional restrictions by Niagara's acting medical officer of health have some restaurant owners across Niagara fearing for the future of their businesses.

Some of those restaurateurs have been loudly critical of the new measures, saying their industry is being unfairly treated.

The restrictions, which came into effect this week, mean restaurants can no longer seat tables of more than four, can't seat people together who aren't in the same household, limits hours of operation

and requires hand sanitizer at every table.

“We’re not here to be an agent of the government, we’re here to conduct business. This order puts us in an adversarial position with a customer.”

CHRIS RIGAS
OWNER, OLD FIREHALL

Chris Rigas, owner of the Old Firehall restaurant in St. Davids, which has been operating for 25 years, said the new regulations will "sink" businesses.

"They're crippling, actually. I'm not gonna pull any punches. These restrictions are an abuse of power by the medical officer of health. They go far beyond anything the province is calling for," Rigas said in an interview Monday night.

If friends can't get together for dinner or colleagues for a business lunch, "It just eliminates so many avenues of revenue for the business," he said.

"We already have a 50 per cent reduction in our seating areas, for the most part, and we have a maximum of 50 people allowed indoors. In the larger places, even if they have the table space, they can't use it. So it's only to a certain point that they're able to conduct

business," he said.

"You can't operate under those conditions — not profitably anyways. It's just next to impossible. This is devastating."

He said he suspects many small businesses will close if the restrictions continue for months — and even some franchises.

He said the restaurant business is "built around socializing."

Restaurants and bars are "a social industry. We're designed around people going out together for dinner," Rigas said.

He said he doesn't think restaurants are any worse for COVID spread than grocery stores.

Continued on Page 2

Bylaw changes to require short-term rentals to be owner occupied by 2024

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is hoping to limit short-term rentals to live-in operations only by 2024.

The move is one in a list of changes to the town's short-term rental licensing bylaw, designed to help tackle the issues caused by the increasing number of

short-term rental houses in town.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said the goal of the bylaw amendments is to prevent hollowing out of the town to short-term rentals and to help combat what's been called "party houses," where people rent a house and hold loud parties, disturbing residents and leaving trash on the roads.

"The issue of more and more short-term rentals is hollowing out neighbourhoods, in terms of full-time occupants, which I think is the wrong direction for the town — or any town — to be going," Disero said in an interview.

"You want to keep well-balanced communities and also there needs to be some accountability and responsibility."

If someone rents a holiday house and turns it into a party, there's got to be some considerations for neighbours. So, for both of those reasons, I think we need to relook at the short-term rental rules and see if we can come to something that will be workable, but pleasurable for neighbourhoods."

While the town final-

izes new amendments to the bylaw, it has ordered a moratorium on short-term rental licences.

The moratorium, effective Oct. 23, is expected to be in effect until the changes to the bylaw are finalized, or unless a decision of council is made otherwise.

Town clerk Peter Todd

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A large pile of garbage bags, but no recycling, outside the Campbell Scott house after a weekend rental. SUPPLIED



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St. Davids restaurant owner says new restrictions will ‘sink’ struggling businesses

Continued from Front Page

“There’s no more risk here than there is at a Costco with 1,000 people. You can go there and get a hotdog with 1,000 of your closest friends, but you can’t sit down to dinner with your next door neighbour.”

However, Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara’s acting medical officer of health, said in a media conference Thursday to announce the restrictions, that restaurants and bars have been where the region is seeing the virus spread in higher volumes.

He cited one “super-spreader” group of young adults linked to 43 cases in bars and restaurants. Public health is not releasing the names of those restaurants.

Rigas said he doesn’t think the spread is directly related to the restaurants.

“They were amongst a group that frequented a couple of different individual places. But it was not because of the socializing within the restaurant. (It) just so happened that when they asked these people for a list of places that they’ve been, the same couple of places, or three places showed up. And it’s not because of any fault of the individual places, just where this group of people were frequenting.”

NOTL Lord Mayor Betty Disero said the bulk of the regulations are provincial.

“Here’s the thing. Notwithstanding the fact that Dr. Hirji supplemented the provincial restriction by saying, ‘Have a hand sanitizer on the table’ and that kind of stuff, I believe the bulk of the hours of operation and all of that is really regulated by the province.”

She said the frustrating part for her is that Niagara-on-the-Lake has been doing so well with numbers, she’s not sure if the “heavy hand” of the region is necessary for the town.

“While I get it, we’re all in a region and we have to work together through this,

each municipality is unique, and maybe the hours the regulated hours and stuff may not be as needed in Niagara-on-the-Lake as they are in some areas that are really, really increasing in numbers.”

She said if Niagara Region and the province are going to restrict businesses so much, those businesses are owed some compensation.

“The compensation package must support the cure, right? If you’re going to tell somebody ‘Well, you’re only limited to these many seats as many hours,’ we’ve got to go back to subsidies and payments while they’re trying to keep their head above water. And this time, I think we have to also ensure that the decisions to go through some of these programs is totally up to the business owner.”

“The last one with respect to rent subsidies, was in the hands of the landowners, who, some of them, were pretty cruel to the business people that rented from them and did not participate and really left their tenants that were trying to make ends meet vulnerable.”

Disero said she thinks the orders “may be a little bit too severe to our restaurants.”

“Like when you go into a grocery store, people are walking around, they’re not all in the same household,” she said.

The Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce also released a statement condemning Hirji’s emergency orders and calling for them to be rescinded.

Rigas said the new restrictions also put a heavy onus on restaurants to enforce the region’s requirements, which he doesn’t agree with.

“We’re not here to be an agent of the government. We’re here to conduct business. This order puts us in an adversarial position with a customer. If they don’t want to divulge that information, what are we supposed to do? Are we

supposed to turn our backs on them and let the money walk out the door?” he said.

“We don’t want that. We’ve had a hard enough time trying to enforce masking requirements and all the other stuff. But at the end of the day, we’re not here to be the police for the regional government.”

He said he thinks collecting contact information for people and times they enter and leave could be a violation of a customer’s Charter rights.

“I think in this country, you’re allowed to go to dinner with who you want, right? But secondly, it’s a violation of their privacy, too. They have to give their name, their phone number, or their email address, or whatever it is, plus the time of arrival plus the time of departure. I mean, that’s a little bit intrusive. If I was going out to a restaurant, I wouldn’t want all that information recorded about me.”

“I’m against every single one of those measures.”

Rigas said he would like to see the region rescind the order and has even called for Hirji to be removed from his position as medical health officer.

“We’d like to see council address this kind of abuse of power by the medical officer of health, what that remedy is, I don’t know what they’ll do. He’s an acting MOH right now, so whether or not they’d be willing to sanction him or remove him. I’m not sure what they’ll decide to do.”

“At the very least, what we’re looking for in this industry is to get rid of this order completely.”

Hirji said he put the restrictions in place using his authority under Section 22 of the Ontario Health Act.

“We are right now seeing a surge of cases in Niagara, which I think mirrors what we are seeing really across the province and around the country. This is obviously not the direction we want to be headed,” he said.

What’s more concern-



Chris Rigas, owner of The Old Firehall Restaurant. RICHARD HARLEY

ing to him, he said, is the number of deaths. Part way

through November, there have already been as many deaths as in October, he said.

“It is likely we’re going to see that number increase further. And that’s quite concerning.”

Last week Hirji said the people who aren’t following emergency orders and continue to spread the virus will be directly to blame for further restrictions on businesses.

Martin Mazza, owner of Italian Pizza & Subs in Virgil, and a former town councillor, said the restrictions haven’t affected his business as badly, as he made the decision to close his restaurant to all dine-in customers from the beginning of the pandemic.

“Not to take sides on the argument on who’s right, who’s wrong, I will say that what’s been asked of people to date has not worked. So to continue on that path would be negligent. It wouldn’t be fair to everybody just to turn a blind eye, pretend everything’s OK. Everything’s not OK,” he said.

“Everything is getting worse, in my opinion. Changes need to

happen. I am not a doctor or scientist to say what those changes should have been. I am just a law-abiding citizen doing my part and dealing with the hand that’s dealt to me.”

He said he feels for businesses that have taken steps to reopen.

“Because for the most part, they’re not to blame. But they’re made to be the scapegoat.”

He said the region, province and municipalities need to “get more on the

same page” when it comes to restrictions.

“Listening to Dr. Hirji this morning saying that he had no idea the province was coming out with those measures on Friday. So that’s why the region’s got a different set of measures than the province does —

well, if these are the people that are making the rules, they should talk a bit more, because we’re the ones that are left to enforce the rules. What set of rules are we following then? The town has a set of rules, the region has a set of rules, the province has a set of rules. Can we get a bit more consistency?”

Rigas said when compared to places like grocery stores, restaurants are doing “way more” in terms of safety.

“Even before COVID, the restaurant industry follows public health guidelines — we sanitize, we do all that stuff already, and we’ve doubled those measures because of COVID — and we take contact trace information to an extent. So if you compare what we’re doing to what a grocery store is doing, or a Costco, or a variety store or whatever, we’re head and shoulders doing way more.”

“To do this to us, really, it’s a killer. This will be a final nail. I mean, there’s a lot of places treading water as it is right now. This will make ‘em sink.”

He said it won’t have as great an impact on the Old Firehall.

“I’ve been here for 25 years and I’ve conducted my business in a way that allows me to absorb some of this,” Rigas said.

“The issue for me now is if it’s not profitable, if I end up having to drain myself

of any reserves or whatever, then I’m forced to lay off my staff and reduce what I do, and it hurts them just as much as it hurts me.”

An online petition to rescind Hirji’s orders was started Monday and as of Wednesday had garnered about 3,600 names.

“We are demanding council either make Dr. Hirji rescind this order, and abide by the orders set forth by the Ontario Government, or relieve him from his position, and replace him,” the petition started by Robert George demands.

Disero and town staff received a letter from the provincial government Monday, which said bylaw and police officers should enforce fines.

Those fines can be up to \$25,000 per day for non-compliance.

“Basically it said that these new regulations are meant to be enforced, and that every level of government, the region and the municipality and the (Niagara Regional Police), are expected to enforce them — regulations from the province,” Disero said.

She said the province has also asked Hirji to provide a list of how many inspection have been done by municipalities within the region.

“I don’t know why. But hopefully I’ll find out (Wednesday) at the region meeting, why they’re asking how many municipalities have actually been doing inspections.”

Disero said NOTL would have a difficult time enforcing the new rules.

“Really, with all these new regulations, it’s going to be impossible for us to have the resources to enforce everything that’s been laid out now.”

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NEWS



High winds keep NOTL Hydro crews busy

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro crews were kept busy Sunday as a major wind storm blew down trees and power lines and caused nearly 20 separate outages.

"Most were individual connections but we also had a switch and a transformer go down, so at the peak over 200 customers were out of power," NOTL Hydro CEO Tim Curtis told The Lake Report.

"The switch and the transformer were corrected first so by 4 p.m. most of the customers were back on," he said.

Crews were out until midnight restoring power to the remaining customers. Monday was a clean-up day as some repairs were tem-



A tree down across Lakeshore Road after high winds.

SUPPLIED/MARIA MAVRIDIS

porary and some customers needed to call in an electrician for permanent repairs, Curtis said.

"In a wind-storm the problems are usually created by trees, either coming down, losing a limb or swaying enough to make

contact" with power lines, he said.

The Niagara Parks Commission also reported numerous problems, including flooding along south portions of the Niagara Parkway.

Damage to the break-

wall in Fort Erie resulted in some flooding and fallen trees along the Parkway caused temporary closures. Parts of the Niagara River Recreation Trail were also damaged and some light standards were displaced by the high winds.

NOTL's new \$3 ride-share transit service starts Monday

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's new on-demand transit is scheduled to be up and running Nov. 23.

