Man dead following police shooting

A man is dead after being shot by police Tuesday afternoon. Police had been called to a Niagara Falls location after receiving a report of a suspected impaired driver. About an hour later he was located in the area of Line 3 and the Niagara River Parkway. “There was in interaction with an adult male and he was subsequently shot by police,” the police report says. He was transported to the hospital with life-threatening injuries, where he was pronounced dead. The SIU is now investigating.

Roads in the area were closed, and neighbours were told to stay in their homes for several hours. Anyone who may have witnessed this or has information is asked to contact either the SIU at 1-800-787-8529 or the NRP at (905) 688-4111 ext. 1098134. The SIU investigates reports involving police where there has been death or serious injury.

The most vulnerable in-...
Public Health not consulted about vaccine distribution

Penny Coles  
The Local

The vaccine should be coming to Niagara soon, but Dr. Mustafa Hirji, the region’s acting medical officer of health, is frustrated with the lack of information he’s received regarding its arrival. “I don’t have any kind of dates or timeline for vac- cine,” he says, “but I hope it won’t be too long.” It’s now being distributed to many parts of the Greater Toronto Area and into Hamil- ton, “and hopefully it will be coming here next.”

In terms of how the vac- cine will be rolled out across the region, Hirji had little in- formation earlier this week. “We know the Pfizer vac- cine will go to hospital sites, and the expectation is it will go to one of the Niagara Health sites. Niagara Health bought additional freezers last month, and has the ca- pacity to store very large amounts of the Pfizer vac- cine, should large amounts start to come here at any point.” He’s not expecting those large amounts any time soon.

“I’m pretty realistic around the fact that the vaccines have just been approved. It’s been less than a month, and there hasn’t been a lot of time to manufacture the vaccine. The entire world is trying to get a hold of it, so I expect there will not be a lot of it coming.”

As distribution of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine began in Ontario, it was de- livered to a number of hos- pitals in the GTA, where it could be kept at the extreme cold temperature required. Vaccinations of health care workers were occurring on- site. The Moderna vaccine doesn’t require the same storage temperatures, and when it arrives, is expected to be administered first to residents of long-term care.

“We haven’t heard much about the plans around the Moderna vaccine, but hope- fully there will be an an- nouncement of that coming soon,” says Hirji. The region has “sample plans” for distribution, and has had since the start of the pandemic, knowing a vac- cine would come eventually, he says.

The plan includes getting the vaccine first to long-term care residents and staff. But even more frustrat- ing than the scarcity of infor- mation about a timeline for Hirji is the lack of involve- ment in discussions about the vaccine roll-out between the provincial task group and regional Public Health, with no idea if those discus- sions will occur.

“There is no way to know at this point if Public Health will have a role in the vac- cine campaign,” says Hirji. The Province has its task group in charge of

Continued on page 5

Risk to long-term care begins with community cases

Continued from page 1

outbreak; involving the entire fa- cility, declared Dec. 10, and the St. Catharines General Site has been dealing with an outbreak in one unit since Dec. 31.

“The current situation with rising numbers (in the commu- nity) isn’t good,” Hirji says.

We have to wait another week, maybe two or three to see the impact of the lockdown that began Boxing Day, he says, but Hirji is also concerned about new cases as a result of Christ- mas gatherings. He says we can definitely expect “a bit of a short-term worsening before we see things get better.”

In Niagara, Hirji says, “we’re fortunate that right now, al- though our hospital numbers are higher, we’re not in a critical situation where we can’t provide hospital care to the people who need it. The limiting factor to hos- pital care, he says, is now on the staffing side. “I think we are still creations, but we’re managing. As far as I know everyone is getting the care they need.”

Staffing issues are also stressing long-term care homes, he says. “In an outbreak, the need for staff increases, to con- tinue care and do all the extra infection and prevention con- trol measures to control the outbreak. But what actually happens is maybe staff mem- bers are out sick, or have been in high-risk contact with people who are sick, and are not able to work, and need to be isolated. Long-term care homes really struggle with having the staff to provide the care that’s needed, and it becomes harder to con- trol the outbreak. When they don’t have the staff to control the outbreak, it spreads and makes the problem more difficult. It becomes a vicious cycle, with staff exhausted, and long-term care homes struggling with that issue.”

The early stages of the pandemic, it quickly became obvious that having staff move from one long-term care home to another, which was standard practice, was causing virus spread. There was a stop put to that, but now, with staff stagger- ing, “in some cases, it does hap- pen,” says Hirji.

Facilities need to reach out to agencies for temporary staff- ing, and those people might be moving from one home to an- other, providing critical staffing.

That also applies to health- care workers who provide spe- cialized services, including pri- mary physicians, who go into multiple long-term care homes, he adds.

Our first line of defence in keeping outbreaks out of the homes, is to reduce the num- ber of cases in the community. That’s the first thing that needs to happen. All of us need to do the hard work of the shutdown, do what we’re supposed to do, and stop interaction between people. “That’s what we have to do to protect long-term care homes,” says Hirji.

Having additional staffing would be helpful, “but I don’t hold out a lot of hope for that.” The short- age extends across the province, and staff available to work in long-term care homes “are all tapped out,” he says.

