leaving, but he’s frustrated that he hasn’t changed his mind about it at the start of the term. He wanted to serve one term, but he firm he has no plan to run for another term of council. Coun. Erwin Wiens reaffirmed this at a council meeting Monday, saying he was opposed to the plan of leaving the town in a better position than they were to come up with a budget that has an increase over last year of less than three per cent, Weins lambasted council for approving a budget with public funds. But within the first year we had a massive tax increase. I supported it at the time because we needed to keep the budget in the range of two to five per cent. They’ve reduced it twice since then, the first time from a 12.30 per cent increase, the second year, COVID and legislative requirements, and COVID-19 measures. In October, staff was asked to keep the budget increase in the range of two to five per cent. They’ve reduced it twice since then, the first time from a 12.30 per cent increase, the second year, COVID and legislative requirements, and COVID-19 measures. In October, staff was asked to keep the budget increase in the range of two to five per cent. They’ve reduced it twice since then, the first time from a 12.30 per cent increase, and speaking of how pleased we are to have a sustainable budget in the future is to look for new revenue sources.

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Chamber president leaving NOTL for new opportunities

Eduardo Lafforgue, president and CEO of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, is leaving his position to take the job of director of tourism for the Yukon Territory.

His resignation was announced Friday by chair Andrew Niven and treasurer Tim Jennings, who was quoted as saying Lafforgue was one of the most respected and talented people they had ever worked with.

Lafforgue took on the tourism role during the pandemic and was quoted as saying he had never been there, but he was ready to learn as much as he could in the Yukon.

He is also quoted as saying he is moving on because he is looking forward to something new and exciting at the age of 78.

Lafforgue said he was surprised by the call, assuming they had hired someone else.

“The call came out of the blue, and I completely forgot about it,” he said.

He said he had a deep interest in tourism and had always been interested in his career.

At this stage, he said, when he called from the Yukon government offering him the job of tourism director, he felt he had to seize the opportunity.

He explained that a large part of his life, he has always lived, worked and traveled around the world, and played a role in the organization.

“I was the first to be given the job of tourism director, when the human resources department reached out to me and suggested he apply,” he said.

He had a phone conversation with them, and was told to apply online.

“At the time, I didn’t think I was too complicated,” he said of the process for applying.

It was also at the time that a fire destroyed the house where he and his wife were living in the Old Town, and they were uncompromised with all that was going on at that point in their lives.

Then, another phone call, after he put it out of his mind.

“In the end,” he added, “they said they were looking very locally, and nothing happened. I completely forgot about it.”

On Jan. 11, he got a call again, from human resources asking if he was still interested — he was surprised by the call, assuming they had hired someone else.

“It was completely unexpected,” he said.

When they offered him the job, he said he needed time to think about it, and they gave him two days to decide.

“They made me an offer,” he said.

That made him feel so good, he laughed. “I seemed like it was a job for younger people, but it was offering all the things I want to do.”

“If I can run for president at the age of 78, I can try something new at my age,” he joked.

Lafforgue says he feels very confident he is leaving the tourism industry in good hands, with MacIntyre, the chair of the board, vice-chair Andrew Niven and treasurer Tim Jennings, CEO of the Shaw Festival, taking over and looking for a new Chamber president.

Lafforgue is effective Feb. 28.

He takes on the position of tourism director for Vintage Hotels, the organization of which he has been a part for the last decade on Lafforgue, but he says he will continue to help move the house, and his wife Anika, an artist, is also excited to go.

She’s even more crazy than I am,” he jokes.

He takes the position in Yukon on March 1, but the move isn’t a challenge for the couple who have moved often, to locations all over the world.

“This is not the first time in our lives where we’re made this kind of move. We have a certain experience for it. And the support of my wife is key. It wouldn’t happen without her.”

And it’s not just to go with him on this next adventure, but to help move the house, although this time, he says; they will keep a home in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

After the fire last year, they rented a house, and just recently put an offer on purchasing a home. That closed Jan. 10, and it was Jan. 11. The call came from the Yukon.

Their plan is to keep their new house and leave furniture behind, so they can come back for visits.

Lafforgue says he feels very confident he is leaving the local tourism industry in good hands, with MacIntyre, the chair of the board, vice-chair Andrew Niven and treasurer Tim Jennings, CEO of the Shaw Festival, taking over and looking for a new Chamber president.

Since his early days in NOTL, he says, “We’ve come a long way, and we have a fantastic brand, with extra-ordinary, very talented people. They will make the right choice for a replacement for me.”

Lafforgue says he is very grateful for all those who reached out to him once the news of his resignation was announced.

“So many kind words, absolutely fantastic emails. It’s been very touching to hear all these testimonies, very, very touching.”

In the announcement of Lafforgue’s resignation, MacIntyre said “Eduardo and I share a love and respect for Niagara-on-the-Lake’s exceptional success in tourism development, and the unique brand equity of its individual partners. We both appreciate the need to move forward in collaboration with all our partners and stakeholders, I am grateful for what Eduardo has brought to the table during his time with us, setting us in the right direction and managing us through the tourism crisis of the last two years. I wish him luck in his exciting new role.”

Councillor Marnie Cluckie also had words of praise and thanks for Lafforgue’s time at the chamber.

“I extend my heart-felt thanks for Eduardo for his leadership, passion and commitment to the success of tourism in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Town staff appreciates the connections that Eduardo has made at all levels of the organization and his collaborative style. He will be sorely missed for his energy, passion, vision, and strategic thinking. I have no doubt he will be a tremendous asset to his new organization as he has been for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber and Tourism NOTL,” said Cluckie.

“We have been through some incredibly difficult years,” says Lafforgue. “I am proud of the work the team has done, and I am grateful to have been a part of it. I thank Paul MacIntyre, treasurer Tim Jennings, the board and our town CAO, Marnie Cluckie and her staff, for their continued support.”

Accommodation sector wants input on new tax

Penny Coles The Local

Speaking to council Monday night about a municipal accommodation tax, Paul MacIntyre said he was not there to debate the tax, but to ask that it be “within the spirit and framework of the intent of MAT legislation.”