While some town residents are looking forward to the new transit system, others are wondering how well the new service is going to provide for the whole town.

The \$3 service is a ride-sharing platform and will have two buses serving three areas of NOTL — Old Town, Virgil and Glendale.

It's uncertain when the bus route will expand to include St. Davids, Queenston and NOTL's rural areas.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said expanding the route is "being discussed through the budget deliberations."

"We won't know any more until the finance committee completes their budget review," she said.

Some transit users are unhappy there's been a



New transit starts Monday. Sourced

long lag between the town's bus service stopping and the new one starting.

On the town's website, a list of frequently asked questions is provided about transit services:

1. Is NOTL Transit no longer operating in Niagara-on-the-Lake?

A. With the sudden onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early March 2020, the town's fixed-route transit system began to see decreased ridership as a result

of the stay home orders being issued throughout the region and province. Subsequent physical distancing measures were instituted, leading the town to suspend transit services indefinitely as of April 9. As such, the pandemic and suspension of services have allowed staff to review the existing transit system and work with the region and Via Mobility LLC to discuss the possibility of an on-demand system to replace the current

conventional fixed-route system.

2. Will NOTL Transit ever operate again?

A. Not in its previous conventional format. NRT On-Demand Transit is the new transit system in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

3. Why can't the conventional NOTL Transit run until this new program launches?

A. The CAO/town staff have elected not to for various reasons, including cost savings, COVID-19 concerns, extra costs for additional COVID-19 related safety that would be spent for short-term and be wasted.

4. Why can't the conventional NOTL Transit run in conjunction with this new on-demand program?

A. Running two systems simultaneously would mean twice the cost for the same area. It is not economically or environmentally desirable or sustainable and it is not council approved.

Culvert projects to cost a total of \$712K

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

A culvert replacement and two new culverts will cost the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

\$712,000.

The contracts were approved Monday for a replacement culvert on Mississauga Street between Johnson Street and Gage Street for

\$561,000, a new culvert at 1599 Concession 3 Rd. for \$93,900, and another at 974 McNab Rd. for \$57,501.50.

The Mississauga Street and McNab Road culverts will be

installed by CRL Campbell Construction & Drainage Limited and the Concession 3 project was contracted to Anthony's Excavating Central Inc.

Niagara-on-the-Lake

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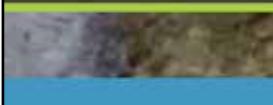
Niagara-on-the-Lake Launches Holiday Decorating Contest

Do You Hear What I Hear? Niagara-on-the-Lake is launching a challenge to residents and business owners to help make this the most Holly Jolly Christmas ever with a Town-wide Holiday Decorating Contest.

Get ready to Deck the Halls, windows, railings, walkways and trees in Jingle Bells and holiday sparkle. Once your masterpiece is complete, snap a photo and submit it at jointheconversationnotl.org/holiday-decorating-contest. The top three submissions per village will be selected by public vote and will receive a holiday prize pack.

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

"If we really want to love, we must first learn to forgive."
- Mother Teresa.



Contributed by Norm Arsenault:

Did you know? The average child's school lunch generates 67 pounds of packaging waste over a year. Reuse containers and reduce waste. Batteries can cause serious harm to human health and the environment when disposed of with municipal solid waste. Many companies and retailers will take your old batteries and properly dispose of them or have them recycled. In NOTL Phil's Valu-Mart and Home Hardware amongst others.. (World Wildlife Organization)

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Editorial: Let's all support NOTL businesses

Richard Harley
Editor-In-Chief

A couple of weeks ago The Lake Report quietly kicked off a campaign to help local businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic.

With support from the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, Town of NOTL, Niagara Holiday Rentals, NOTL Bed & Breakfast Association, Lord Mayor Betty Disero and MP Tony Baldinelli, we have dedicated a full page each week to our "Shop Local" campaign.

The page features free business profile stories to any Niagara-on-the-Lake businesses or business owners. It is a 10-week campaign that we hope will continue and grow.

Why?

With the pandemic kicking into full gear again now that the cold weather is on us, and with restrictions tightening up, we feel it's absolutely necessary to support local businesses.

Not only do we at The Lake Report sympathize as a fellow local business, but we have seen first-hand through our stories, even this week,

how damaging this pandemic has been to people trying to make ends meet.

And it isn't just business owners who suffer, it's their employees, their service and goods providers, and family members.

And when businesses close, our residents suffer, too.

And, of course, one major reason we can't forget is that without local businesses advertising in this paper, The Lake Report would not exist.

Without a strong local paper that will cover hard news stories like the major fraud at NOTL Hydro (which other media simply ignored) and keep our politicians and decision-makers accountable, the town will suffer. We would be at a loss for real, informative journalism and ordinary people's voices would be heard far less often.

So, we have chosen to support our local businesses that help support us to keep important news coming to the residents of our town. We don't want NOTL to end up as a news desert, like many other small communities.

Another way we're supporting local businesses is

by waiving all fees associated with our Press Pass local discount program.

The program offers discount cards to any resident of NOTL, free of charge, and businesses can sign up to be listed on our website as a partner, to help drive local business during the off-season, while maintaining regular prices for visitors.

Between these two initiatives, we are choosing to invest in NOTL businesses. If it even brings even a small bit of extra business to our town, it will have been worth it.

Over the coming weeks, we will continue to publish stories about businesses free of charge and we encourage all residents of NOTL to read the stories and patronize the businesses. See our Shop Local feature on Page 7 this week.

And, of course, we have always encouraged our readers to support our regular advertisers. Without the people who advertise week-to-week, the paper would not be able to continue.

A strong community paper brings other benefits, including highlighting countless charitable initiatives, help-

ing spread the word about non-profits and fundraising events for important charities that improve the quality of life for residents, such as NOTL Palliative Care, Niagara Nursery School, the NOTL Rotary Club, the Legion, Lions Club, Shaw Festival — the list goes on.

Remember to please support our local businesses now, during the holiday season and beyond into next spring.

They need your support. We need your support.

You can find a full list of businesses in our Shop Local program on our website, Lakereport.ca. You can also head there to check out what businesses are involved in our Press Pass program and stop by our offices to pick up your very own Press Pass.

Stay safe and abide by safety measures put in place to make sure our economy doesn't suffer further.

The more diligent we all are in ensuring we aren't spreading COVID, the more numbers will drop, and the closer we'll be to seeing our economy fully reopen so businesses can recover.

Shop Local.
editor@niagaranow.com



Newest restaurant restrictions are unfair

Dear editor:

Niagara public health issued an order under section 22 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act on food and drink premises in Niagara.

This order contains many measures, including a requirement that nobody be seated or served with other patrons not from the same household or who are not persons essential to maintaining physical and mental health, such as caregivers.

This policy punishes the compliant for the transgressions of a few individuals. Niagara's restaurants and bars have, as Niagara public health stated, been compliant with orders and directives, with notably few exceptions.

A few individuals have taken it upon themselves to

disregard the law and the guidelines put in place for their own health and safety, and for the well-being of others. In response to that, businesses that had nothing to do with these violations will be punished.

Last week's Canadian Survey of Business Conditions found that close to one-third (30.4 per cent) of businesses did not know how long they could continue to operate at their current level of revenue and expenditures before considering further staffing actions, closure or bankruptcy.

As well, 29.2 per cent of businesses in the accommodation and food service sector reported they could continue to operate at their current level of revenue and expenditures for less than six months

before considering further staffing actions, closure, or bankruptcy. Last year, 24,000 people worked in this sector in the Niagara area.

The government of Ontario has already introduced legislation to penalize those who do not follow the law. The Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce calls upon governments to enforce the laws they have already passed before making new ones.

Unenforced laws only penalize the law-abiding and undermine the authority of the government and of law enforcement.

We note that the "super spreader" event that precipitated the order involved 41 bars and restaurants, but also 23 retail stores, 17 sports and recreation teams, 12 family

homes, and two long-term care homes.

This order does nothing to address the spread in those other venues, which collectively outnumber the bars and restaurants that are being blamed. It is entirely understandable that Niagara's restaurants and bars feel they are being singled out and punished.

The Chamber calls for this blanket order to be rescinded immediately. We believe governments at all levels should commit to punishing those who break the law and stop punishing the law-abiding with overreaching

measures that harm responsible and well-intentioned businesses.

*Mishka Balsom, president
Greater Niagara
Chamber of Commerce*



OPINION

Ford dropped the ball. The time to act is now

MPP Wayne Gates
Special to The Lake Report

There can be no doubt that any elected official ran for office expecting to deal with COVID-19.

Nonetheless, officials are elected to rise to moments that meet them during their tenures no matter how difficult they may be.

Representing Niagara-on-the-Lake, I understand the pressure that Premier Doug Ford is under to juggle the many deeply affected areas of our constituencies with the need to halt the spread of COVID-19, which once again threatens to overwhelm our health care system and so drastically attack our seniors.

The decisions required are not easy ones when you are balancing policies that save lives with policies that save livelihoods. However, this is the job we ran for and this is the pitch we've been thrown.

While I stand with those



MPP Wayne Gates. FILE

in our province trying to defeat this deadly virus, there comes a time when as a member of the opposition I must raise my voice against what I see to be critical policy failures. We can see the devastating consequences of inaction before our eyes.

Provincial modelling released in October said by the end of November we could see 1,200 cases a day. Last Thursday we saw nearly 1,600, only 12 days into the month. This projection was revised to indicate that we could see as many as 6,500 cases a day

by December.

I firmly believe the numbers show that Ontario has not unleashed its full potential to stop this virus. As the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario showed, nearly 97 per cent of the dollars spent to fight COVID-19 have been federal dollars.

To make matters worse, the premier has failed to deploy almost \$7 billion earmarked for provincial efforts. It sits there while the virus grows at an exponential rate.

Even worse in the new provincial budget, despite 670 school outbreaks in Ontario, there is no funding for smaller class sizes. There are no measures to expand the work of public health, whose staff are working around the clock every day.

There are no measures to attract more personal support workers for our long-term care homes, which have proven to be tinderboxes of this virus. As

we all know, COVID-19 is particularly deadly to our parents and grandparents in care homes.

Perhaps most surprising of all given his background as a small business owner, Ford would rather let businesses struggle on their own, instead of giving them the financial support they need to keep tighter public health measures in place.

Make no mistake – this is a period of time that the history books will write about. There is no blueprint for how to do this properly and it is a tough job.

However, I believe future generations will look to this moment for brave leadership. The premier still has time to change course and act decisively to deploy the resources available to him to protect businesses, workers, health care staff and our seniors.

Wayne Gates is the New Democrat MPP for Niagara Falls, which includes NOTL.

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What's the harm in opening Parks Canada rink?

Dear editor:
I just read The Lake Report's story that Parks Canada is not allowing the skating rink to be open this winter.

I understand why, but I don't.

This is an outdoor rink. If some outside benches were allowed to put on skates, what is the prob-

lem? You are outside. Children and families need places to go especially when everything inside is closed. I can understand not renting skates out but many people have their own skates.

How can you allow the fort to remain open, the visitor centre and

gift shop, most heritage buildings, the public washrooms and historical grounds to be available to visit when you don't allow a totally outside skating rink to be open?

Also privately-guided tours with reservations for up to nine participants? Are you going to stop kids from tobogganning down

the hills also?

People's mental health is something to think about as well. Taking away an outside activity during our long winters is not acceptable, especially when the fort and other activities within it remain open.

Sincerely,
*Elaine McCaughey
NOTL*

Community centre hours likely to hurt cafe, seniors

Dear editor:
There are very few places where seniors can enjoy an indoor coffee, muffin, sandwich, etc. and escape the isolation of our homes.