Getting the vaccine to Ni- agara in the next few weeks, for staff, visitors and residents of long-term care homes, will also prevent outbreaks and will be a great game-changer.”

Causes of new cases are sim- ilar to recent weeks. In addition to the long-term care homes, there has been a lot of spread within households, a few more cases of family gatherings in the lead up to Christmas, and some cases within workplaces, says Hirji.

In NOTL, the cases this Tuesday were up to 110, with 26 new cases in two weeks. The outbreak in Niagara Long Term Care declared Saturday “is part of the story,” he says.

In the last two weeks, there have been several cases in NOTL households, family gath- erings and meeting with friends. Also, there are a few cases in NOTL linked to work, or visits outside the community, he says.

2January 7, 2021

Thank you to everyone out there who has kept our lights on, kept our staff employed, and kept the spirit of small business alive.

All our love and thanks,
The Willow Cakes Family
And a special thank you from
Catherine O’Donnell and Sean O’Donnell

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Top left to right: Neil Land, Sam Betton, Nicole Mcaulley, Amika Johnson, Heidi Timm-Johnson, Sean O’Donnell
Bottom left: Carol Giang, Stacey MacIntyre, Megumi Kawarada
Missing: Alan Dyer, Catherine O’Donnell

January 7, 2021

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The Province has its task group in charge of

Continued on page 5
Fiery van crash one of most difficult calls

Continued from page 1

2004 fiery church van crash into the barriers in front of the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge to tell her about the fire. Three people, including the driver and two passengers, were killed.

“Th...
Save money on electricity while you can

Penny Coles
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro customers are now paying a lower, off-peak electricity rate of 8.5 cents per kilowatt hour, whether they are currently time-of-use or tiered customers.

The lower rate went into effect Jan. 1 and lasts for 28 days.

The decrease in rates was intended as assistance to those in Ontario staying home during the COVID-19 shutdown, says NOTL Hydro president Tim Curtis.

That reduction will be reflected in the February hydro bill, he says. After Jan. 28, customers will go back to their time-of-use or tiered rate.

The 8.5 cents/kWh hour is equal to the off-peak rate for time-of-use customers, as set by the Ontario Energy Board.

The tiered rates in December were set at 12.6 and 14.6 cents/kWh.

The new rates for Jan. 29 to May 1 are after the government decided to bear the excess costs of the Green Energy Act. “The rates are lower,” explains Curtis, “but the rebate is also lower, so the net result will be minimal.”

For larger businesses that did not previously get the rebate, and are not being given a lower rate, the effect will be a significant reduction in cost, says Curtis. That’s a move he praises. NOTL Hydro has been calling for many years to remove these costs from all electricity ratepayers and to treat all business customers as fairly as residential customers, he says.

On May 1, the tiered and time-of-use rates are meant to be reset. “Anybody who made a decision with regards to getting the tiered or time-of-use rates should re-evaluate at that time,” says Curtis.

“Given recent history, it would not surprise me if we have other changes between now and May 1, 2021, but I have no more knowledge than your readers as to this.”

The Ontario plan to reduce costs to the consumer does not decrease the cost of producing electricity in Ontario. It simply transfers the cost from ratepayers to taxpayers, says Curtis.

“The cost of producing the electricity has not gone away. Any time the prices are lower than the cost is a subsidy, and that is borne by the taxpayer.”

However, he adds, there is a benefit of lowering electricity rates in a time like this. “Most everyone has to pay for electricity, either directly or as part of their rent. They also have to pay it every month. Reducing the cost of electricity is an effective way of getting money in the hands of most Ontarians quickly, by reducing their current costs. Proportionally, it also provides a bigger benefit to those less well off.”

Tim Curtis, president of NOTL Hydro (Photo supplied)
Bail revoked, Jimmy Lai’s back in prison

Penny Coles
The Local

A grueling year for Jimmy Lai has not ended well for him.

The owner of Apple Daily, media outlet openly critical of the Chinese Communist Party, is back in jail, his bail from a December arrest revoked Dec. 31.

The media tycoon, with close family and business ties to Niagara-on-the-Lake, was out on bail earlier this year, and arrested again on Aug. 10, taken from his home in Hong Kong. Granted bail from that arrest, he remained free until Dec. 2, when he was arrested again.

Although allowed bail on Dec. 23, he was ordered back to prison on Dec. 31, after the government’s appeal to his release.

An Associated Press account of his return to prison said it was argued that the judge’s decision to grant bail could have been erroneous, and therefore invalid.

Hong Kong judiciary has said he was granted bail because there was no flight risk, and that Lai was willing to have his movements restricted.

Associated Press reports his bail conditions included surrendering his travel documents and a ban on meeting with foreign officials, publishing articles on any media, posting on social media and giving interviews.

Lai had recently resigned as chairman and executive director of Next Digital, which runs his Apple Daily newspaper, “to spend more time dealing with these personal affairs,” the Associated Press reports.

Lai is the owner of Vintage Hotels, which includes the Pillar and Post, the first hotel to be taken over and managed for a time by his twin sister, Si Wai Lai, a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident.