The chair of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce board, and vice-president of operations for Vintage Hotels, MacIntyre said he hopes it will create a new funding source to invest and drive sustainable growth — not to replace old funding.

As the province lifts some restrictions this week, tourism operators “are prepared to meet the challenges ahead — whether it is through creativity or innovation, or simple unrelenting focus on value and customer service. But over the past two years we have become exhausted — not only do we feel exhausted but many hard-earned dollars went down the drain with their lines of credit and their cash flow.”

In bringing a new tax levy on the hardest sector of this pandemic is asking the sector to also invest in time, resources, and possibly technology, he said.

There is no new tax switch to float on our point of sales technology or accounting software in June or July. And everyone’s systems are different. It may involve tech investment, contractual updates, dating, training. The administration of collecting and administering any funds from a new tax will take time and
Second maintenance budget minimizes increases

Continued from page 1

then after budget committee deliberations to a 10.40 per cent rise, and finally to 2.99 per cent, with a general levy of $13,670,566, up $543,793 from last year. With $151,187 in assessment growth, this year’s budget will cost taxpay- ers $1,216, and $44.08 more than last year, for an average residential propertypegged at $356,960.

With a storm water man- agement levy requirement of $879,443, up from $456,998, the average residential prop- erty tax for an urban taxpayer increases to $1,380.64, with an increase of $33.17 over last year on the average tax bill, for a total increase for those urban properties of $97.25.

This year for the first time, made easy with new budget software, staff looked at a four-year historical trend, and was able to reduce the budget by $365,000 through reduced reserves, including the legal fee reserve.

The “solid investment” in the storm water management program, Freeborn explained, is to fund regular cleaning of storm ponds, which hasn’t occurred for several years in NOTL, allowing them to fill with debris. The increased cost will continue through future years, as the ponds will now function as a treatment facility, he noted, mentioning all the legis- lative requirements, he said.

Reducing the increase to 2.99 per cent, Freeborn said, was chiefly a result of changes to the legal reserve. The budget committee, which includes Couns. Norm Bisback, Gary Burroughs, Sandra O’Connor and John Wiens, had considered a two per cent tax on accommoda- tions of five rooms or more, with increases to three and then four per cent in the following two years. Council had allocated $100,000 commitment for the NOTL Museum expansion, a project that had been deferred due to COVID restrictions, and a contribu- tion to the spring event organ- ization, the NOTL Museum of Commerce, 13 for 13, will be funded through parking reserves, council agreed.

The Victoria Street project is on hold, and council moved forward with the accommo- dation tax to fund $100,000 museum in 2022.

There were two presenta- tions before the budget dis- cussion, one from Paul Mac- Intyre, the chair of the NOTL Chamber board, and also vice-president of operations for Vintage Hotels, the other from Janet Jones, represent- ing a chamber committee, the NOTL Tourism Advisory Master plan.

They both asked that, given the acceptance of the municipal accommodation tax as a done deal, a govern- ance committee be created to involve tourism stakeholder- ers, in discussions of how the tax will be administered and what it will fund.

They both requested time to work out a process to collect the tax. Jones said she hoped it could be put until the 2023 bud- get, and objected to coun- cil approving funding for a project before any money has been collected.

A motion by Arsenaull to approve the accommodation tax was approved this year, three next and four per cent the year after on five rooms or more, to be in- stituted July 1, that resolution coun- cils be established, and that therebe consultation with the accommodation providers over the next several months. Arsenaull called the goal of the motion to approve the tax “the right thing to do.” There is no money for a MAT, and when there is, it will be available as a fund- ing source for the museum expansion, an initiative coun- cils has approved, he said.

Burroughs, who support- ed an accommodation tax by the accommodation tax were $100,000 for the museum is funded for a year, “we’ve had to find $200,000 in 2023.” As a museum board member, he added, he believes the com- mitment toward the capital budget to be “extremely im- portant,” allowing the muse- um to access funding from upper levels of government.

And since the majority of tourists to the museum are peo- ple, “it’s a typical cost for a MAT to cover.”

Clare Cameron spoke passionately against the motion to fund the museum expansion with a municipal accommodation tax. “It’s the wrong time, given the state of the tourism industry and how pre-carious it is going into the third year of a pandemic,” she said.

Cameron said she couldn’t support putting the tax in place until a tourism strategy is in place, and also because of the disruption it would cause the accommodation sector when guests are already being booked for this season.

“Preference would al- ways be cooperation instead of coercion,” she said, “and I’m very uncomfortable with how this has come to the table, as if we have cotton bulbs in our ears. I feel there is something very coercive about this.”

To add to the problem, “we’ve recently lost our head of tourism, NOTL and presi- dent of the Chamber of Com- erce, Eduardo Lafforgue has resigned, effective the end of the month,” who normally would have been a key stake- holder in this, which makes the time seem even more off for me.”

Cameron said she is also uncomfortable with the way it “contradicts this need for a MAT with the funding for the museum. I feel we’re being forced to choose between the municipal accommodation tax and museum.”

If it was levy-supported, it would increase the budget hike to 3.75 per cent “com- pletely within the original guideline. If we want to show our true support for the muse- um, and not use the muse- um as a lever to pass this tax, we should build more sup- port for our beloved museum on the levy, where it belongs.”

A further motion, this one by Coun. Wendy Chero- pita, was approved to more specifically address the tax, calling for the creation of a advisory group made up of six or nine tour- ism stakeholders, selected by staff to assist in the design, governance and process for the program, without holding up its implementation in July.

Key initiatives support- ed in the budget to advance councils priorities, Freeborn said Monday, include the tourism strategy, planning workshop action items, the heritage conservation district master plan, the NOTL museum expansion, and also the NOTL Tourism’s new study on how to develop the region.

Drivers for the 2022 bud- get, Freeborn told councillors, include advancing service de- livery initiatives, including improvements to the town website, developing a frame- work towards a sustainable budget, and ensuring envi- ronmental stewardship in de- cision-making.