The Sweets & Swirls Cafe in the NOTL Community Centre is one such location.

Yet, our town, in its wisdom, by the decision to now close the community centre on Saturdays and Sundays effectively closes the cafe for Saturday walk-in customers.

Like my wife and I, many regulars and others were advised the cafe is now closed on Saturdays for the reason above.

Clearly little thought or common sense was exercised in this decision and the negative revenue impact, in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, will have on this popular well-managed cafe. It is only pouring salt on the wound and adds to the stress of fighting, like thousands of others, to stay afloat and survive.

Additionally, a small conversational Spanish class, coffee club and others who support the cafe have been prevented from meeting – these are critical to this small business's survival.

The closure also appears to be an 11th-hour knee-jerk

decision communicated on Friday.

The town is the landlord here and the common area operates, and is supported by, the cafe owners, in full compliance with the provincial and regional guidelines.

The visiting public are not the anti-mask, COVID-spreader crowd – this is not the Toronto red zone – we are from the “respect for the law, follow the rules generation.” All are extra-cautious, being in the higher risk category.

Please reopen the cafe and common area for business on Saturday. In addition, revisit the Spanish class and

coffee group etc.

Monitor the situation for compliance and then, and only then, take appropriate corrective action as necessary.

Please support our local businesses and the mental health of our seniors, as they savour their precious time out for coffee with friends.

Do not repeat the error of the past by driving another cafe (Second Cup) out of this location. We need a local approach to our COVID action guidelines – not a one size fits all.

*Samuel Young
NOTL*



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Short-term rentals need more regulations

Dear editor:

We are all aware of short-term rentals. If you've stayed in a hotel, enjoyed a bed & breakfast or rented a cottage or house for a vacation, you have rented a residence for a short period of time.

These forms of short-term rentals have been around forever and form the backbone of the tourist and travel industry. Every jurisdiction has strict regulations concerning every aspect of most short-term rentals, which include fire code and building code compliance, parking requirements and the added regulations of each establishment's landlord/operator.

If you stay in a hotel, you are usually in the commercial district with the most stringent provincial and regional regulations for fire safety and occupancy. The hotel operator will have strict limitations on number of occupants, noise and type of use of the premises. Hotels are also employers and a positive force in the

economic success of any community.

If you stay in a bed & breakfast, the owner/operator is required to live on the premises, comply with local authorities that have jurisdiction, including strict building and fire code regulations and public health. If local bylaw infractions occur, the owner is held accountable. The owner of a bed & breakfast is very often an involved member of the community and a good neighbour. Bed & breakfast establishments make good neighbours.

If you rent a house/residence for a short time, participate in a house exchange, or stay at a cottage for the summer or for winter skiing, it is an opportunity to enjoy a vacation that is often embedded in an established community. Parking restrictions, noise levels, building and fire code requirements are all based on regular residential use, with the supposition that the occupants will have some self-imposed

restrictions, and perhaps some interest in a community and civil society for mutual benefit.

Short-term visitors are not always easy neighbours and often do not feel invested in the community. Local amenities that are precious to the residents form part of the attraction and with it an entitled use, but without the consequences of facing your neighbours. Every tourist town from Pompeii to Venice to Niagara Falls has had to deal with short-term rentals that have threatened to undermine the community that is the heart of the town.

The original Airbnb was a great concept ... blow up an air bed in your living room and offer breakfast to a visitor who doesn't want to pay huge dollars for a hotel room. It was a very intimate experience that was all about an alternative economy and a grass roots travel experience.

Then it became a multi-billion-dollar industry that

has quickly trespassed the intimate travel experience threshold. There are no more air beds, no breakfast and certainly no home owner. There is no specific address advertised, only a key or a code and some instructions, and a credit card transaction. It is that impersonal. And your Visa transaction includes unlimited use, with rare consequence.

It is possible to make an enormous amount of money from one house in Niagara-on-the-Lake, advertised on Airbnb. Enough to drive the sale price of a house up by the hundreds of thousands. This is an irresistible temptation to any healthy entrepreneur – but at enormous expense to a community.

Unless specific regulations and limitations for short-term rentals are implemented, our communities will be determined by forces that do not have the health of our communities in mind.

Victor Tarnoy
NOTL

Limiting short-term rentals could hurt Shaw Festival

Dear editor:

I would like you to know the thoughts of one long-time visitor to the Shaw Festival regarding the proposal to limit short-term rentals in Niagara-on-the-Lake town to only owner-occupied ones.

This is the note I sent to the town:

I am a faithful Shaw viewer (for 20 years) who brings a group of three couples to Casablanca Cottage on Victoria Street every year.

We like to cook and have the informal atmosphere of the cottage to renew friendships and enjoy the lovely atmosphere of NOTL.

I strenuously disagree with the plan to make all rental properties primary residences – we would not come to the festival if our options were a hotel or a home where the owner was present while we were there.

We spend about \$2,000 on tickets, and \$2,500 on housing, meals and shopping in

NOTL annually and have had excellent service from Mr. George.

He responds quickly to any problem, has been very responsive to communications and has the NOTL rules for behaviour posted in the cottage.

I also think the long list of fees and regulations would create obstacles for conscientious owners and do little to inhibit those who would break them.

The signage requirements

would only pollute the yards and homes in town. Phone numbers posted inside residences would seem to accomplish the same thing.

Perhaps a separate phone number for the police department for noise issues would help residents get relief from unruly neighbours.

I believe this plan would have a significantly detrimental impact on the Shaw Festival.

Kenneth Fonville
Charleston, S.C.

Annual visitors rely on short-term rentals

To the editor:

I sent these comments to the Town of NOTL's forum concerning changes to the rules for short-term rentals and wanted to share them with your readers:

My family and I have been coming to NOTL to attend the Shaw Festival for over 20 years. The first

time we missed was this year.

For the last 16 years we have rented houses for a week at a time. For the last 10-plus years extended family has also come, at first meaning that a second house was rented.

When my daughter started her own family we

moved up to a third house.

Every year we spend \$2,000 or more on tickets to the Shaw Festival, buy our groceries at Valu-mart, eat at local restaurants (like the Old Winery, the golf club, Corks, and our favourite – the Olde Angel Inn), buy local wine (especially ice wine and Reisling), and

stock up on preserves at Greaves.

We have already rented three houses for a week next August (our usual length and time of stay), and hope to be able to continue doing so for many years to come.

Jonathan S. Kleinman
Ann Arbor, Mich.



Marnie Cluckie has been selected as the town's new CAO.
SUPPLIED

Marnie Cluckie hired as new chief administrator

Continued from Front Page

"We would also like to express sincere gratitude to Sheldon Randall for taking on the role of Interim CAO this past year. He has done us a great service, particularly with his steadfast guidance throughout this global pandemic."

In the town's announcement, Cluckie said she believes NOTL is "committed to a high quality of community life. I've seen Niagara-on-the-Lake strive to preserve its heritage, agriculture and distinct beauty while creating vibrant sustainable communities for all."

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said town council is "excited" about hiring Cluckie.

"We are confident she will excel in this challenging leadership position and play an active role in managing and guiding our local government services for the town," Disero said.

Ontario sunshine list data shows Dowd was paid \$166,784 in 2018 as NOTL's chief administrator, her last full year in the job. She retired in August 2019 but earned \$219,536 that year, according to the salary disclosure list. The list shows Cluckie was paid \$161,413 in 2019 with Halton Region.

She said the town is "progressive, creative and forward-thinking but also grounded in its strong history."

COVID exposes flaws in Niagara school consolidation and busing policies

Dear editor:

There is no doubt that COVID-19 has impacted NOTL in many ways.

It also has brought to light longstanding flaws in our local institutions. The District School Board of Niagara is one of those institutions.

Over the last three decades, across Ontario and especially within the boundaries of the DSBN, there has been a relentless policy of closures and consolidation.

This has enabled the school board to ensure all classrooms are filled to capacity.

Viruses, like the flu, bullying and sexual harassment flourish on crowded school buses. There are studies anyone can read online that show busing is a serious impediment to student performance. Nothing good happens on a school bus.

COVID-19 has made it very clear. To protect our children and enhance education for children in NOTL there needs to be a complete reversal of consolidation and busing practices.

This will not be easy, however, it has to happen.

If the school board can't do it, then the province should return the education tax to our town council.

Our council built Niagara District High School and seven elementary schools. The province took that away in 1968. The province should give it back – what's left of it.

Don MacDougall
NOTL



Lake Report SHOP LOCAL

SUPPORTING OUR BUSINESS
COMMUNITY THROUGH COVID

COVID-19 has taken its toll on Niagara-on-the-Lake, and The Lake Report wants to help businesses that are struggling. We're offering FREE short stories to help businesses during these trying times. If you would like to be included, simply send us 150 words about your business and a photo to go with the story. We know everyone is suffering and this is just our small part to give back to the community that supports us. Send stories to editor@niagaranow.com

Waterscapes and Ponds

Submitted
The Lake Report

Waterscapes and Ponds is a local company specializing in the design, construction and maintenance of water features including ponds, streams and waterfalls.

After relocating to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Lee Manning pursued his passion for creating beautiful water features and 15 years ago formed his own company. He is able to turn your vision into reality with custom designs and little or no disruption to your existing landscape.

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including opening, closing, maintenance and repairs as well as planting services has led to 85 per cent of our business coming from satisfied client referrals.

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your beautiful pond with the soothing sound of a gently flowing waterfall and bubbling stream next spring. Contact Manning today for a free quotation, 905-468-7618 or leemanning835@gmail.com.

Serendipity: The Little French Shoppe

Submitted
The Lake Report

"Serendipity: The Little French Shoppe" has been an integral part of downtown Niagara on the Lake since 1991.

With a focus on tablecloths and hand-painted tableware, the majority of our products are imported directly from France, more specifically Provence.

In recent years, our store has expanded to include "Serendipity: At Home" where you will find tableware from Florence, Italy, local handmade pottery, and the Beekman 1802 line of goat milk bath and body products, among many other items.



Outside of the shop. SUPPLIED

As with all other small businesses, we have had to adapt to the "COVID reality." Our tablecloths, along with many of our products, are now available online and can be shipped anywhere in Canada and the United States.

We offer free local delivery within a 25-kilometre distance, as well as curb-side pickup. Follow us on Facebook (Serendipity: The Little French Shoppe), Instagram, (@thelittlefrenchshoppe) and check out our website at thelittlefrenchshoppe.com.

Sandtrap Pub & Grill

Submitted
The Lake Report

At the Sandtrap Pub and Grill, "Keeping it Local" is our motto. Paul and Matt Dietsch are hands-on owners who, along with their amazing staff, enjoy welcoming new residents and life-long NOTLers to their pub.

Our menu consists of homemade comfort foods, pizza, wings, daily soups and more all available for eat in or take out. The pub has received many compliments on the leadership show with the current pandemic protocols, especially the cleanliness.



Sandtrap's motto is "Keeping it local." SUPPLIED

And with the spacing of tables and installation of plexiglass dividers, customers feel comfortable dining indoors. We welcome you to come and

enjoy what makes us the most popular spot for locals. To take out or dine in, call 905-468-8727. See our menu at sandtrappub.com. We're at 358 Mary St.

Garrison Gifts

Submitted
The Lake Report

Garrison Gifts (GG's) is an online business that started this summer in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Established by three neighbours (Suzanne Harris, Nancy Assuras and Janice White) who live in Garrison Village, the company curates bespoke gifts. Each gift starts with either a unique tray, basket or charcuterie board.



A Garrison gift. SUPPLIED

gift.

Each item comes beautifully wrapped and with a glossy note card. If you have something specific you are looking for, please let us know. We are happy to work within your budget.