The hotel also includes the Prince of Wales, Queen’s Landing, and other properties in NOTL and Ontario.

Si Wai now runs the Oban Inn, also owned by her brother.

Lai has been known through Public Health. That’s where I feel the sense why the Province didn’t make sense why the Province hasn’t even spoken to us."

He sees the lack of involvement with Public Health departments across the province as one reason the distribution and administration of the vaccine are lagging far behind what was expected.

"There has been a lot of talk about how slow rolling out the vaccines has been in the parts of the province that do have it. They’re trying to run a vaccination program, and not using the existing infrastructure we have for a vaccine, which is of course through Public Health. That’s where I feel the frustration. It doesn’t make sense why the Province hasn’t even spoken to us."
We may be entering the toughest months of this pandemic. The news is not good, with numbers rising in Niagara-on-the-Lake, in the region and across the province. And depending on how many people didn’t stay home and do what they were supposed to do over the holidays — in addition to the politicians we know broke the rules — we might be in for a bumpy ride before we start to see that downward slope we’re waiting for, possibly even until the arrival of the vaccinoes in Niagara, which we can only hope will take awhile.

Thanks to all of you who did make sacrifices over the holidays. It wasn’t easy, but it did make sacrifices over the holidays. It wasn’t easy, but we’re already looking forward to the holidays. It wasn’t easy, but we’re already looking forward to the holidays. It wasn’t easy, but we’re already looking forward to the holidays. It wasn’t easy, but we’re already looking forward to the holidays. It wasn’t easy, but we’re already looking forward to the holidays. It wasn’t easy, but we’re already looking forward to the holidays.

The really heart-breaking news is that COVID is now in one of our local long-term care homes, and is also increasing in facilities across the region. All health care providers, and all staff at these places have already been through so much. They know what they have to do, and we can be sure they’re doing their best. These are our children, our loved ones, our grandparents. They are being forced to carry out their duties. They have worked so hard to keep their heads above water, finding ways to stay open on some level legally and safely, and it’s not over yet for them. This month is just the beginning of a re-

We’re almost there, but we need to pull together with curbside pick-up, or cautions in-store shopping, please think local first. We can see the finish line, and if we work togetherness, we’ll reach it together.

Penny Coles
The Local

Gates pushes for long-term care reform

Wayne Gates, MPP Niagara Falls riding Special to The Local

Long-term care is a humanitarian crisis, in our communities and in this country.

As awful as it is to read about the outbreaks, we cannot turn away from the facts. Seniors are being forced to carry out and to beg for food and water, while they’re left vulnerable to deadly infections.

Loved ones are dying in long-term care — with more outbreaks than we saw ever at the height of the first wave.

As with all governmental policy during COVID-19, I remained open as possible to working with our Premier and providing a united front against this virus, but on the file of long-term care, Doug Ford has failed our province.

Ford has had 10 months to prepare for a second wave of COVID-19 and yet our long-term care homes are even more at risk than during the first wave.

Today there are more outbreaks in these homes than at any point during this public health crisis.

When we began to call on the minister of long-term care, Merrilee Fullerton, to provide immediate staffing supports to Oakwood Lodge in Niagara Falls, where more than 200 staff and patients were COVID-19 positive in the 153-person home, she waited more than a week before acting to take action. There were new outbreaks they hoped they would put before them. If there is anything you need, you can get anything you need to get home, feeling safe.

ASSAULTED WOMEN’S HELPLINE

Mobile calls to: #SAFE (#7273)
1-866-863-0511 (Toll Free)

CRIME STOPPERS

1-800-222-8477

niagaratips.com

Text 274637 (CRIMES), keyword: Niagara, then your tip
Online learning a challenge, but there are tips to make it easier

My colleagues in the elementary grades face similar stresses, and many report feeling completely burned out this year like never before. Many secondary school teachers spend their evenings developing lessons they can deliver synchronously to students both in class and at home. And during my recent conversations with university professor Joseph Brown, he discussed the problems and challenges that he faces teaching online, from the lack of energy from the students to the inability to sufficiently implement interventions.

Not surprisingly, mental health has been a big focus during the pandemic as well. A recent article in The St. Catharines Standard focused on the DSBN’s mental health team, and the efforts they have put forward to support students during this difficult time. The gut of things is that no one really knows what the long-range effects of the pandemic will be on students once things are closer to normal.

Nevertheless, this is the situation in which we find ourselves. Believe it or not, there are ways to get the most out of it from a student’s perspective. And parents of students of all ages can encourage their children to use some of these suggestions:

• Be sure your child is on a set schedule for remote learning.
• During COVID times, we had the opportunity of doing home improvements, whether it be plumbing, yard work etc. Those who are handy do it themselves. Those who are not call the experts.

• My personal objective was simple: look for a local advertiser and choose and support local business. This I did!

• It appears fine but being under the COVID spell, I accept a verbal quote for work to be done in my home. I am penciling this note to remind everyone to get a work contract in writing. I knew better than to accept a verbal agreement, but blithely relied and treated my chosen local expert. In hindsight, a reputable company would have automatically issued a written agreement for both parties to be reviewed and signed. What was agreed upon verbally was never completed, and full payment was still expected.