The goal with this year’s budget principles hasn’t changed from 2021, coun- cillors heard — to maintain core services, while mini- mizing the impact to tax- payers, delivering on current commitments and obliga- tions; protecting town assets; continuing to successfully address COVID-19 impacts; and a new one this year, ad- vancing the priority initiatives of the town.

New studies also include a character study of the Rand- wood Estate and a recreation master plan.

Voting in favour of the budget, Lord Mayor Betty Dero said, “it’s not sustain- able, but we’ll get there.”

Sunshine on a cold day

There was ice in the water at Navy Hall, but the sunshine made for some great photos of the mallards who didn’t seem to mind the cold in the Niagara River. (Dave Gebhardt)
Beginning Monday, the province is allowing restaurants and some other businesses to reopen at 50 per cent capacity. Opening their doors couldn’t come soon enough for most local restaurants. Justin Lakett, front of house manager for Caroline Cellars Winery, says they are thrilled to be opening again. “We have such an amazing local clientele, and we are excited to see everyone again — whether it’s for dining in or picking up takeout.”

The restaurant isn’t as busy in the winter months, so reduced capacity is not an issue during the week, Lakett says, “but of course we wish we could be at full capacity on the weekends. At least there’s a timeframe in place with plans to open at 100 per cent capacity in the next re-opening step.”

She expects they will continue to do a lot of takeout, which helps with their revenue stream.

“We are disappointed that although the rest of the province restaurants don’t have to do contact tracing anymore, the Section 22 orders in place in Niagara mean we still have to do contact tracing for all guests, in addition to checking proof of vaccination QR codes. We are also disappointed that the stream of free rapid tests for small businesses has completely dried up — we cannot access these at this time.”

Having access to rapid tests would mean employees could use a test if they come into contact with someone with COVID, or if a customer reports back that they were at the restaurant in the couple of days prior to testing positive, she says. “Of course any employees who have come into close contact or have a household member test positive to isolate for the recommended amount of time — we aren’t using rapid tests in lieu of isolation. Currently we have to purchase rapid tests for our business instead of accessing the free tests from the government.”

Jokie Joki, owner of The Irish Harp, has had the ability to stay open through this latest shutdown with her outdoor patio, which has been popular with locals. She’s continued to have bands outdoors on the weekends, and some takeout specials — she’s always looking for something extra to draw people, especially in the winter. She’s looking forward to seeing the 50 per cent capacity limit lifted, but even with just eight tables on the patio, it’s been worthwhile staying open and keeping her staff employed, says Joki.

She plans to keep the patio open throughout the winter — there are always some who prefer it to indoors, either because they don’t have proof of vaccination to eat inside, they just feel more comfortable outdoors, or because they love to bring their dogs with them — the Harp provides dog mats and bowls of water for their four-legged guests.

And Joki will continue to hold events, such as a comedy night and a trivia contest, to help lift the spirits of those anxious to get out and have some fun.

“It’s definitely time,” she says. “We’re happy to be open for the community.”

Jeff Letvenuk, marketing manager at Pillitteri Estates Winery, says they have been offering curbside wine ordering, and their restaurant, Barrelhead, has successfully been offering takeout, “but we are looking forward to being able to serve guests and taste wines again.”

The winery tour and tasting program, he adds, “is an essential part of how we present our wines to guests, and it is the best way we can build relationships with our customers.”

Continued on page 8
ON STAGE
FEBRUARY 9 – 19

THIS IS HOW WE GOT HERE

By Keith Barker
Produced by Native Earth Performing Arts
Presented by the Shaw Festival

A multi-award-winning play of love, loss, and letting go.

FEATURING NICOLE JOY-FRASER, KRISTOPHER BOWMAN, JENN FORGIE AND JONATHAN FISHER

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**Editorial**

**Good news: infections have peaked, restaurants open**

This is turning into one of those good news/bad news weeks.

It seems ominous cases might have peaked, and are beginning to decline in Niagara and across the province. At the same time, we're celebrating the opening of restaurants and other businesses.

That’s the good news.

Not so reassuring is that we have no way of knowing whether that decline will continue, or lead to another wave of infections. Our local acting medical officer of health says it might be too soon to be reaping — he fears we could be in for another repeat of this time last year, when the province related restrictions and we saw a resurgence of cases.

And if not, if we manage to dodge that bullet, we won’t see a large number of cases from new variants, we could truly be headed to the endemic stage.

However, as Dr. Mustafa Hirji warns us, it’s not of COVID variant we need to be behind us.

He thinks many of the measures we have learned to protect ourselves from COVID could be ongoing, even permanent. He suggested building codes might be changed in the future to improve ventilation.

We might continue to wear masks, especially indoors in the winter. We might even want to rethink our holiday schedule, having a longer break in December so if we are infected during holiday celebrations we don’t take it back to work, or school. Hirji spoke of societal changes over decades — most related to improved sanitation, such as no longer spitting in public, and better understanding of hand washing — that have reduced or eliminated some diseases, such as tuberculosis and diarrheal diseases.

As always, he stressed the need for vaccinations, and suggested being fully vaccinated should mean having booster shots — the two doses we may have got months ago are not very effective against omicron. And with the global unvaccinated population, it’s pretty much a forlorn con-

clusion there will be new variants, which may or may not require more, different vaccines, wear masks, especially indoors.

And also not so good is the ongoing news about the truck con-

voy, and the trouble it is causing Ottawa residents and businesses as protests continue. It’s also disrupting traffic on major high-

ways in some areas of the coun-

try, and police are beginning to look at it as unlawful.

It has become a reminder to withhold judgement, and be open to understanding of those who have different beliefs. Unfortunately, it’s all the other issues, aside from vaccines, associated with the protest that make understanding so very difficult.