We can be reached online at garrisongifts.ca, on Facebook (@garrisonsgifts), Instagram (@garrison_gifts) or by email at gg.garrisongifts@gmail.com. We look forward to assisting you!

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Now more than ever, it's important to buy local and support Niagara-on-the-Lake businesses.



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BETTY DISERO

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COVID UPDATE: NOTL cases decline but restrictions tightened

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake is down to two active cases of COVID-19, as the Niagara region moves into the province's recently updated orange "restrict" level.

As of Tuesday, the following emergency orders are in effect by the province across all of Niagara's 12 municipalities.

Contact information required for all seated patrons.

No more than four people seated together.

Volume of music to be limited to conversational level.

Safety plans to be prepared and provided upon request.

Face coverings required at sport and recreational facilities except when exercising.

Face coverings required at all indoor workplaces.

Eye protection required for workers coming within two metres of patrons not wearing face coverings.

Increase spacing between patrons to three metres for areas of a sport or recre-



FILE PHOTO/RENE BERTSCHI.

ational facility where there are weights/weight machines and exercise/fitness classes.

Recreational programs limited to 10 people per room indoors and 25 outdoors.

Require contact information for all patrons and attendance for team sports.

Require appointments for entry; one reservation for teams.

Social gatherings limited to 10 people indoors or 25 outdoors (may not be combined).

Limit operating hours, establishments close at 10 p.m.

Liquor sold or served only from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

No consumption of liquor from 10 p.m. and 9 a.m.

Require screening of patrons at businesses and/or mall entrances (e.g. a questionnaire).

Closure of strip clubs.

Fitting rooms limited to non-adjacent stalls.

Maximum of 50 people at a supervised event indoors or 100 outdoors (may not be combined).

Maximum 50 people at any event, sport or recreational venue in all combined recreational fitness spaces or programs (not pools, rinks at arenas, com-

munity centres, and multi-purpose facilities).

Limit duration of stay (e.g. 60 minutes) at sport and recreational facilities; exemption for sports.

No spectators at sporting venues or events permitted (exemption for parent/guardian supervision of children).

Personal care services requiring removal of face coverings prohibited.

Change rooms and showers closed.

Bath houses, other adult venues, hot tubs, floating pools and sensory deprivation pods closed (some exceptions).

Religious services, weddings, and funerals limited to 30 per cent capacity indoors or 100 people outdoors.

In addition to provincial restrictions, Niagara's acting medical officer of health Dr. Mustafa Hirji has placed further restrictions on restaurants and bars, including not dining with anyone from outside of your household and having hand sanitizer at every table.

Restaurants that don't follow the orders risk a fine of \$750, or as high as \$25,000 per day.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said Hirji also said local bylaw officers and Niagara Regional Police will be responsible for enforcement of the new orders.

Under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Hirji also has the power to direct bylaw officers or the police to enforce orders, Disero said.

"However, Dr. Hirji has given no direction. I can tell you that even if he does give such direction the town would be challenged in resourcing enforcement in this respect."

Restaurant owners across Niagara have voiced strong opposition to the new guidelines, calling for Hirji's resignation and for his orders to be rescinded.

Meanwhile, NOTL has adjusted hours of the community centre, arenas and has released some information about plans for the Christmas parade.

The community cen-

tre will be closed on weekends due to lack of attendance, Disero said. In the fitness centre, the change rooms will be open but the showers will be closed. The walking track has been moved from the gym to the auditorium to allow more people to take part.

The arenas will be closed to spectators, except for one parent or guardian per participant to stay and watch if the participant is under the age of 18. Disero said town staff are working on a way to offer online viewing for parents who want to watch virtually.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Christmas parade will be different this year, Disero said.

"It will not be the traditional parade on Queen Street, but it will be a smaller one and Santa will parade through all five villages so that citizens who are young at heart can watch from the comfort of their home or street. We're working on the route and safety measures. More information will come next week."

Heddle Shipyards wins another major contract

Tim Taylor
The Lake Report

Heddle Shipyards, operators of the Port Weller Drydocks, has signed a multi-year, multi-million-dollar agreement to fabricate components for three ships now under construction at a British Columbia shipyard.

"This is a great day for Ontario shipyards," says Ted Kirkpatrick, director of business development and government relations for Heddle. "We intend the work to be spread as evenly as possible between our facilities."

Heddle operates shipyards in Hamilton, St. Catharines and Thunder Bay, as well as Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Two of the ships have been commissioned by the Royal Canadian Navy. The third, an offshore oceanographic science vessel, is being built for the Canadian Coast Guard.

The work, part of a



Ted Kirkpatrick, Heddle Shipyards Director of Business Development and Government Relations, surveys work underway at the company's Port Weller Drydock in February 2020.
TIM TAYLOR

partnership with Seaspan Shipyard of Vancouver, is expected to ramp up in early 2021.

"Two big things are happening," said Kirkpatrick. "The work includes the fabrication of tertiary steel

components — ladders, stairs, gratings and handrails — as well as a modular package that will be built in Ontario and transported complete, for installation in the ships under construction in Vancouver."

"A module is an internal section of the ship. It's a big piece of the inside. When it leaves our facilities it will be completely outfitted with pipes, electrical components, machinery. They lower them into the ship and they just click together."

The new agreement is expected to employ at least 50 workers company-wide.

Kirkpatrick said the contract provides more predictability for Heddle's business.

"It's long-term," he said. "Work that we can build the workforce around. The team will include people who will be more completely employed during our quieter periods and new people we will be hiring."

The contract also signals that Heddle will play an in-

creasing role in the national shipbuilding strategy, a long-term project to renew Canada's federal fleet of combat and non-combat vessels.

Heddle is also partnering with Seaspan Shipyard to bid on the construction of the polar icebreaker for the Canadian Coast Guard.

"If we win that, it will be a significant amount of work. More than all the package of work we're currently doing."

"It's pretty amazing. Things really seem to be moving in the right direction."

In 2017, Heddle entered a long-term lease with the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, which manages and operates the Canadian assets of the Seaway on behalf of the federal government.

The company was founded just over 30 years ago in Hamilton and has grown to be the largest vessel services and drydock company in Canada.



A special delivery

The staff at Niagara North Family Health Team's Virgil site received a delivery of KN95 face masks from MPP Wayne Gates on Friday.

Steven Durocher, lead of the Family Health Team, said the clinic is grateful for the masks,

He said through businesses and support from the community, it has helped ensure there have been no mask shortages at the clinic.

"I think the way businesses have all transformed to start producing these. I mean even patients of mine where I think they had a plastics company or were making car parts are now manufacturing masks. The demand is obviously still there but now the supply is as well, just from community support and businesses too."

Gates said the masks came from a donor who didn't want to be named, but wanted the masks to go to good use.

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Child care crucial for town, mayor says

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Having a nursery school in town and having a reasonable waiting list for families is crucial to attracting more families to Niagara-on-the-Lake, says Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

Council voted in October to give an additional \$340,000 toward expansion of the school, which operates out of the community centre and is currently the only licensed child care provider in town. The town's contribution will be covered by tax revenues. An earlier pledge of almost \$250,000 will be paid out of development charges.

Of the \$2 million project cost, the school will also be providing \$715,000 of its own money, \$100,000 of which the school is hoping to raise in the community.

The other funding is coming from various levels of government, including the Ministry of Education.

Disero has made a \$1,000 donation herself.

"It's really important when building and keeping a community that we look at it as a complete community," Disero said in an interview.

"And that includes things that all taxpayers pay for that only some use, like the Niagara Nursery School, like transportation, like even maintenance of some of our sports facilities."

She said a nursery school will also help with the town's long-term growth strategy.

"The other thing too, is that part of our strategic plan, and part of our goals and objectives within the strategic plan is to try to



Nursery school staff Karen Denbesten and Matthew Maxwell with students. JESSICA MAXWELL

promote economic development and young families coming into our community. And this will help in that regard."

She said the number of kids in Niagara-on-the-Lake is increasing. The town's recent Halloween goodie bag project alone showed there at more than 700 kids in town, Disero said, and she estimates there could be more that didn't sign up.

"I think everybody was surprised by the number over 700. We're an 18,000 population and 700 is a good jump from where we were even five years ago."

The number of kids also brings up the potential need for a high school in town. Disero said she and NOTL parent Caroline Polgravia having been looking into ways to create some type of high school situation for kids living in town. The idea, so far, is to create a hub for students in town, so they can spend one or two days a week in their hometown.

She said she has been working with Polgravia on trying to encourage the Catholic school board to look at how rural education can be improved and keep NOTL high school

students in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"Even if it's just a couple days a week, so that way they're more connected to the community," Disero said. "They can continue friendships with other high school students here in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and hopefully in turn, that will allow them to stay once they're finished school, in our community and in our town and become the leaders of tomorrow, which is really important."

She said the town approached the school board in August and officials were "interested and very excited about what we're doing."

The hub would be a place for students to come and participate in the online portions of their schooling, and could be offered out of a building in Virgil where the Yellow Door Theatre Project operates, she said.

The idea is to give students a place where they can work with other students from the community, while also having access to career counsellors, during regular school hours.

"They would be doing their online schooling with their computer, but there would be someone there to

ensure that people are keeping a distance, that they're wearing a mask if they need to," Disero said.

"What they want to do as well is bring in speakers that will talk to them about different careers," she said, and to connect students with different organizations and workplaces in the community for one-day co-op programs to give them experience in various industries.

The solution is a mix of pandemic response and showing the Ministry of Education that there is a need for a high school in community, she said.

"So we're working on it, to try to get buy-in."

She noted the province is looking for creative ways to improve rural education and a community high school hub could be an idea that helps meet those goals.

"If Caroline is successful in putting together this hub, then we may be able to convince the province that rural education needs to look different than urban, just because of the nature of the distances between households and the densities in urban areas."

She said as far as a dedicated public high school, there are no plans in the works yet, but that at some point in the future when the Glendale community is more developed, it could be something the town needs.

Either way, a nursery school is a step in the right direction, Disero said.

"I see it good for so many reasons. One, we're complete. Two, we're pushing our economic development agenda. And three, we're also trying to provide for young families coming into Niagara-on-the-Lake."

Nursery school hopes to reach \$10K by Dec. 1

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara Nursery School has raised about \$6,297 so far, towards its goal of \$100,000 for a new expansion.

Board member Kathleen Staz said there is another \$2,500 coming in the next week or so.

She said after an editorial by The Lake Report encouraging residents to donate to the school, they've seen good response.

"We've had support from those connected to the NNS, past, and present, and also from community members who simply recognize the importance of supporting local families," Staz said.

"Some donors have also expressed contributing again in the new year."

Staz added the school is hoping to reach the \$10,000 mark by Dec. 1.

Since the editorial we've had multiple donations come in recently that were made through the website, and that the website info is out there because of

the support of our local papers."

She said donations are also coming in through the Canada Helps site and others are going to the school to drop off donations in person.

Anyone wishing to donate to the school can do so at the school's website, <https://niagaranurserieschool.ca>.



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You throw me out when you want to use me, but take me in when you don't want to use me. What am I?

Last week: I go in the water black and come out red. What am I?