• Re: Changes to Conservation Authority legislation a concern, (NOTL Local, Dec. 31).

After reading this article, I am compelled to comment further. Ontarians have not seen this level of abuse of power since the Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris cut provincial funding to Conservation Authorities by 70 per cent in the mid-90s, downloading that funding responsibility to municipalities without corresponding funding support.

• With the passing of Bill 229, here is the issue: The Ford government buried these damaging changes to the Conservation Authorities Act within the omnibus provincial budget bill. It had nothing to do with the provincial budget and it absorbed the government from first posting this on the Environmental Bill of Rights for commenting and input, which is required under provincial legislation.

• This is clearly an abuse of power based on political will rather than proven science, and from a local perspective, could lead to unwanted development in Niagara on the Lake by way of Ministers Zoning Orders (MZO’s). We should all be alarmed at these abuses by this and the previous PC governments.

Steve Hardtke
NOTL

Why only one mailbox?

During COVID times, we had the opportunity of doing home improvements, whether it be plumbing, yard work etc. Those who are handy do it themselves. Those who are not call the experts.

Why we had the occasional problem with mailboxes. I mean, some yobs armed with a baseball bat and drunken loud intention, but why did you take our mailbox and only ours? I didn’t know if I should be flattered or insulted. In other case, I am inconvenienced. Would you like to return it? You might even put it back on its post.

Do young people make amends nowadays? I am assuming it was a young person. If an older person, then I guess he/she has a problem and I should extend a little sympathy. Anyway, whoever the person, or whatever the age, I would like it back . . . please!

Cynthia Rand
1278 Line 2

We should be alarmed by changes to Conservation Authority legislation

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Cynthia Rand
1278 Line 2

Shop local, not loco

When completed, Disero said, “We are very happy to see this significant development for our community and continue to be the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities’ partner in Niagara.”

We often speak about how important it is to waste collection services to be affordable, accessible, and environmentally friendly. Increasing waste collection fees is not an affordable solution.

Starting October 19, 2020 in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Niagara Region will be losing the Surplus Materials Exchange. This is a space where people can buy and sell used materials, such as building supplies, furniture, clothing, and electronics. It is a place where people can make connections and build community.

We need these types of organizations to continue to thrive in Niagara to address the issue of waste reduction and reuse.

MacIntyre, the chair of the Regional Waste Management Commission, shared this message:

“While the Surplus Materials Exchange is closing, the Niagara Region will continue to support community-based waste reduction initiatives. We encourage residents to look for other places in their community where they can buy and sell used materials.”
Town offers help with long-term care outbreak

Penny Coles The Local

Lord Mayor Betty Disero says she was saddened to hear about an outbreak at Niagara Long Term Care Residence on Welington Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake. “They have been so successful keeping the virus out for almost a year,” she says. “Now, with all the variants showing up, it’s making the disease even more contagious.”

As the numbers of COVID cases increase in long-term care facilities, she says, “it seems like they’re trying to bail water out of a boat that’s sinking. They can’t keep up with it.”

On Tuesday, the 124-bed residence was reporting two staff members and two residents infected. The staff members were asymptomatic, and self-isolating at home. “My heart breaks for them. They’ve worked so hard, and just as we start to see a vaccine in sight, they get their first outbreak. It’s just awful. They were so close to being infection-free.”

The Niagara Long Term Care Group has been in touch with Public Health, and has offered to be available to help out in any way they can, says Disero. “It must be so difficult for them,” says Disero. “I’m sure they are taking every precaution to prevent infection from spreading, and keep their residents and staff safe. We’ll do anything we can to help.”

With the numbers going up in the community and across the region, she says, “it is really the people working in long-term care, the rest of us have to be vigilant. ‘Wear a mask, keep a distance, wash your hands, and stay within your own households.’”

Community mourns heritage preservationist Michael Howe

Penny Coles The Local

Losing a well-fought battle with leukemia, long-time resident Michael Howe died peacefully at Hospice Niagara on Tuesday, Dec. 29, at the age of 74.

In his final days in hospice care, from Christmas Eve on, says his wife Marsha, “he was able to be with him around the clock.”

Although the pandemic seemed to come home to an empty house she had shared with Michael for the last 20 years, with not even their son, Chris, able to travel from his Alberta home, Marsha says, “there is not a corner of the house, or in my being, that he’s not with me now.”

The couple met on “the streets of Niagara-on-the-Lake,” and became childhood sweethearts when she was 14 and Michael was 16.

When she says they met on the streets of town, she is referring to her childhood, and Michael’s, during a time when couples of the post-war era, raising kids during the 50s and 60s, met often for dining and socializing, the kids playing outdoors.

Both Marsha, whose family in Niagara goes back generations, and Michael, whose parents Margherita and Norm moved here to raise their four children, were part of that group of kids. They both went to Niagara District Secondary School, and then away to university — Michael to Queen’s University, graduating in 1968 with a business degree and a Masters in business administration, Marsha to nursing school. They married in 1974.