And speaking of understand-

ing (or lack thereof), there has been a bit of indignation locally for an alternative in Niagara that is not playing by the COVID rules. As frustrating as that might be to some, and with no knowledge edge at press time of what might be done about it, if anything, it’s a good reminder that many par-

ents are frightened for their kids, not so much due to COVID, but for their mental health. This group in Niagara is trying to do what they think is best for their children. Who among us doesn’t worry long-term effects of this pandemic on youngsters, teens, even university students — and wish it could be different for them. Yes, most parents choose to follow the rules, whether they agree with them or not. That’s an important lesson for those who choose differently, we can wish the best for them and their families.

On a completely different note — sad news that Chamber of Commerce president Eduardo Lafrasse will be leaving town for other climes. He has been a passionate and knowledgeable supporter of local businesses, and he will be missed. All the best Eduardo!

Also, after a tense and pretty acrimonious budget debate at council Monday. Erin Wiens said he won’t be running for a second term. He is someone who is strong in his beliefs and not afraid to say what he thinks, and it is always good to hear a differ-

ent opinion. Hopefully he can be persuaded to change his mind.

While he was not happy about the budget, put it this way, there was a lot of work that went into it by staff and the budget committee, and residents will be happy to hear there will be only a slight increase to their taxes.

For those who want to concen-

trate on the good news, there is that extra revenue. Restaurants opening at 50 per cent capacity could use the extra revenue.

Penny Coles

The Local

**Local Voices: Town needs to review its hunting boundaries**

Shirley Madsen

Special to The Local

Did you know the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake issues hunting licenses? Did you know the Province of Ontario allows hunting for deer within the limits of the town? Did you know you can set up a hunting blind on private property and shoot deer with a crossbow within the limits of NOTL?

Go to the Town of NOTL website, ontario.ca, Niagara Region (NPCA) or the Min-

istry of Natural Resources websites and wind your way through their hunting bylaws and regulations and you will find out what you can hunt, when, with what weapons, the specific locations and the cor-

responding fees and hunting limits. Apparently, it is entirely up to the Town of NOTL as to where the hunting boundaries are designated for the re-

spective wildlife and fowl, etc.

Now, you may believe this can all be trusted to the respon-

sive levels of government to manage on a yearly basis and keep abreast of all the new de-

velopments within their juris-

dictions and the proximity to people, homes, recreation facil-

ities within the community.

However, I would serious-

ly challenge this premise and submit to you (resident and taxpayer of NOTL) that this is not the case.

Do federal, provincial or municipal elected officials have any idea as to exactly what the ground rules are for hunting in the Niagara Region and specif-

ically NOTL?

More importantly, does the general public and specifically the residents of NOTL (a tourist destination for millions of visi-

tors each year) understand how close they are to these specific areas designated for hunting?

Today, as you drive along Lakeshore Rd eastward to NOTL (just East of Four Mile Creek Road) you will notice a peach orchard on the north side with two deer hunting blinds (structures) on the property, approximately 30 metres from the west side of the Parks Can-

ada/DND lands where much of the NOTL wildlife live. These blinds are also approximately 100 metres from a winery and several residential homes.

It is not unusual to see peo-

ple walk along the Parks Can-

ada/DND fence line down to the lake/marsh.

To entice the wildlife, es-

pecially deer, a large quantity of apples has been dumped to attract them from the Parks Canada property. I can tell you from a personal perspective, I do not consider this form of hunting with bait to be hunting. These blinds are erected yearly and taken down after the season.

Environmental philoso-

pher Gary Varner identifies three types of hunting: thera-

peutic, subsistence and sport. Each type is distinguished by the purpose it is meant to serve.

Now I understand hunting, hunters and as some would say we need to control the popula-

tion so thinning is a process that has evolved as a result of population growth amongst species and growth of our towns and villages. What is dif-

ficult for me to wrap my head around is how the municipal-

ity, region and province allow this practice to take place in a populated area beside a Parks Canada property (Niagara Shores Park) where many resi-

dents and tourists walk year-

round.

Five years ago, the town
director of corporate services was contacted and stated “the map of hunting boundaries, first made in 1970, is update-

ed as communities grow” in the last five years the town has grown considerably, and over the past 20 years doubled in population.

More and more people are out walking, parks trails, (where available) and generally outside enjoying the outdoors, especially now COVID-19 has become a part of our daily lives.

When was the last time the town updated the hunting by-

laws? More importantly, when is the last time the province up-

dated its hunting regulations? Grimby’s original bylaw said “no hunting in Grimby on land or water” which kept the hunters under control for al-

most a century.

Let the hunters hunt, but not within our town limits. Let the people we elect at the muni-

cipal, regional and provincial level introduce the necessary changes to ensure NOTL has kept abreast of the changing times.

We moved to the Niaga-

ra region because we love the tranquility, peace and enjoy seeing the wildlife. It is time to review our current bylaws and input from our taxpayers and visitors. NOTL residents and visitors, make your voices heard.

View from the couch

Donald Combe

Special to The Local

The Song of Lunch, Prime (2010), is a lunch-time meet-

ing of two former lovers. The film is a poeti-

cal, private language, which

the viewer may or may not

understand. This story-tell-

ing style captivated me, as did the intensely fine per-

formances of Alan Rickman and Emma Thompson.

Donald Combe is a retired

English teacher who loves

to go to movies. Until he re-

turns going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share

his passion with us.

Shirley Madsen

Special to The Local

Hunters are enticing deer from Niagara Shores Park, close to where people are walking, says a local who believes NOTL should rethink its hunting boundaries. (Photos supplied)

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The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local

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**Need Help? Make The Call**
Library ready for safe, gradual reopening

Cathy Simpson
Library CEO
Special to The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library reopened for in-person visits on Feb. 1, and we’re very pleased to welcome everyone inside again.

Library staff began planning for the safe reopening following the provincial announcement public health restrictions would ease Jan. 31. We’re now open Tuesday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Fridays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday openings are planned for March when in-person programs resume. Programs remain virtual throughout February and curbside pickup appointments are still being offered.