Answer: A lobster

Answered first by: Chandelle Weaver

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Sheelah Young, Margie Enns, Kathy Neufeld, Margaret Garaughty, Julia Klassen, Terrie Courtlander, Sheila Meloche, Wade Durling, Liz Teeple, Christine Yakymishen, Britiney Turasz, Sylvia Wiens

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

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
	COVID-19 Due to COVID-19, many events are now virtual. Find a list of NOTL events here week to week. Stay safe, wash your hands, wear a mask and distance whenever possible.		
	LEGION FISH FRY EVERY THURSDAY! From 4 to 6:30 p.m. Drive-thru only Cash only		
22 Back to the Farm OpenHouse - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Foxtrot Fields (1950 York Rd.) Linocut Printmaking: Holiday Cards - 1 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre	23 Famous and Infamous: Jonathan Wild (an 18th century London crime boss) - 2 p.m. - NOTL Museum Council - 6 p.m. - Virtual: livestream.com/notl Ask a Tech: One on One Tech Tutoring - All Day - NOTL Public Library Contact creganti@notlpl.org Crewmate or Imposter: 3D Printing Workshop - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Niagara's Name that Tune - 7 p.m. - The Irish Harp	24 Heritage Trail Committee - 2 p.m. - Virtual: livestream.com/notl Virtual Coffee with the Lord Mayor - 6 p.m. - Virtual: facebook.com/Town.of.NOTL/ Rhyme Time: Virtual Circle Time for Infants and Toddlers - 11 a.m. - Virtual: notlpulibrary.org	German Conversation - 10 a.m. - Virtual: contact.aol.com Virtual STEAM Storytime - 1 p.m. - Virtual: notlpulibrary.org Nobel Prize: Zoom - 2 p.m. - Virtual: notlpulibrary.org Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. - Virtual: notlpulibrary.org Fresh Greenery Hop - 1 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse
29	Community Wellness Committee - 10 a.m. - Virtual: livestream.com/notl Niagara's Name that Tune - 7 p.m. - The Irish Harp	30	1
			Irrigation Committee - 10 a.m. - Virtual: livestream.com/notl Virtual STEAM Storytime - 1 p.m. - Virtual: notlpulibrary.org German Conversation - 10 a.m. - Virtual: contact.aol.com Nobel Prize: Zoom - 2 p.m. - Virtual: notlpulibrary.org

Know of a local event? Tell us. Submit it directly to www.niagaranow.com

The Lake Report

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Nov. 19 - Dec. 5



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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p>19 Committee of Adjustment - 6:30 p.m. - Virtual: livestream.com/notl Minecraft Club: Virtual Building Challenge - 4 p.m. - Virtual: notlpubliclibrary.com Make it with Micro:bit Virtual - 4:30 p.m. - Virtual: notlpubliclibrary.com Niagara's Name that Tune - 6 p.m. - NOTL Golf Club Sketching Techniques - 1 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p>	<p>20 The Wild: Explore the Wilds of NOTL - 10:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Practical Geneology - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. - NOTL Public Library St. Davids Lions Turkey Roll Raffle - St. Davids Lions Club That 70's Rock Show - 8 p.m. - Club 55 Shaw Festival Me and My Girl Pre/Post Show Entertainment - 6 p.m. - Queen's Landing Hotel St. Davids Lions Fish Fry - 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. - St. Davids Lions Club</p>	<p>21 Mixed Media Altered Pages for Fun & Art Journaling - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. - Virtual: riverbrink.org St. Davids Lions Christmas Tree Sales Begin - St. Davids Lions Club The Irish Harp with Matti and Steve - 8 p.m. - The Irish Harp Linocut Printmaking: Holiday Cards - 1 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre Book Club: Drawing for Absolute Beginners - 9 a.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p>
<p>25 Lecture Series - 10 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Holiday Garland - Niagara Pumphouse Arts</p>	<p>26 Minecraft Club: Virtual Building Challenge - 4 p.m. - Virtual: notlpubliclibrary.com Niagara's Name that Tune - 6 p.m. - NOTL Golf Course Sketching Techniques - 1 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre</p>	<p>27 Kill Bill the Band - 8 p.m. - Club 55 Bacchus Lounge Entertainment - 6 p.m. - Queen's Landing Hotel</p>	<p>28 A Star is Born Wreath Workshop - 1 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre Bacchus Lounge Entertainment - 6 p.m. - Queen's Landing Hotel</p>
<p>2 Environmental Advisory Committee - 2 p.m. - Virtual: notlpubliclibrary.com Minecraft Club: Virtual Mini Game - 4 p.m. - Virtual: notlpubliclibrary.com</p>	<p>3 LIVE Stream.LOVE.JAZZ Series: Faith Amour Duo - 7 p.m. - jazzniagara/live Holiday House Silent Auction - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Regal Florist and Garden Centre Virtual Candlelight Stroll - 7 p.m. - Virtual: www.yourtv.tv/niagara Artful Treasures - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre St. Davids Lions Fish Fry - 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. - St. Davids Lions Club</p>	<p>4 Artful Treasures - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre Rotary Enchanted Wonderland Stroll - McArthur Estate 210 John St. E Holiday House Silent Auction - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Regal Florist and Garden Centre</p>	<p>5 "Putting Niagara residents first." 289-697-5757 JS-CONSTRUCTION.CA Renovations Additions Custom Homes Kitchens Decks & Fences & Much more!  Proud winners of NOTL's Choice Awards 2020</p>

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T L R





Mikreations closing and moving on after 13 years

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

It's the end of an era for Niagara's art community as Mikreations Art & Frame Gallery prepares to close its Niagara Stone Road storefront permanently.

But Mike Penner, owner and sole operator of the business, says he won't vanish entirely. All lines of communication, such as his business phone number, email and website, will remain open as he works through determining his next steps. His next move likely will include keeping the framing business alive, he says. After he takes a brief hiatus.

It was time to make a change and his decision to close up shop wasn't based on just one thing; "There's a whole basket full of reasons," he says.

The COVID-19 pandemic was certainly one of them. The forced closure at the beginning of the pandemic gave him time to rethink his vision moving forward. Being more available for family was another.

"I've been wondering about the future of the business and how to move forward with it to kind of streamline it or improve on what's happening. And then COVID hit and it just sort of forced the questions even stronger about what is the future of this business?" Penner says.

An upcoming rent increase, which would align with the renewal of his lease, was also a factor. He says he was growing more dissatisfied with the location and had contemplated dropping the brick and mortar aspect of the business for a



Mike Penner decides to close down Mikreations on Niagara Stone Road after a "basket full of reasons," but will be seen again.. SUPPLIED

long time.

"I had a flood in the building, and this is actually the third flood I've had in about the last four years, and nobody is responsible. The landlords don't seem to be taking any specific action to make sure that this doesn't happen again," he says.

So, Penner decided to shut down Mikreations in its current capacity. But that doesn't mean the end of it all. He says he found a new space at the former Virgil public school to use as storage and he is considering operating the frame business on a scaled-down model from there in the coming months.

This won't be the first time he's rebranded the Mikreations name to suit new aspirations.

"Before this I had my own decorative painting business, and for the 12 or 13 years that I did that, it was always a struggle to get the contracts to find the people who would pay to have you do incredible things on their walls or ceilings or whatever," he says.

That initial business was also called Mikreations. It's a name he says he wasn't so confident about at first. But as the years went on, and people stopped to try to pronounce the name, or ask questions about its origins, he says he realized it was part of what made the business memorable.

"At first that really bothered me but then I started thinking that actually maybe it was a good thing because it made them stop and think about the name and take note of it, rather than quickly forgetting what the name of a business is," he says.

"So maybe there was something good in that."

Mikreations will always be memorable for many local artists, like Gail Kerr, who says she has shown her own paintings in the gallery space and frequently brought her work in to be framed.

"I've only been here in Niagara-on-the-Lake for about five and a half, six years. But ever since I got here, he's been like an icon. You know, on Niagara Stone

Road, the hub of Virgil there," Kerr says.

"I've taken my framing there, I've recommended lots of other people, even from out of town, I said, 'Oh, there's a guy here. He's good, you know, he can do your framing for you.'"

But it was more than the stellar workmanship that kept Kerr coming back. She says she's going to miss the friendly conversation that always accompanied a casual drop-in to the gallery.

"What I love most, which I think is the part that I'm going to miss the most as an artist is, he's just the type of guy that would love to have you drop in. I loved dropping in there and just talking about different artists and about what's going on in the art community," she says.

"And he was just so connected to everybody. So, I'm going to miss that kind of gab session ... he's just such a friendly guy too."

That sense of personal connection was not lost on Penner.

He says some of his most memorable moments in

the gallery were chatting with the many artists who wandered through his doors. What began as a business relationship often grew into a much more lasting friendship.

NOTL artist Jesse Lepp is one of those relationships, he says.

"He was challenging the first time he walked into the store: head down, barely a word to say, and it was challenging to try and open up this artistic 'can' and find out who he was and what made him tick. Now, Jesse will often come in and we'll have these incredible conversations about anything under the sun," he says.

Penner says deep connections happen with customers as well.

"Some who come in and they feel like they can trust you, for some strange reason. And that's just such a huge compliment, that they would trust you enough to share something personal," he says.

He says it's the art on the walls that can evoke strong emotion in many who walk through the doors.

"Those are great moments for me. There was a piece of Jesse's art that hung here many years ago that was a slightly disturbing piece of art and I loved it. But the majority of people would just walk straight past it," he says. "It was, I think, too much for them to take in."

"But every once in a while, you'd have somebody who would walk in and they just about fall on the floor in front of it. And they would spend hours, opening up about some deep personal trauma or something that had deeply affected them," he says.

For some reason, he says that painting brought emotions rushing out. It wasn't a negative experience so much as a healing one, he says.

"I always refer to that piece of art as the most successful piece of art I've ever had in here. Even though it sat on the wall forever," he says.

Lepp's painting, called Anxiety, is now back in Penner's possession.

Now, as Penner is planning to close this location and move to a smaller space, the gallery side of the business won't be making the trip, save for three artists who he says don't have another outlet for their work.

"So, the gallery is, for all intents and purposes, closing permanently. But I do intend to carry on with the three different artists who have no other outlet. And since I've been working with them for quite some time I've asked if I can continue on with them," he says.

In his new space he says he will continue to represent Lepp, Judy Thorley and Fernando Pendas Fernandez.

Penner is having a store-wide closing sale from now until about a week before he closes officially on Dec. 12. All paintings are discounted anywhere from 15 to 50 per cent off, decided by each artist. Custom framing services will be available until Nov. 24.

Penner says he will continue to be reachable as he works through the next few months and will make an announcement when he has firm plans for the next stage of his business.

Disero says short-term rentals contribute to 'hollowing out' of neighbourhoods

Continued from Front Page

said the moratorium suspends the issuance of all licences (new or renewal) until the fees and bylaw amendments are considered by council.

"This ensures all licences will be issued under the regulations of, and required to be in compliance with, the new regulations should

there be any changes."

Proposed changes to the bylaw include:

Transition short-term rentals to be operated from principal residences only (by Jan. 1, 2024).

Restrict short-term rentals from advertising without a license and add a requirement for advertisements to include the licence number.

Create requirements

for property managers to respond within 30 minutes to complaints.

Introduce a Renter's Code of Conduct and Good Neighbour agreements.

Require signage for short-term rentals, which includes the town's customer service number.

Technical amendments for approval of fees (to be through annual user fees).

Introduction of a third-party compliance company to monitor rental advertisements, offer a 24/7 complaint line, offer support to enforcement of the licensing bylaw.

Suggest revisions to a previously-approved fee structure (decrease from proposed 2020 fees, increase from 2019 fees) to fund third-party compliance company.

Some homeowners and yearly visitors who use short-term rentals have expressed concerns about the proposed changes, saying they don't think short-term rentals should have to be owner occupied.

Others have voiced strong concerns about the "hollowing out" of Niagara-on-the-Lake due to short-term rentals and about problems

created by "party houses."

Vacation rental managers have continued to say that licensed houses aren't the problem when it comes to party rentals.

Currently, town statistics show NOTL has approximately 400 licensed short-term rental houses — about 5 per cent of the private dwellings in town, according to the 2016 census.