He is known best in Niagara-on-the-Lake for his love of the community and its heritage and as a founding member of the Niagara Foundation. His father Norm was one of the founders, his mother Margherita a founding member of the NOTL Conservancy. “His dedication to heritage preservation came naturally,” says Marsha. “They absolutely passed it on to him. Michael and Norm were close, really good with one another as father and son. I could see Norm passing that on to him.”

“Michael’s love of the community, and love of heritage, was bred in the bone,” agrees Niagara Foundation volunteer, recent Big Nix, Brad Nixon. “He had a natural, nuanced understanding of the community, and provided consummate leadership for the Niagara Foundation.”

His leadership was always praiseworthy in a quiet manner, and “often took care of details that might have otherwise been dropped,” such as keeping in touch with people.

Despite his busy schedule of travelling for work, “he was always able to pick up on foundation business and move forward,” says Nixon.

He was thoughtful when weighing development proposals, would consider the consequences, and come up with an opinion which he would share, but never in an autocratic manner. “He was very much a consensus, collegiate leader.”

In recent years, he was most concerned about the Wilderness, a King Street property with natural and built heritage the foundation is in the process of purchasing, changing the course of King Street, and extensive residual development he believed to be inconsistent with the style and heritage of the town, says Nixon, and had a very broad range of interests, consistent with the mandate of the foundation.

Michael, adds Nixon, was “observant, intelligent, and very witty. He sometimes didn’t suffer fools gladly. He was also compassionate, although that wasn’t something he wore on his sleeve.”

Nixon describes him as “socially progressive, in a quiet way.” Although the inner person was quiet, “he loved to party,” especially a local party people with whom he was in touch.

“There is no doubt his home was here. This is where his heart was,” says Nixon.

Marsha says they travelled together frequently, especially to Italy, where her sisters live.

It was there, in September, 2019, that she noticed Michael experiencing a shortness of breath during a hike in Capri, that was new for him.

“They had been going there for eight or nine years, and this was different.”

Back at home in November, Michael underwent a vigorous medical investigation, and “there were all kinds of red flags,” says Marsha, including low counts of red and white blood cells, and an absence of platelets, that meant he wasn’t getting enough oxygen.

He was diagnosed on Christmas Eve, 2019, with MSD, or Myelodysplastic syndrome, sometimes referred to as pre-leukemia.

After two months of chemotherapy at the Walker Cancer Centre, there was no improvement, says Marsha, and they were told Michael’s disease had progressed to leukemia, and would be very difficult to cure.

Marsha began driving him to the Juravinski Cancer Centre in Hamilton for treatment around the end of March, she says, just as COVID had shut everything down.

“I never even met his doctor,” she says. “I would drive him there for his appointment, and sit outside in the parking lot, in the extreme heat of the summer, while Michael went through all his treatments on his own.”

During that time, she says, “he was doing okay. We were walking, and he was a little slower than usual, but he looked okay. But he wasn’t getting a good remission.”

Marsha says the events of the year brought them closer together than they had ever been. “We had time to talk, ‘and we went through this together. Nobody else understood the disease. And Michael never stopped hoping for remission.”

His doctor suggested a new drug, and had enrolled him in a clinical trial at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre in Toronto, but Michael became too ill, she says. “He was so accepting of it. He did whatever he was told, and just kept hoping for the best.”

They had a last getaway together after Thanksgiving, to a friend’s cottage in Owen Sound, but after that, he developed a fever, and was hospitalized.

“‘I can’t tell you the amount of chemicals and medication he received. It was absolutely overwhelming,’ says Marsha.

She stayed with him, and as a registered nurse, became his primary caregiver throughout both his stay in the hospital and hospice, along with staff in full masks and gowns. She was the only visitor he had.

Being both a Leo and an A type personality, Michael didn’t want company as he declined — he was a proud and private man, says Marsha.

One memory of her long-time companion makes her chuckle.

“She was always so nattily dressed. He’d come down the stairs ready to go out, and Margherita would say, ‘you look like you just stepped out of a bandbox,’ an old expression that means spotless and neatly pressed, which he was, she says. ‘that was something he enjoyed.’

With only 10 people now allowed at a funeral service, Marsha says the family is instead praying to have a larger, outdoor gathering this summer.

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High school student looks at education changes

Janvi Ganatra Grade 12, A.N. Myer Secondary School

I have always looked forward to my senior year of high school as a significant milestone in my life. Although the pandemic has drastically changed what this year looks like, I started Grade 12 with a mix of concern, excitement and an optimistic mindset.

Deciding to enter a hybrid learning model in September meant attending in-person classes two to three days a week with proper sanitizing, social distancing and a mask. The rest of the days were virtual learning from home. The most recent province-wide lockdown has changed this learning model to completely virtual, until Jan. 25.

As much as I have enjoyed the extra hours of sleep and freedom in my schedule, virtual learning is just not the same, and can feel endless. Missing are the structure and learning environment of a classroom, the presence of a teacher and peers, getting to see friends every day, and even the buzzing hallways and loud cafeteria at lunch.

We all understand that COVID-19 is a serious health concern. With the necessary restrictions, schools and teachers are trying their best to adapt. And I am hopeful that in this new year, we will eventually reach a new normal.