We’ve gradually increased opening hours this year, including Sunday and Monday. The increase depends on several factors, including budget approval, which will allow hiring and training of more frontline staff because, as in other sectors, the pandemic has reduced library staff and volunteers. So far, we’ve limited the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace by following provincial and regional health directives and by creating “work bubbles” to minimize contact among employees.

The library board has been meeting virtually to mitigate the spread and continues to provide excellent governance. The board recently approved a vaccination policy for library employees and volunteers. This policy ensures the library meets its obligation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect employees and the public, and to maintain a healthy and safe workplace.

As well as planning this week’s reopening, staff are also organizing March break activities. Like all of us, kids are craving social interaction, so we’re planning for in-person programs. They’ll be a mix of drop-in and sign-up activities, including a family movie night, art projects, makerpace sessions, gaming, and coding classes. Ms. Addie looks forward to welcoming children and parents back to the Rotary Room, and we’re excited to introduce our new makerspace facilitator, Aedan Johnston, who will run the coding classes and maker sessions.

All our re-opening plans ultimately depend on the course of the pandemic and public health directives, but we’re seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and look forward to seeing you in the library. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Responsibility for fire safety must be shared

Jay Plato
Deputy Chief, NOTL Fire and Emergency Services

At the time of writing this article, fire has claimed the lives of 17 people in the month of January, within Ontario. Most recently, six children have passed away as a result of fires in Brampton and Sandylake First Nation. These tragic events serve as a somber reminder that fire safety is everyone’s responsibility.

Everyone knows they need a smoke alarm in their house, but so many are still unsure exactly where to put it, that the batteries need to be changed, or that they expire. Fire prevention departments across the province work tirelessly to push these critical messages. Yet, time and time again, we meet individuals through public education events or emergency responses that are unaware of these items. Between fire departments, the provincial government, and businesses developing and making fire safety products, strategies are in place to ensure citizens, just in Ontario but across Canada and the world, become fire safe. These parties working together can still not do it all. The last step is personal accountability for ensuring you and your family are fire safe.

Every municipality in Ontario must establish a program that teaches public education with respect to fire safety and certain components of fire prevention. This is mandated by the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. For most municipalities, this is completed by the local Fire Department. This is the first strategy and tool used to create the behavioural change required surrounding smoke alarms and other fire safety messages. You don’t have to look very hard to find these messages all over the place. They may be posted in your workplace, ads on social media, firefighters talking with community members at events, or interviews with Fire Prevention Officers or Fire Chiefs on the news. Fire Safety messages are spread everywhere frequently.

Not all people across Ontario can be reached by these methods, however. This is where the provincial government comes in to assist.

The provincial government has enacted legislation requiring all homes having smoke alarms. This law provided municipalities and fire departments with additional tools to assist in trying to ensure citizens are remaining fire safe. New homes must have smoke alarms installed on all floor levels, outside and inside bedrooms, and older homes must have them installed on every floor level and outside bedrooms. Not having smoke alarms in these locations can lead to charges, fines, or even jail time. If education does not seem to be working or sinking in, fire departments have the ability to enforce these laws with the intent of leaving a more lasting impression about the requirements of having a working smoke alarm.

Lastly, while fire departments are doing what they can, businesses developing and creating fire safety products are also working hard to assist in making homes safer, making it easier to keep you and your family safe in a fire emergency.

The introduction of hard-wired interconnected smoke alarms helped ensure you were alerted of an emergency on another level in your home faster. These devices can now also be connected wirelessly in some cases. Built-in 10-year lithium batteries now don’t require a battery change for the life of the device.

Residential sprinklers are also a fantastic tool to assist in keeping your family safe. There are many misconceptions about the operation of sprinklers and their capabilities; however, that’s an article for another day.

With these organizations working together using education, legislation and technology to keep the citizens of Ontario safe, there is one last step that these parties cannot control. These organizations cannot control personal responsibility.

Fire safety is everyone’s responsibility. Please take the necessary steps to ensure you are keeping your family safe. Test your smoke alarms monthly.

Change your batteries at least once a year. Ensure your smoke alarm is not expired.

Library intern Emma MacDonald is ready for reopening. (Photo supplied)

Local should devote page to convoy

Jen Wawrow

I have great concern that our Public Health is mandating for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren a vaccine in name only, this is still in the experimental stage until 2023.

I would have hoped The Local would have done a full page on the truckers convoy to Ottawa 2022, who are standing tall against all these mandates. If you listen to the Zello Walkie Talkie App you will hear young children thanking the truckers for giving them a future, and parents thanking the truckers because their seven, 12, and 15-year-olds contemplating suicide now have a hope that they will have a future.

Yesterday in our Niagara Region people at the Husky Travel Centre on York Road were handing out food to those travelling to Ottawa, scores of people standing on overpass- es waving our Niagara convoy with support. As a Local paper please be a voice also for those standing tall for our freedom. …Let We Forget.

Thank you for hearing my heart and have an awesome day.

Janet Hemphill
St. Davids

PS. A Niagara local convoy plans to support the truckers, alternating Saturday and Sunday weekly. This week will be Saturday, Feb. 5, meeting at the Husky Travel Centre in NOTL between 12-30 and 1 p.m., leaving to do a ‘slow roll’ to Gategate- way by Hwy 8, and ending at the Niagara Gateway Information Centre on the service road at Caesars campground.
Continued from page 4

Rob and Danielle Begin of The Grist say it's been a rollercoaster since opening last spring. (Photos supplied)

The patio has been popular at The Irish Harp, but owner Jovie Joki is happy to offer indoor dining again. The same as it once was, or if this becomes the base camp for a new kind of normal. We don't know what the todays will hold, but know we will have to do more tomorrow than we did yesterday:" It's an exhausting task for many, he says, who "already gave everything into each of the everyday's we've already been through."
I apologize to next council in advance

Continued from page 1

investigated selling off assets, and we're looking for other funding.

“We had four years to make it sustainable,” Wiens continued. “Instead, we've increased taxes incredibly.”

He disagreed that the budget was a tough one because of COVID — more revenue was earned from parking than expected, and more from utilities.