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NOTL launches town-wide Christmas decoration contest

Staff
The Lake Report

It's the time of year for holiday cheer and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is trying to make the 2020 season a little brighter by hosting a town-wide holiday decorating contest.

The contest is open to all Niagara-on-the-Lake residents and business owners.

To participate, photos of decked-out building exteriors can be sent to the town's Join the Conversation page at jointheconversationnotl.org/holiday-decorating-contest.

The top three submissions (per village) will be selected by public vote. First-place winners will receive a holiday prize valued at \$150, second earns a holiday prize valued at \$75, and third place winners gets a holiday prize valued at \$50.

The town offers the follow-

ing guidelines for the contest:

* Open to all Niagara-on-the-Lake residents and business owners.

* One photo per property.

* Only exterior decorating will be considered.

* Photo must be submitted by the property owner or with the property owner's permission.

* Contestants should be willing to allow the town to scale, crop, or alter the size and colour of submitted images, as required.

* Submitted photos may be shared and used by the municipality.

"Nothing lifts my spirit and warms my heart more than the twinkling of tinsel and lights this time of year," Lord Mayor Betty Disero said in a media release from the town.

"I think we all need an extra dose of that magic this year. So come on, Niagara-on-the-Lake, let's see you sparkle!"



NOTL 4 All tees raise money for Red Roof

Dedicated NOTLers and admins of the popular NOTL 4 All Facebook page Blair Cowan and Daniel Turner were out selling t-shirts recently to raise money for Red Roof Retreat. The shirts are selling for \$20 each, with 50 per cent of proceeds supporting Red Roof, which offers programs for children and young adults with special needs.

Mixed Up: NOTL director explores being queer, mixed in new film

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake filmmaker and Shaw Festival actor Howard Davis a.k.a. Hauji hopes his new movie will help to celebrate the differences in people.

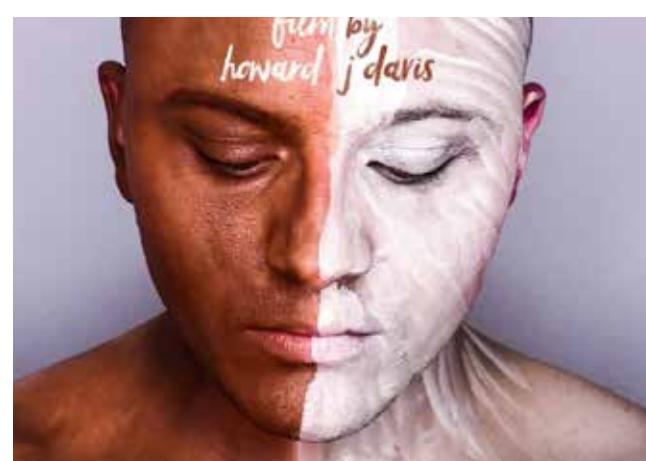
Davis released his feature-length film "MixedUp" on Amazon Prime, OutTV and Apple TV last Wednesday.

The movie is an arthouse film, Davis said in an interview the day before its release, and follows his journey being queer and mixed race.

"It explores my personal story around finding inner cohesion in a world that's socialized around constructions of race and gender and orientation. And, as a mixed male, I ask a lot of questions in the film and really demand that we celebrate the beauty of difference."

He said the movie challenges the antiquated idea that being of mixed race is abnormal.

"The film really is sort of a manifesto of sorts that asks that we celebrate the



A promotional image for the film. Sourced

beauty of difference and help normalize the existence of being queer and being mixed."

During the film, Davis interviews other people who have similar experiences with being mixed, including Indigenous actress Tantoo Cardinal and another Shaw Festival, actor Thom Allison.

"I interview many people just to sort of make sure people realize that to be mixed doesn't just mean you are within the binary of being Black and white, you can be mixed

within many cultures," Davis said.

The documentary also explores Davis' biological history.

Davis first came to NOTL to work for the Shaw Festival in 2011, and has since acted and designed for the theatre company.

"I've stayed rooted in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I haven't been there every season. But I've worked across Canada and in theatre, and I'm a filmmaker as well."

Davis said the film touches on his own "eternal struggles."

"A lot of people will look at me and just assume that I'm white, because I pass and so it's really, without trying to be didactic to audiences, it's trying to share with an audience that blackness comes in many shades. And really, it's something that people need to learn about more, because for years, people have assimilated into a dominant white culture to survive. And we're learning now that that's not the case. We need to actively pursue fighting racism."

"There's a lot of visual metaphors that help dramatize that struggle. And also, the flip side of that, there's some visual ways that I emulate the joys and the beauties of being mixed as well."

One of the struggles he faces personally, he said, is people not accepting him as Black.

"Admittedly, that is something that does happen when you are, quote, unquote, between worlds ... I do get a lot of people that go, 'Well, what do you know, you're

not really Black.' And I have to, because my skin can always speak for me, I have to find other ways just to inform people that you can't say things like that, because it erases my experience and many, many other people's experiences."

Davis said it's important for him to share the film with the Niagara community, because of its Indigenous and Black history.

"Part of me wanting to share this with the Niagara community is because we can often feel isolated from subjects of racialization.

And, you know, in this town alone, most racialized artists, or most racialized people are either working at the Shaw Festival or they're field workers," Davis said.

"So, there is a huge divide in this community, I find. And the irony is where we're on a rich soil of Black and Indigenous history.

Harriet Tubman was here. This was where the Underground Railroad came and arrived. And, unfortunately, a lot of people don't know that. So, I really

would stress that there's an educational revolution that needs to happen in this region. And I would just urge people to embrace that rather than erase it."

He said, in a way, the pandemic has helped with the film's underlying message.

"I'm excited to see how we transform out of it, rather than going back to the way things were — I really don't want that to be the case. You know, you hear people go, 'Oh, we'll be back to normal soon.' And I go, 'Well, actually, couldn't we take this pause to really be conscientious about how we move forward?'"

"And that's also a big part of the film as well, is how do we collectively, I don't want to say forgive and forget — how do we forgive and remember, but move forward conscientiously?"

"We also are part of a festival called Image+Nation, which is out of Montreal, and it's Canada's oldest queer film festival. And if people want to find out more information, they can go to mixedup.ca."


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Fledgling business adds new life to St. Davids centre

Bloom & Co. is about more than just the popular NOTL ball cap. But that is a huge seller

Tim Taylor
The Lake Report

Two Niagara entrepreneurs have proven that one-plus-one can make three.

Kalin Falconer and Nataschia Wielink, each had their own thriving wedding service businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake, when a colleague suggested the two should meet and talk shop.

They had a coffee at The Pie Plate in Virgil.

Two years of relationship and idea building led the new partners to open Bloom & Co., a lifestyle boutique, nestled in a small building in the shadow of the busy corner at Four Mile Creek and York roads, in St. Davids. They just celebrated the Bloom & Co.'s third anniversary.

Falconer, 31, was, and still is, an event florist. When she spoke to The Lake Report, she didn't pause a beat in her floral preparation for an upcoming wedding across the street at Ravine Winery.

Wielink, 43, remains a professional photographer, specializing in weddings and commercial promotional images. And they both share the retail business.

It is not easy to define just what Bloom & Co. is.

Google Maps calls it a



Nataschia Wielink, left, and Kalin Falconer, show off both their popular NOTL ball caps and their lifestyle boutique, Bloom & Co. Curated Living, in St. Davids. TIM TAYLOR

home goods store. But it seems to be much more than that.

The two proprietors throw out a smattering of descriptors to put edges around what they offer: "Our items will either enhance your space by the way they are used or by the way they make you feel," says Falconer, as she strips dozens of white roses in her bright, back-of-the-store floral workroom.

"Well made. Beautiful. Unique. Things we like. Simple and unfussy. Relaxed. A little understated."

Their front-window sign calls it Curated Living. The website adds, "that lends a laid-back nod to sophisticated style."

"It is a sort of collection," says Wielink, who once had a desk in the workroom, but it has long since been lost to things floral. "When we bring in new things, we think about how they will go with the rest."

Wielink was born and raised in Beamsville and now makes her home with her husband of 26 years in St. Catharines. She is the third of seven children of a truck-driving father and a stay-at-home mother. She and her husband have three grown children.

Wielink kind of sidled into the photography business. When their youngest child was a year old, she took a few photography courses at Mohawk College

in Hamilton.

"People heard that I had a camera. I started with families and then a few weddings. One summer my husband said: 'I think you have a business now.'

"Today I shoot more commercial things — a lot for wineries. I help them with their social media photography. I really love food and drink photography."

Photography takes 70 per cent of her time, Bloom & Co. retail, 30 per cent.

Falconer calls herself an event florist. She was born and raised in St. Davids, attending St. Davids Public School and Niagara District. Her mother works as an admin professional at Prince Phillip elementary

school in Niagara Falls. Her father is an auto mechanic. She has two younger sisters, living and working in the region.

She came to the floral industry in a roundabout manner.

While studying interior design at Fanshaw College in London, Ont., she started working part-time at a flower shop.

"I fell into it that way. I liked working with the fresh product. I call myself an event florist — a lot of events production and design. We don't sell flowers at Bloom & Co."

Throughout the conversation, Falconer doesn't stop preparing hundreds of white flowers for the weekend celebration.

One suspects it is always this way for the two entrepreneurs — juggling the needs of three busy businesses.

By definition, synergy is a whole that is greater than the simple sum of its parts. That's the way Bloom & Co. feels.

And it is not static. They are always open to new ideas.

When the pair were in Nashville on a brief vacation, they both bought ball caps that boldly said NASH above the visor. It was an "aha" moment for both.

"We both said: 'That's really neat, at the same time,'" remembers Falconer. "We knew it would totally be a popular thing in our town, for both locals and tourists."

Today, they also sell NOTL pennants, toques, tote bags and pins, but the NOTL ball cap is one of the shop's best-selling items.

The women are thoughtful when asked about the store's location. They both respond at once.

"We're a little out of the way for some people," Falconer starts. "But we have a loyal customer base and people come out to see us," Wielink continues.

Then Falconer: "It is a busy corner, so we get lots of visibility." Wielink finishes the collective thought: "And we're paying a fraction of what we would be paying in Old Town."

Almost like one mind.

They would love to have a café on one of the nearby street corners, just to add traffic. But a fourth business isn't in the cards right now.

"We would do it ourselves — maybe someday — but I really don't want to get up early to make someone else's coffee," says Falconer. "We could do it right next door, but we're not ready to pull the trigger."

Two highly creative people, making it happen.

Developer John Hawley to build rental housing in Village

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

John Hawley, developer of the Village subdivision in NOTL, is building 20 rental apartments as an addition to the neighbourhood.

Hawley, who said the development will help diversify housing options in Niagara-on-the-Lake, asked town council to defer development charges for 18 months or until the houses are built and occupied, on Monday during committee of the whole.

Council approved the request, with the condition that staff come back with housing affordability and diversity criteria for council

to use for future deferment requests, and to advise Niagara Region to do the same.

Town treasurer Kyle Freeborn said the deferment would only cost the town the interest it would have made on the money in that time. Coun. Erwin Wiens pointed out the number would be nominal.

Hawley said seven of the apartments are going to be leased to the Shaw Festival as housing for staff and the other units will range from \$1,600 per month for a one-bedroom and \$2,200 for a two-bedroom.

He said there are a number of challenges building rental housing and that the

homes would be "beautiful, elegant buildings" but with "simple elements."

"We couldn't spend money on extravagant additions to them," he said.

"You work back from the rent that you can charge and you work back to see how much you can afford to pay for the building," Hawley explained, adding there had to be cuts to some of the luxury features to make the project financially viable.

"Frankly, we could have sold the site as luxury townhouses and made more money but we wanted at this point in the project to give back to the community and also to add that element to the Village to round it out."