For high school seniors, this year also includes finalizing post-secondary plans, applying to schools and scholarships while maintaining good academic standing and an optimistic mindset.

Navigating all of this is stressful in itself, not to mention the added stress of transitioning into a new learning model, isolation, dealing with day-to-day changes and the uncertainty associated with a pandemic. Amidst all of this, it is essential to prioritize mental health, realizing that this year many things are out of our control, and the best thing to do is make the most of the situation at hand.

I am thrilled to continue with my school’s Arts Council and NOTL’s Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council through Zoom and Google Hangouts.

Transitioning to tutoring math online through Microsoft Teams has been a whole new experience, and joining new extracurriculars in virtual formats, such as the Junior Achievement Mentor Company Program, are a fun way to stay connected, and explore doing things while gaining valuable experiences.

Every high school student’s experience in learning during this pandemic has been different. Here are the thoughts and opinions of some friends in Grades 9 and 10, who graciously agreed to share their experience.

“I think that schools are doing their best to keep us safe and allow us to continue learning, but I will be glad when it is safe to have regular school again,” says Kaitlyn Lambert, a Grade 10 student at Eden High School. “Students need to know how to follow safety protocols. For example, Continued on page 10

Janvi Ganatra is a Grade 12 student at A.N. Myer Secondary School. (Photo supplied)
Students have ‘altered high school experience’

Kaitlyn Lambert is a Grade 10 Student at Eden High School. (Photos submitted) 

Maisy Harrison is a Grade 9 Student at A.N. Myer Secondary School.

There have only been two cases of COVID-19 in the entire school so far, and there has been no evidence indicating that there is a contraction of the virus from other people in the school.

However, says Lambert, “with the amount of learning that is being done at home, it is harder to contact teachers for support, though they usually respond quickly.” Although says, “with the amount of learning that is being done at home, it is harder to contact teachers for support, though they usually respond quickly.” Although

“Despite a global pandemic, I have also been able to make new friends, and have an altered version of a proper high school experience. I am still involved in clubs, like Myer’s Art Council. Even though we are not meeting in person, we all still have so much fun making plans for future events. I know that my Grade 10 year, no matter what restrictions Niagara is under, will be great. I have faith that my school will have the necessary support for me to succeed in my courses and enjoy my time at Myer.”

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Across:
1. Opposites of neither
6. Protect
10. “Your almighty blackbirds baked in ___”
14. On the ocean
15. Publish
16. Route
17. Va
18. Serviced
20. Cotton Club setting
22. Jamboree
23. Up
25. Intelligence agency
26. Not traded on a stock exchange
28. Top guns
30. Ethnic
35. In favor
36. Adaptation
38. State animal of Maine
40. The Sultan of Swat
41. Talent seeker
43. Shuttle operator
44. Behaved
46. Whipped
48. Beat
51. Accidental dive
51. Feable
52. Some foreign Government heads
53. Except
55. Comic — Minn.
57. Light metal
60. Knucklesheads
65. Suspension
67. Duration
69. First to die in the Bible
71. U.N. nuclear watchdog

Down:
1. Tub
12. U.N. nuclear watchdog
13. Swirl
19. Warning signal
21. Touchdown forecasts
24. German state
26. O Kunda
27. Temporary peace
29. Single Married Sadness
31. Electromagnetically charged particles
32. Maritime refugees
33. Tasteful food
34. Indos
37. Southern hemisphere constellation
40. “He’d make a lovely corpse”

(Dickens: “Martin Chuzzlewit”)
KATHARINA (SCHMIDT) EWERT 1936-2020—Katharina Ewert passed away to be with Jesus on December 30, 2020, in her 84th year. She is predeceased by her husband Cornelius Ewert (1925-1999) and her siblings Nick, Mary, Henry, Jake and Dave. Survived by Annie Ewert and John (Carol) Schmidt.

Katharina was born in Leamington, Ontario to Nikolai and Helena (Martens) Schmidt in 1936, persevering despite dire circumstances at birth. She was Tina to her family and Katy to her school mates.

Dearly loved mother of Ken (Rebecca) Ewert, Bob (Sylvia) Ewert, Judy (Willy) Giesbrecht, Lynne (Ed) Giesbrecht and Susan Ewert (Steve Kelly), Grandmother and Oma to Rachael (Paul) Weber, Sarah, Robert, Ann, Marnie-Lynn, Taryn, Tyson, Stephanie and Kaylee. Stone to her sister MaryAnn Greaves, she leaves to mourn Judith (nee Grierson) his wife and best friend, as well as his sons Billy (Jessica) and Jason (Lynn). He was son of the late William Greaves and Lillian Maud Parker and predeceased by his sister MaryAnn Greaves, he leaves to mourn Judith (nee Grierson) his wife and best friend, as well as his sons Billy (Jessica) and Jason (Lynn). He was son of the late William Greaves and Lillian Maud Parker and predeceased by siblings, Estelle and Allan. He is survived by his son-in-law Sonja and by his grandchildren. Reunited with his parents, Herman and Mathilde (nee Hausman) Ewert, passed away to be with Jesus on December 30, 2020, in his 84th year. He is predeceased by his wife, Doris; his brother, Henry; and his sister, Delores. A life well lived, he will be fondly remembered by cousins David, Robert, Helen, Fred, Mamie-Lynn, Nancy, Janie and Roy as well as many others.