“We haven't lost money on COVID,” he said. “We can't use COVID as an excuse.”

“We have reports coming back all the time saying we have to spend more on the ad,” Wiens said. “Benny Maretta made it clear that we would take us down by making us spend a lot of money. I think the success we've had so far is done the right thing to defend our town. I'm very proud of what we did. It needed to be done.”

Addressing the municipal accommodation tax, she said, “We’ve talked about it since 2016. There have been so many discussions, and each time we're asked to hold off. It’s a tactic not to do it. You are never going to get people to come to the table to start talking seriously about it until you tell them there's a deadline. Now there's a deadline.”

She said she supports bringing stakeholders to the table. “If I was a member of the chamber, I'd think about how to market our town in a better way,” Wiens said, “and try to make my town sustainable. It's not going to be sustainable. It's not going to happen in one year. It's not going to happen in one term of council. I'd think about how to market our town.”

He also points to some of the expensive legislative requirements, such as the need to properly dispose of soil in ditches, and the cleaning of storm water ponds, which have been ignored for too long.

The next council will face either a huge increase in budget, or huge cutbacks in spending, he warned.

“Talking to The Local Tuesday morning, he was just as outspoken about his disappointment with council decisions, especially over the budget. ‘I’ve been consistent in everything I’ve said over the last four years,’ he said. ‘We said we were going to be professional, make sweeping changes, and yet year after year, the budgets have not been sustainable. These are my taxes, and my neighbours’ taxes.”

He spoke of more than 150 “action items” to be dealt with by town staff, such as issues that should have priority, such as roads and facilities maintenance, are put off, as taxes continue to rise.

“We’re going to hand this off to the next council. I feel we won’t be there to deal with it. I apologize to them in advance.”

Lord Mayor Betty Disero had the last word before the vote for the budget proceeded, and she couldn't let Wiens’ comments go without a response.

“Sure we’re all living on the same planet. We’ve all had to deal with COVID and those issues. When we arrived here three years ago no one ever anticipated that developers would be taking us to court, and that we’d have to react and defend the town from lawsuits,” she said, explaining the high cost of legal fees, for which council has been criticized — this year there is another $500,000 in the budget for legal fees.

“People look to us and say we’re spending too much on lawsuits. We have to respond to them or our town would be better off if they have other revenue streams, like MAT, to pay for things.”

The money should be used to pay for things like washrooms on Queen Street, parks, or bicycle paths, as well as going to NOTL Tourism “to market our town in a better way,” Wiens said.

Disero also spoke to the issue of operations, with every department having a reduction from their ask. “We were at 13 per cent in asks, and that came down to under three (per cent increase). Everyone took a bit of a hit, and operations had to take a bit of a hit.”

To play one department against the other is not productive at all, she added.

Disero said she could support this budget because “we’ve set a roadmap to be sustainable. It’s not going to happen in one year, and I trust that the incoming council will be better off if they have other revenue streams, like MAT, to pay for things.”

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Many physicians and other healthcare practitioners are providing care through phone or video calls. While this took off because of the pandemic, virtual appointments seem here to stay. They’re a great way to help keep everyone safe while still addressing many of your healthcare needs.

To make sure you get the most out of your time with your doctor, follow these tips:

**Before your appointment**
- Choose a private and quiet location with minimal background noise.
- If it’s a video appointment, make sure there is ample light so your doctor can see you clearly. If you need to show them a part of your body, wear loose-fitting clothing.
- Have on hand any devices your doctor may have recommended, such as a thermometer, bathroom scale or blood pressure monitor.
- Gather any information you may need, including your current medication list and pharmacy name, location and phone number. Also take note of any health care data such as recent blood pressure readings or glucose levels.
- Write down a list of questions and concerns. Have a paper and pen to take notes.

**During your appointment**
- Keep in mind the call from your healthcare provider may come in as a blocked number.
- Give yourself extra time, as the call may come in a bit before or after your scheduled time.
- Let your doctor know if someone else is with you and introduce them.
- Keep an open mind. Although the appointment might feel different, try to treat it like a regular visit. Ask questions. Schedule follow up appointments if needed.

**Technology tips**
- Choose whether you’ll use a smartphone, tablet or computer. Ensure that your device is charged and that you have access to a reliable connection.
- Video calls work best with high-speed internet. If possible, consider using a wired connection.
- When booking or confirming your video appointment, ask which app or program your provider will use and download it before your session.

Find more health tips and information at kidney.ca. www.newscanada.com

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Broadcasting legend Ralph Mellanby, who helped bring hockey to the masses on television, has died, according to reports.

Mellanby, 87, is credited for his work as a hockey and sports broadcaster across Canada in the 1960s and 1970s. He was a key figure in shaping the way hockey was covered on television, and he helped bring the game to millions of viewers.

Mellanby's career spanned over two decades, during which he worked for various organizations including the Hockey Night in Canada (HNIC) and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). He was known for his work on HNIC shows such as Hockey Night in Canada, Friday Night in Canada (FNIC), and Saturday Night in Canada (SNIC).

His contributions to broadcasting were not limited to hockey. He also covered other sports such as women's hockey, football, golf, and tennis. Mellanby was recognized for his work, receiving the Order of Canada in 2014.

Mellanby left behind a legacy that will continue to influence the way hockey is broadcast and enjoyed by generations to come.

Ralph Mellanby, Delia Iafrate and Don Cherry at a Steve Ludzik Foundation event. (Photo supplied)
Kim Wade
Special to The Local

This month is Free February at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, which is opening up once again to the public on Thursday, Feb. 3, offering free admission for Niagara residents. The unlocking of the museum’s doors is in response to the province’s first phase of the plan for the gradual easing of COVID-19 restrictions that became effective Jan. 31.