Council expressed some concern over setting a precedent by waiving development charges, to which Hawley said, "I would suggest that if developers come forward with rental housing, this might be a precedent we would want to set."

He said it's difficult and complicated to build affordable rental units. "I certainly would not be coming forward for a request if it was for sale housing. There's no need to assist developers with condos or anything for sale."

The conversation among councillors took a brief turn into talking about what affordable housing is, and

what sort of rent figure that looked like — but Hawley clarified the development is not traditional government affordable housing, but rather his own effort to build more affordable houses.

Hawley said the development would be three buildings that would resemble "three small mansions."

"These apartments will provide an opportunity for those who work in Niagara-on-the-Lake but cannot afford to purchase a home here," he said.

Construction is set to begin in December and the project would take about a year to complete, with apartments ideally ready to rent in November 2021.



The Village sign. JESSICA MAXWELL



Barbara Ahluwalia is inducted as a lifetime member of the NOTL Golf Club last week. With her are owner John Wiens, club controller Kevin Winnington, greenskeeper Mike Magwood and head pro Billy Simkin. KEVIN MACLEAN

Golf club honours Ahluwalia with lifetime membership

Kevin MacLean
Managing Editor

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club bestowed a rare honour on one its longtime members last week – making Barbara Ahluwalia a lifetime member of the club.

Ahluwalia, even at age 87, remains one of the most consistent players at the club, male or female, and is the first woman to be given a lifetime membership, owner John Wiens noted.

The honour recognizes Ahluwalia's "decades of dedication, achievement with winning three senior ladies championships, four

super senior ladies championships and many various 18-hole ladies league cups since the 1980s," Wiens said in a letter.

He added that the tireless Ahluwalia, who has been active with numerous community organizations for many years, including the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre and Newark Neighbours, "has been instrumental in creating and sustaining a culture of friendship" at the golf club.

The lifetime membership, previously granted to only Al Derbyshire and Doug Garrett, means Ahluwalia will never have to pay annual golf fees.

Shaw adds free Christmas shows Dec. 5-19

Staff
The Lake Report

The Shaw Festival is adding a free festive twist to its popular concert series.

From Dec. 5 to 19, in the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre, "Songs for a Winter's Night" will feature favourite melodies from the holiday season.

During each free performance, up to 50 socially distanced guests wearing masks will be immersed in the holiday magic of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Directed and choreographed by associate artistic director Kimberley Rampersad, with music direction by Paul Sportelli, "Songs for a Winter's Night" includes holiday favourites such as "White Christmas," "The Prayer" and "Have Yourself



Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane with Andrew Broderick.

PETER ANDREW LUSZTYK.

a Merry Little Christmas."

The concert features the talents of festival ensemble members Kyle Blair, Andrew Broderick, James Daly, Kristi Frank, Élodie Gillett, Alexis Gordon, Olivia Sinclair-Brisbane, Jonathan Tan and associate music director Ryan deSouza.

Audience members

attending performances of "Songs for a Winter's Night" are invited to share their holiday memories with the Shaw. Patrons' stories of Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and all other seasonal celebrations will be woven in to the holiday

concerts. Festive recollections can be emailed to feedback@shawfest.com.

As The Shaw prepares for the holiday season, additional concerts featuring the music of Duke Ellington, Dorothy Fields and Cole Porter have been added to the schedule from Nov. 25 through Dec. 4.

Tickets are general seating and can be reserved by calling the Shaw Festival's box office at 1-800-511-SHAW (7429). Tickets for the concert series will not be available online.

Funding for "Song's for a Winter's Night" and additional concerts is provided by the Ontario government.

For more information about the festival's COVID-19 health and safety practices, visit shawfest.com/dutyofcare.

Washrooms always closed in winter, Disero says

Staff
The Lake Report

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said she's been hearing from Niagara-on-the-Lake residents with concerns about the town wash-

rooms at Simcoe Park and Queen's Royal being closed.

But that's nothing new, Disero said during a committee of the whole meeting Monday.

The two washrooms

close every winter, she said, adding the facilities were not designed for winter use.

"The public washrooms at Queen's Royal Park and Simcoe Park have been closed for the winter.

This does not have anything to do with COVID. They've always been closed for winter months because they're not built operating to operate under cold weather and during winter months."

The solution to COVID-19 is **right in front of your nose.**

- Wear a face covering.
- Keep 2m apart from anyone outside of your household.
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- Wash your hands often.



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GAMES



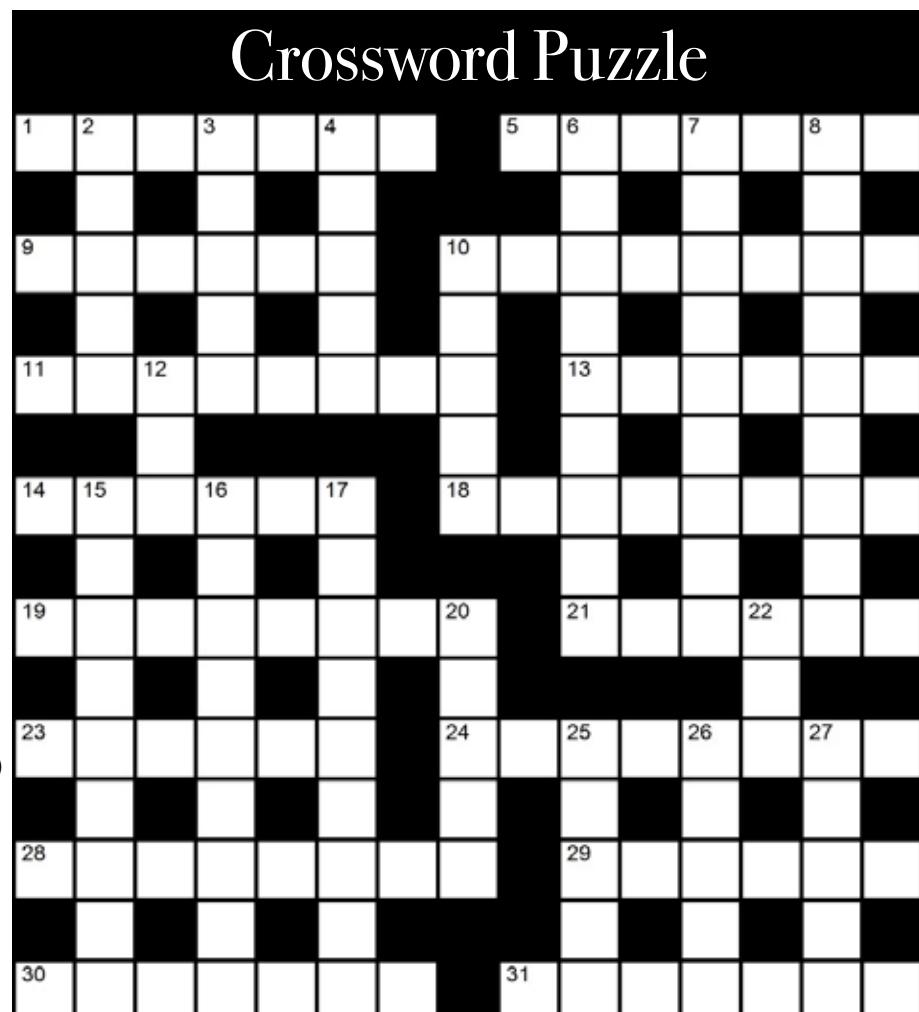
Have some fun

Across

1. Goblet (7)
5. Devour (7)
9. Biased (6)
10. Typo (8)
11. Main roads (8)
13. Likenesses (6)
14. Respect (6)
18. Roomy (8)
19. Belongings (8)
21. Locomotive (6)
23. Sucking fish (6)
24. Noblewoman (8)
28. Unfortunate happening (8)
29. Fictional ape-man (6)
30. Crisp (7)
31. Outlaws (7)

Down

2. Capital of Vietnam (5)
3. Strap (5)
4. About (5)
6. Firmly adhering to a purpose (9)
7. Hollering (9)
8. Dummy (9)
10. Spars (5)
12. Obtained (3)
15. "A -- Named Desire" (Tennessee Williams) (9)
16. Detonation (9)
17. W Moroccan city (9)
20. Vessel used for private cruising (5)
22. Fury (3)
25. Extremely (5)
26. Exhausted (5)
27. Point of view (5)



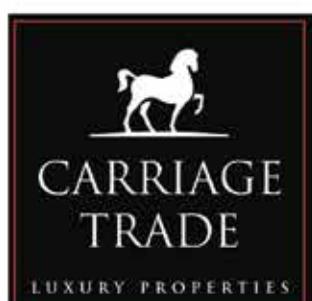
Last issue's answers



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NOTL Sparks celebrate Diwali with light night

Priya Litt
Special to The Lake Report

It was an honour for me to attend as a special guest speaker and presenter to teach NOTL's Sparks, the youngest members of the Girl Guides of Canada, all about Diwali!

Most popularly known as the Festival of Lights, Diwali is widely celebrated by many Indians around the globe, especially in India.

Diwali symbolizes the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. This festival is usually on the darkest night of the month, yet with all the candles and diyas it becomes the brightest night!

We can also learn from this and make the choice to brighten up our lives like Diwali, reminding ourselves and others to light up each and every heart with love

and compassion.

The Sparks decorated diyas made from clay, adorned them with beautiful gems and lit them up with tea lights. Diyas are oil lamps that are traditionally lit up by using a cotton wick dipped in ghee or vegetable oils.

With crayons, they coloured and decorated beautiful rangoli designs, an art form of beautiful patterns. Rangoli means "rows of colour." To create rangoli we traditionally use coloured rice, dry coloured flour, coloured sand or flower petals to make designs at the entrance of our homes. It welcomes happiness and is thought to bring good luck.

Special helper Achal Litt came dressed in traditional Indian attire and gave out treat bags to each Spark. Diwali is all about giving, sharing, caring and spreading love and kindness all



The NOTL Sparks celebrate Diwali by lighting diyas.
SUPPLIED PHOTOS/PRIYA LITT

around.

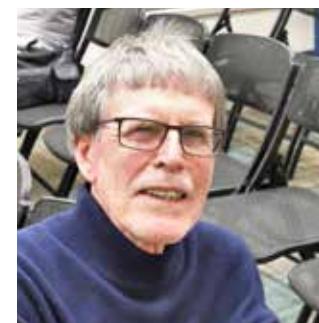
The Sparks and the Guides were all fascinated and enjoyed learning about this wonderful cultural festival. With glow stick necklaces and bracelets along with the brightly lit

diyas, the night ended in the brightest way possible as the Sparks bedazzled the night with sparklers.

Let's all remind ourselves and those around us to spread love, light and happiness. Happy Diwali!



Dr. Brown: Other species mirror common human behaviours



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

Dr. William Brown
Special to The Lake Report



A baboon with its youngster. PIXABAY PHOTO

Sometimes when we struggle to make sense of human behaviour it helps to examine the behaviour of closely related species such as chimpanzees, baboons and rhesus monkeys – to name the main three.

Like us, they are highly social and face the daily challenge of navigating the

social landscape within their troop. Meeting the challenge involves keeping track of who's in charge, who's in, who's out, who's allied with whom, who to be wary of and who you can count on when the chips are down.

No wonder Robin Dunbar, an evolutionary psychologist at Oxford University, put forward his hypothesis that the complexity and demands posed by keeping track of relationships within

the groups was the main selective pressure that drove the evolution of the brain in primates – not the skill with which tools were fashioned and used.

There is strong observational evidence that what we might call moral behaviour is sometimes practised by chimpanzees – examples of which include helping those unable to find food or fend for themselves and the provision of long-term support for disabled members

of their troop for months and even years.