GREAVES, WILLIAM - AUGUST 19, 1945 - DECEMBER 29, 2020—In lieu of flowers we ask for donations to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). In lieu of flowers, we ask for donations to the University of Toronto Library Fund c/o donations.management@utoronto.ca or 416-978-0811.

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Micheal was in Toronto and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He was educated at Queen’s University graduating in 1968 with a Business degree and a Masters in Business Administration. He joined Peat Marwick in 1974 and remained with KPMG for his entire career as a Chartered Accountant. Michael was a consummate professional, passionate about his work which continued until November of this year. His career was marked by frequent and extensive international travel and over the years he visited nearly all of the world’s major cities. He was highly respected internationally for his expertise in Risk Management. Most recently, he worked in the off-shore practice in Bermuda and The Cayman Islands. Through the years, he was a positive mentor for many of his colleagues. Michael cared deeply about his community and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and fought to preserve its heritage, mainly through the work of the Niagara Foundation of which he was president of their board for many years. He will be remembered for his wry sense of humour, scathing wit and gusto for life. He loved dogs. Duster, his Brittany, was his best buddy.

At home he enjoyed working in the garden and gave true meaning to the term “House Proud”.

Above all, was the life Michael shared with Marsha. He genuinely lived his marriage vows, “till death do us part.” He truly loved Marsha and he will be eternally missed.

Cremation has taken place. A celebration of Michael’s life will take place at a later date. Arrangements entrusted to MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake. In lieu of flowers, those who wish, may make donations to Hospice Niagara or Lincoln County Humane Society. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com.

HOWE, MICHAEL NORMAN—Passed away peacefully at Hospice Niagara on Tuesday December 29, 2020 at the age of 74. Beloved husband of Marsha for 46 years. Loving father of Christopher Howe. Caring brother of Peter (Judy McLeod) Howe, Robin Howe and Louise (John Thompson) Howe. Fondly remembered by his nieces and nephews Rosalind, Joelle, Alexandra and Trevor. Predeceased by his parents Margaret and Norman Howe.

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TOBE, STEPHEN—It is with profound sadness that Stephen’s family announces his passing. Stephen was born in NOTL 76 years ago to the late John and Rose Tobe. He is predeceased by siblings, Estelle and Allan. He is survived by his beloved wife of 51 years Martha, sister Vicky Wright (Harvey) and numerous nieces and nephews. After Stephen graduated from McGill University with a PhD in Biology, he never looked back. A post doc fellowship at the University of Sussex led to scientific discoveries and lifelong personal and professional collaboration. Stephen was a professor at the University of Toronto in insect physiology for 35 years. His lab’s research on cockroach hormones made him a world renowned scientist. Stephen also dabbled in administration and was associate dean for 4 years. He mentored colleagues and students in Asia where crustaceans replaced insects as a research tool. His passion for scientific involvement in different arenas lasted for a lifetime. Stephen lived between Thailand and Niagara after retirement. Beach walks, fiesty Thai food, travel and international friends made for rewarding winters in Ban Kwai. Ham radio, wine, produce growing and family were the cherished highlights in Niagara. Stephen lived a rich and varied life and was a citizen and explorer of many lives forever. A celebration of his life will be held post COVID. Thank you to the Niagara palliative group for Stephen’s fine care and to Dr. O’Kane and team at PMH. Online condolences may be shared at http://www.pidartefh.ca. Memorial donations may be made to the University of Toronto Library Fund c/o donations.management@utoronto.ca or 416-978-0811.

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Thank you God, Holy Spirit and St. Jude for listening and answering my prayers. - NS

To place an obituary
in our Classifieds, please contact Julia at: julia@notllocal.com or 905.934.1040
Deadline is Tuesdays at 10 a.m.
That piqued Brown’s interest in programming. Until then, his love of the Hardy Boys novels had him setting his sights on a future involving forensics, specifically DNA analysis.

He enrolled at Brock University for an undergraduate degree in computer science, and subsequently earned his master’s degree at the same institution. The University of Guelph was next, where he earned his PhD in the same discipline.

While waiting to defend his thesis there, he took a job at Polycon Industries, a Magna company in Guelph. He spent a year there as a manufacturing systems analyst, crunching numbers, collecting data and helping engineers trouble-shoot to solve defect problems on the automotive bumper production line.

Once he had successfully defended his thesis, Brown decided that he preferred the world of academia in- dustry, and began shopping his curriculum vitae around to various institutions. Two months into his search, he was contacted by Innopolis University in Russia. In consultation with Beth, who grew up with a bit of a nomadic lifestyle due to her father’s work, he decided to accept the invitation to an interview via Skype.

Following two such interviews, Brown was invited to the university for a face-to-face meeting. “So I went over to Russia for a few days,” he reminisces, “which was a huge process, as you have to get all the visas and that sort of stuff. I headed over, and when I got back, they offered me the job. We decided to take the offer.”