Staff at the museum are happy to welcome back the Niagara community with their current exhibition, Photographic Memory, which explores photographs of our community from 1945 to 1985. Many of our visitors have enjoyed ‘finding’ themselves in these outstanding images of Niagara-on-the-Lake when it was still just a quiet, small town, rebuilding in a post-war economic slump,” says Barbara Worthy, local writer, producer and the museum’s visitor and member services assistant. The museum will be open from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday through Monday.

The museum is committed to continuing to provide digital programming for those who want to virtually explore the museum’s extensive collections, learn something new or test their knowledge. The Winter 2022 Virtual Lecture Series begins on Wednesday, Feb. 2, with the first lecture, Behind the Cases. Worthy will ask curator and managing director Sarah Kaufman and assistant curator Shavna Butts questions submitted by the curious public about the museum’s collections.

The next lectures in the series are:

Feb. 16: Re-imagining Niagara: Using GIS (Geographic Information System) to Study Local Economic Development 1783-1812, presented by Jessica Linzel.

March 2: Apothecaries to Pharmacies – Prescriptions, Potions, and Healthy Herbs, presented by Katelynn Best.

March 16: Shaw at 60! Join scholar Leonard Connolly, in conversation with Barbara Worthy as they reflect on 60 years of the Shaw Festival.

March 30: In the final lecture of the winter series, David Hemmings explores Heritage Homes of Niagara.

Upcoming events include the Members Virtual Trivia Night on Thursday, Feb. 24, at 7 p.m. The Doc Club series will run on the first Friday of the month from February to April. These scheduled Zoom discussions will feature additional films during March in honour of International Women’s Day, in collaboration with RiverBrink Art Museum.

As a reminder, the Museum online shop and the Museum bookstore remain available as an online option for all your home decor, gift and research needs. Staff is looking forward to new inventory arriving during the next few weeks, and the bookstore offers one of the most significant collections of local history in Niagara, covering topics from the War of 1812 right up to the 21st century.

All the NOTL Museum Winter Series virtual lectures begin at 11 a.m. Registration is required: www.notlmuseum.ca. For more info, email: aklassen@nhsm.ca. For more information on all these activities and programs, contact the museum at 905 468 3912, or go to www.notlmuseum.ca.
Celebrate Seniors

Golden Years Guide

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Submitted by: The Royal Henley

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Local News

Kids of all ages have been enjoying the snowy hills at Simcoe Park and Fort George. If you haven’t been out, grab some friends and a toboggan, snowboard, or whatever you’ve got and go! Only 46 days until spring! Send us your photos of your winter activity fun!

Interview with Taleah

Today is a ___________ January day and I wanted to go ___________ with my ___________ friends. ___________, went down the hill on his ___________ first. He went ___________ down really ___________. Next, she ended up ___________ the entire way down! Finally it was my turn to go. I went ___________ on my inflatable ___________. It was so ___________! We had a ___________ day.

Q. What do you want to be when you grow up?
A. I would like to be a chef. My favourite thing to make is pizza.

Q. How would you change the world if you could?
A. I think I’d make it rain candy. My favourite candy is Kit-Kat. I’d want it to rain all kinds of candy.

Q. What is your ideal day in NOTL?
A. I would go to the park and go on the swings.

Q. What is your favourite movie?
A. Abominable. It’s my favourite because it’s adventurous. They go all the way from New York City to Mount Everest.

Q. What do you do to help others?
A. I help my parents with the laundry and dishes. At school I help by cleaning around the sink; I keep it dry. I don’t like when I get my shirt wet when I’m leaning over to wash my hands, so I keep it dry so no one else gets their shirt wet.

Q. What is a fun family tradition you have at home?
A. On Fridays we watch movies. That’s the night I make my pizza. Nanny and Grandpa come sometimes.

Q. If you were a superhero, what would your name be and what would your super power be?
A. I’d want laser eyes like Superman. I’d use them to defeat bad guys. My name would be Super Nathan.

Q. How do you keep yourself busy during the COVID lockdowns?
A. I played electronics. Minecraft is my favourite.

SNOW DAY!

With a friend, finish the story by filling in the blanks with words from the appropriate part of speech.

We had a ___________ day.

After sledding we had some ___________ and ___________.

Today is a ___________ January day and I wanted to go ___________ with my ___________ friends. ___________, went down the hill on his ___________ first. He went ___________ down really ___________. Next, she ended up ___________ the entire way down! Finally it was my turn to go. I went ___________ on my inflatable ___________. It was so ___________! We had a ___________ day.

JOKE

Q. Where do snowmen keep their money?
A. The snowbank.
Hockey mom, she raised malady. From his late mother’s pro-Alzheimer’s Disease stems dedication to raising funds at Wayne Gretzky Estates Winery to visit with Steve McNeil, Lord Mayor Betty Disero and her mother Lena Disero stop in at 358 Mary St., Unit 7, NOTL | 905. 468. 8002

“She was the ultimate hockey mom, she raised five of us,” the Etobicoke-ar

e mail carrier and hockey referee told The Local last Wednesday afternoon during his marathon skate at Wayne Gretzky Estates Winery. “She battled Alzheimers for the better part of 20 years, and she was in a nursing home for her last 11 years. I saw so much that hardened me in a sense, and that’s what made me do these skates.”

McNeil has been doing these skates for over 10 years now. Each one lasts 19 hours and 26 minutes, representing the year, 1926, that his mother was born. What began as a way to blow off steam after an especially challenging visit at the nursing home has now brought him across the country raising funds for local chapters of the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

“I would get in my truck and I would have an empty, hollow feeling,” he explained. “I always had my skates in my truck, and if I saw an outdoor rink, I’d stop, put my skates on, put my music in my ears and skate. Three hours later my wife would call me saying where are you?”

The idea hit him to turn his outlet into a marathon fundraiser while he was officiating a hockey game one night. He approached Rob Ford, the mayor of Toronto at that time, asking for permission to remain on the Nathan Phillips Square ice for 19:26. Armed with Ford’s approval, he hit the ice and completed the marathon. Today he says that city council contacts him every year to help him with his arrangements.