And based on fossil evidence, the provision of long-term care for disabled members was also provided by our long-extinct close-cousin species, the neanderthals.

Of course, chimpanzees can be malicious and merciless to the point of savagely killing others. But then, as we are reminded daily, sometimes humans are calculatingly malicious, merciless and savage toward one another. For our primate relatives, good and bad behaviour are biological features of the species as a whole and individuals within the group, not some imagined force beyond the biological nature of their nature as animals.

The similarities between the social behaviour of humans and primate relatives are striking. Older male baboons, for example, often develop long-lasting friend-

ships with members of both sexes – platonic in the case of female friends.

These friendships are cemented by grooming and spending long periods with one another. For males, competitiveness and aggression toward one another mark their early years when they struggle to establish themselves in the hierarchy for preferential access to females.

But, as many grew older, much of that aggression and competitiveness subsides. In short, they mellow – as often happens with human males.

The chimpanzee study – like the baboon study – was based on long-term observations in the wild and revealed that older males became more conciliatory and favoured more long-term, mutually beneficial relationships, again associated with spending more time together and grooming with members of both sexes.

At all ages, females in both baboon and chimpanzee societies tend to be more social. No surprise there.

What these studies reveal is that social behaviours and values cross species lines. One thing I have learned from the now burgeoning literature on the behaviour of other species is that much of our behaviour has deep evolutionary roots.

And social intelligence – the ability to read the mood and intentions of others – is well-developed in primates and other social animals, such as dolphins, and even small-brained corvid birds, such as crows and ravens.

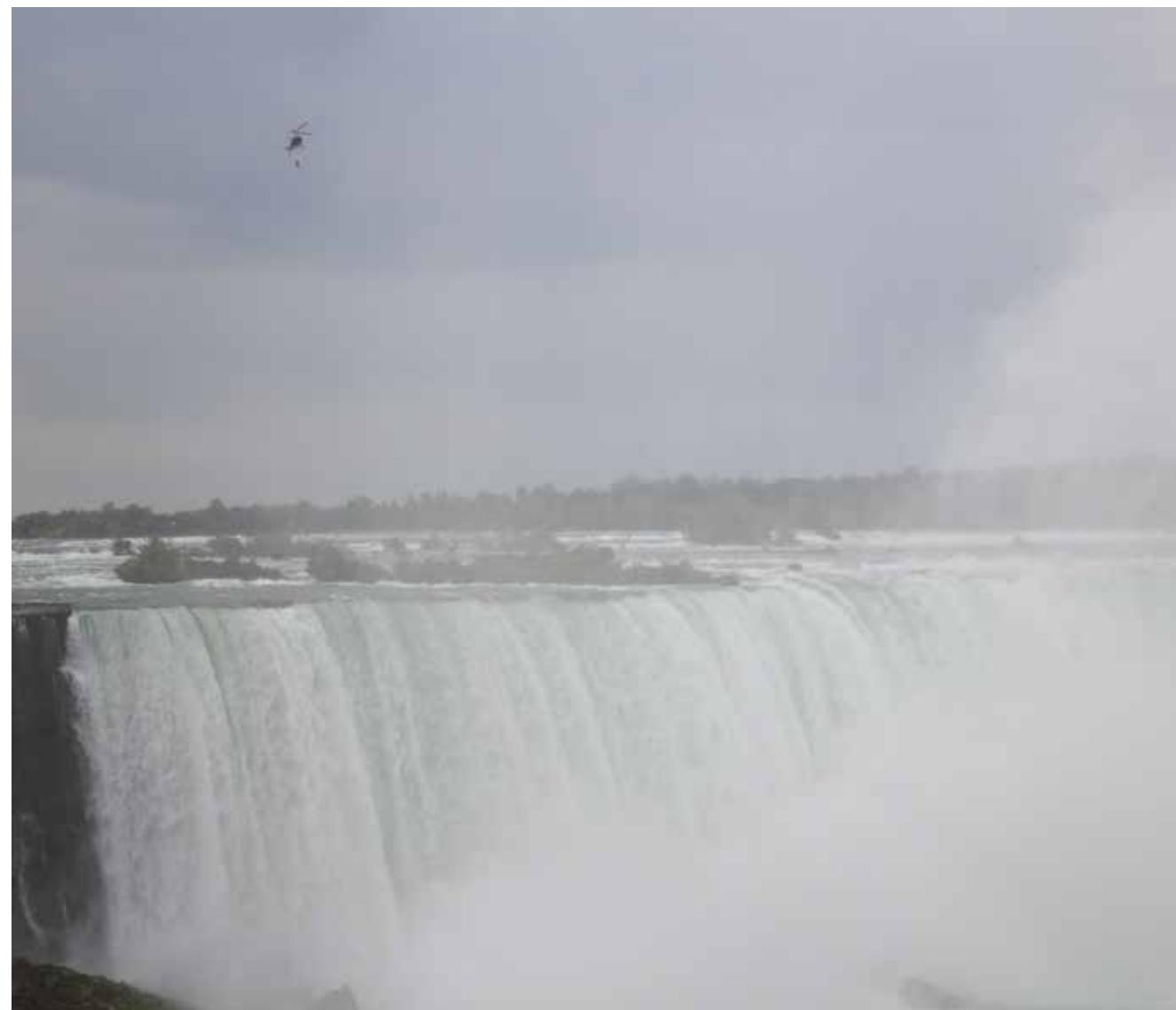
In the case of the latter, it's amazing how much brain power, including facial recognition of humans, is packed into such a small brain with nothing like the primate neocortex to brag about.



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Erendira Wallenda performs stunts over Niagara Falls in 2017, including hanging by her teeth above the deadly waters. FILE PHOTOS/RICHARD HARLEY

Wire-walkers and miracles at Niagara Falls



Denise Ascenso
Exclusive/The Lake Report

across the brink of the falls but crossed the gorge down from the falls.

In 1859, Jean Francois Gravelet became the first person to wire-walk across the Niagara Gorge. In 1876, Maria Spelterini became the first woman to do it. In fact, she crossed four times in 18 days. On one of those crossings she was blind-folded.

It was in 1896 that wire-walking was halted by law.

However, 116 years after this law was implemented, in 2012, Nik Wallenda got permission from the United States and Canada to do a high-wire act.

Unlike previous walkers, Wallenda was crossing over the actual brink of the Horseshoe Falls.

It was billed as the longest, unsupported tightrope walking act in history. Wallenda was successful and upon reaching Canada, he presented his passport to immigration authorities to legally enter

The first walkers, though, did not walk

the country.

Several ships have also taken the plunge over the falls. In 1829, a schooner, The Superior, was sent over the falls as a stunt.

It got stuck on the rocks at the bottom of the falls, staying there for a month before finally breaking apart. In 1837, during the Upper Canada Rebellion the steamer Caroline was set on fire and sent over the falls.

On Aug. 6, 1918, an old dredging scow ran into some problems while dredging the sand banks out of the south end of the Niagara River.

The tow line from a tug boat broke as it was pulling the scow to shore. The two men on board the scow were terrified as they headed toward the Horseshoe Falls. Fortunately the scow became wedged in some rocks and the two men were rescued.

There it remained for over 100 years un-

til Oct. 31, 2019, when higher-than-normal water levels in the Niagara River and a strong wind storm lifted the scow off the rocks.

The scow was pushed 50 metres down the river toward the brink of the Horseshoe Falls before it was caught on more rocks. This scow could possibly be the next object to go over the falls.

There also have been a few miracles at Niagara Falls.

On July 9, 1960, seven-year-old Roger Woodward and his sister were in a small aluminum boat with a family friend going for a ride on the south end of the Niagara River.

The boat capsized when it got caught in the rapids. The man went over the falls and perished.

Woodward's 17-year-old sister was rescued but the rescuers ran out of time to reach the young boy. Horrified, they watched help-

lessly as Woodward went over the falls with only his life jacket on.

The crew of the Maid of the Mist saw an orange life jacket bobbing in the water below the falls and scrambled to rescue Woodward. On their third attempt, Woodward was able to grab hold of a life preserver ring.

Upon Capt. Clifford Keech hearing Woodward's incredible story, he contacted the authorities. Woodward was taken to Greater Niagara General Hospital, where he spent three days recovering from multiple bruises and a slight concussion.

Many others, though, have not been as fortunate. It is thought that 20 to 30 people a year attempt to take their lives by jumping into the waters of the Niagara River. Most of them go over the Horseshoe Falls. Between 1850 and 2011, an estimated 5,000 bodies have been found at

the foot of the falls.

One of the most recent Niagara Falls miracles occurred on July 8, 2019.

An unidentified man was seen sitting on the fencing at the brink of the Horseshoe Falls. By the time police arrived he had climbed over the fencing and jumped into the river.

The police put into action the plan for body recovery in the basin of the falls. However, the man survived and was found by the authorities sitting on some rocks near the observation platform for the Walk Behind the Falls tour groups.

Daredevils, thrill-seekers and tourists from around the world are all drawn to the magnificence of the natural wonder that is Niagara Falls...

More Niagara's History Unveiled articles about the past of Niagara-on-the-Lake are available at: www.niagaranow.com



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EXPLORING PHOTOS WITH NOTL MUSEUM



MB Foods

Today the site of a massage therapy business and art gallery at 1547 Niagara Stone Rd. in Virgil, this building started as the Virgil Locker Service in 1950, providing cold storage for local farmers and a small grocery. In 1957, it was named MB Foods and, under the ownership of the Bogusat family, the store expanded to become one of the largest independent grocers in the region. It provided many specialty products, such as their popular German sausage and baked goods. In 2005, it was bought out by Valu-mart (Loblaw's) and a new building was built next door.



Circa 1910 wainscot and plate pail. BRIAN MARSHALL

BRIAN MARSHALL
Columnist

I love wood. Whether it's left natural or painted, there's something about it that resonates in me on a very basic level.

Perhaps it's the fact that no matter how finely finished, there is a living quality to wood that no manmade substance can duplicate.

Or, it might be its tensile strength and malleability that appeals to me. Then again, it could be that our species has used this natural product for so long and in so many ways it has simply become a part of our DNA.

Still, for whatever reason, wood makes my heart sing, which is why histori-

cally correct wall panelling and wainscoting have been a longstanding part of my design aesthetic.

So, let's start at the beginning by asking the question why our ancestors living in a timber, stone or structural brick house might choose to panel their interior walls with wood?

The answer is very simple. Wood is a natural insulator which, when applied to interior walls, not only improved the interior environmental conditions but also mitigated any dampness transferred via the stone/brick walls.

For timber-built homes, it

provided a secondary barrier to air movement through the cladding. Further, the partial-height wainscot offered similar benefits while also protecting the more delicate plaster above from damage caused by chairs, boots, spurs and the like.

In 17th- and 18th-century North American homes it was very common to see ceiling-to-floor wood paneling. Then, at the turn of the 19th century, the English Neo-classical and Regency movements in architecture (plus the Federalist style in the U.S.) challenged the long-dominant Georgian, causing a shift in both exte-

rior and interior design.

Full-height panelling became passé as designers extolled the virtues of wainscot and plaster (the latter often hung with wallpaper).

While there was significant debate around the correct height for wainscoting, there was one rule that was commonly adhered to: the cap (or dado) was set level with the windowsills to create one continuous line defining the top of the "pedestal," according to the Classical Orders.

Over the decades that followed, wall panelling would see a cyclical resurgence in popularity, particularly during the Eclectic Revival and Edwardian periods. Wainscoting, whether raised panel, flat panel or beadboard, ranged from classic height to two-thirds wall height.

Today, both full-height panel and wainscot are recommended by discerning designers. And, with the advent of pre-manufactured kits, it's more affordable than one might think.



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