Innopolis University is Russia’s answer to Silicon Valley. It’s about a 45 minute drive away from Kazan, explains Brown. “It’s on the top of a hill, and around the Volga River. They went in there and bulldozed a full forest. They are putting in a full city in that area.”

While construction of the campus was still underway, his first year was spent working out of an office building in the larger city of Kazan. The university helped Brown and other international professors assimilate into that community, with some basic language courses and her living quarters. A year later he was on the campus and living in the brand new high-tech community, also called Innopolis.

All instruction on the campus is conducted in English. The students are a mix of Russian nationals and international students. “It’s a private institution, with government support,” Brown explains. “We only focus on the IT (Information Technology) aspect. The partner companies that are doing the funding, when a student is in here, they agree to also to work a year in one of the partner companies.”

Innopolis is tuition-free for students in exchange for that commitment to one of the more than 150 IT firms involved, including Yandex, the largest technology company in the country — think of it as Russia’s version of Google. A bachelor’s degree in computer science, while master’s programs include AI (Artificial Intelligence) and robotics, software engineering, cybersecurity and data science. They can also move onto postgraduate studies in theoretical foundations of computer science.

As a professor at Innopolis, Brown splits his time almost evenly between teaching and research. An additional 20 per cent of his time is expected to be spent in service to the community, which could include public communication and administrative duties, among other tasks. With co-writer and fellow professor Hamza Aslam, he recently published a textbook, Affordance Theory in Game Design: A Guide Toward Understanding Players, which he uses in one of the fourth-year computer science electives that he teaches.

COVID has forced many of his instructions online. Like Canada, Russia went into a lockdown last March. “They put us all on vacation,” Brown says. “They told us to stay in our homes and only come out for groceries to our nearest store. As a foreign national, I have a registration for where my home is, and I have to carry that. There’s an equivalent for Russian citizens, an internal passport. During the pandemic they were stepping people, and you had to have that on you.”

He and Beth arrived in Canada in mid-November and had to follow quarantine procedures for 14 days. Comparing the current lockdown that began on Boxing Day to what he experienced in Innopolis, Brown can’t believe how lax the restrictions are here. When he returns to Russia next week, he will have to test for COVID, but he says there will be no forced quarantine period for him. The private medical insurance that is part of his employment with the university gives him a higher class of medical coverage, too.

When he does return, he will be doing so alone. As Beth does not have a work visa in the country, she spends much of her time supporting Brown’s academic endeavours. The pair met at Brock and married in 2013. Brown describes his wife, who holds a degree in calculus, as his scientific equal. “She’s my editor-in-chief, my copy editor, my proofreader,” he says. “But because she doesn’t have a work visa, they are not allowing her to return at the moment.” Currently, they have no idea when she will be able to rejoin him in Innopolis.

Brown says he stays away from politics in Russia as much as he can. He feels safe in Innopolis and doesn’t see a large military or police presence there or in the larger Kazan. “Like in Canada, people are separate from their government,” he explains. “It wouldn’t be accurate to say that a lot of the Russian people, especially the youth, are happy with what their government is doing. You have to live in the system, and kind of mind your tongue while you’re there.”

Brown spends most of their time socializing with other members of the academic community. Joe’s love of hockey, though, has resulted in the couple becoming huge fans of the Russian pro league, the KHL.

Specifically, they attend the games of the team based in Kazan, the Ak Bars. “They’ve been around since the Soviet league,” says Brown. “They’re really good. They won the championship, the Gagarin Cup, two years ago. We were there for the equivalent of the Stanley Cup finals. The ticket prices are so cheap, about 2000 rubles, about $40 in Canadian dollars, 6000 rubles for the Cup games.”

Which leads back to this year’s World Junior Championships. “We’ve been cheering for Russia, and for Canada,” he admits. So when the two bitter enemies faced off in the semi-final game, he had to choose sides, and Canada won. “They won the game, so well, shutting out Russia 5-0, punching their ticket to the gold medal contest and forcing our second favourite team to vie for the bronze against Finland Tuesday.”

As of press time, those games hadn’t yet been decided. But Joe was happy to not have to make the decision on which jersey to wear. He simply planned to switch between games.

Life in Kazan

Kazan • population 1.169 Million (2012 Census)
Innopolis • known as an urban settlement and satellite of Kazan, founded in December, 2012, designed to house a population of 155,000, about 42 km southwest of Kazan, 790 km east of Moscow.
Travelling from Toronto to Kazan • via Turkish Air- ways, Toronto to Istanbul, Istanbul to Kazan
Innopolis University Student-Teacher ratio is 16.8:1, 23 per cent of its students are international, with currently under 700 full-time students enrolled.
KHL is the Kontinental Hockey League
Ak Bars Kazan plays in the KHL’s Kharlamov Divisi- on; their current captain is Canadian Justin Aze- vedo from West Lore, Ont., a 2008 draft pick of the LA Kings; Patrice Cormier of New Brunswick, a 2008 draft pick of the New Jersey Devils, is also a member of the team; the team was originally called Mashstrov Kazan, then SC Uritskogo Kazan; note NHL alumni include Vincent Levalier, Brad Richards, Alexei Kovalev and Pavel Datsyuk.