He’s been across Canada twice, making a point to stop in at each of the seven cities that play host to NHL hockey teams. The last two years have put a bit of a damper on his usual itinerary, with COVID-19 restricting his ability to take his mission far and wide.

Niagara-on-the-Lake was one of eight stops this winter on what he is calling his Ontario Skate-cation. His plans were to visit 10 cities in the province to mark his 10th anniversary, but two locations were cancelled just before he started. It’s his second time visiting the Gretzky Estates and coincidentally, this year’s skate took place on the Great One’s birthday. Because of provincial restrictions that were still in place last week, a limited number of participants were allowed to accompany McNeil for a few laps around the rink, and each had to register prior to the event.

Samantha Marson, the Niagara Predators trainer and assistant general manager, was there to skate with McNeil for the second straight year.

“It’s such a different character, the atmosphere he brings, he gets lost in his music skating around and dancing,” Marson said. “It’s a great cause, too. You never know in life what can happen. The hockey community comes out and supports him wherever he goes.”

Teena Kindt of the Alzheimer Society of Niagara said that McNeil’s efforts had brought in donations totaling $1651.70 to the local chapter as of press time. She was hoping that by the end of the week that total would reach the magic number of $1926, which would still be significantly lower than the approximately $3,000 raised at last year’s event.

“January is Alzheimer Awareness Month, and with our annual walk moving to May this year, this is a great opportunity to showcase our local chapter,” said Kindt. “It’s a fabulous man, and we’re very fortunate to have him here again this year. It brings great exposure.”

Kindt explained that the funds raised during the 1926 Skate stay in Niagara, supporting the organization’s wellness programs which are not funded by any government agencies. The local chapter needs to raise about $600,000 a year to maintain the level of service offered through their programs.

McNeil took to the ice just after 12 a.m. Wednesday morning. By the time he arrived he had been skating for more than 13 hours and was showing no signs of fatigue. On the contrary, he assured anyone who asked that his stamina has never been a problem during his marathons.

Without fault, each visitor who spoke to McNeil was handed a sandwich and asked to sign his yellow hoodie, which was adorned with the logos of his local sponsors. Lord Mayor Betty Disero’s signature found a spot just above that of Ice-Dogs mascot Bones.

At the end of each marathon he removes the hoodie and presents it to the local Alzheimer Society chapter. It usually finds its way onto the auction block eventually raising more funds for the cause.

The eight-city Skate-cation continues this Friday with a stop in Windsor. McNeil will be in Peterborough on Feb. 12, and wraps it all up at Niagara-on-the-Lake on the famous Weber’s Burgers on Highway 11 near Orrilawa on Family Day.

“I’m just trying to get out and make people aware,” McNeil said. “I’ve dealt with Alzheimer Societies from coast to coast. Some have the resources, some don’t. I’m just trying to make an even playing field for everybody.”

He continued, “COVID has shown us that even though our seniors mean so much to us, we’ve dropped the ball in a lot of ways. This is a wonderful opportunity for communities across Canada to get involved with their Alzheimer Society.”

Kindt says there is still time to donate, and suggests that a contribution of $19.26 would be appropriate if possible. Donations can be made at www.alzheimersniagara.ca/donate or at https://www.1926skate.com/donate.
Local teen going to world ball hockey championships

Mike Balsom Special to The Local

For 13-year-old Crossroads Public School student Cohen Jacob, there’s no better chance to represent his country at the World Ball Hockey Federation (WBHF) U16 championships in Bratislava than a trip to the world’s biggest and a huge responsibility.

His father Rob says that when word came of his son’s selection to the very first U14 National Ball Hockey Association of Canada (NBHAC) team to compete at the world’s level, the family was surprised, but not totally shocked.

“Cohen always tried out and played in older divisions, the two or three years up,” explains Rob. “When he went to the try-out for U14, his own age group, he was really a standout player there.”

Word came of Cohen’s selection early January, about a month after the single-day tryout camp he attended in Oshawa early December. The long, grueling session on the ball hockey surface was enough to impress national team general manager Scott Jacobi.

“From my perspective, he’s got good size, a good shot, good speed,” Jacobi tells The Local. “He ranked very, very highly on our list for communication on the bench with his teammates, too. These are the things we’re looking for in evaluating the fullness of the player we want to represent the country on the floor.”

Besides Jacobs, a handful of Junior Team Canada (JTC) personnel from various age levels are there to provide insight into the players, but one of the most important elements in Cohen’s selection was feedback from his coach in his St. Catharines-based team.

“We reach out to the coaches they play for to get a more rounded evaluation of them,” explains Jacobi. “I can figure out how the coaches would play a shot. It’s a bit harder to understand the quality of the person. When we’re there (Bratislava) we spend as much time off the floor as we do on it. It works best when we have good people.”

“Good coaching has benefits,” adds Jacobs. “And Cohen’s exposure to playing with the older kids, challenging himself against bigger and better players, has its impact. He’s given more product of that, and he’s a heck of a player.”

Wade Stafford, Cohen’s coach with the St. Catharines Storm, suggested to Rob that he take his son to Oshawa to vie for a spot on the national squad.

“He’s a good kid, I enjoy coaching him,” Stafford says. “He keeps advancing as an all-around good player. With his size (5’9”, 155 pounds), there’s so much bigger than all the other kids at that age. He has a natural shooting ability, and he’s a heck of a player.”

Currently, Cohen plays in the ballhockey.com league house as well as on the Storm’s competitive U16 team. At age 11, he was part of the Storm U13 team that won the Bauer Ontario Youth Open Championships in July, 2019. That win qualified them for a championship in Philadelphia, that was cancelled due to the pandemic. He was also on the Storm U16 team. He made the team for a 2021 Labour Day weekend 3 on 3 tournament in St. Catharines, going the distance undefeated.

The U14 JTC team will compete in Bratislava, the capital city of Slovakia, June 27 to July 5. Jacobs says the countries are more established at U14, especially Sweden, Finland and the Czech Republic. But he expects his tight roster of 15 excellent players and two goalies will have a chance to take home the gold even if it’s the first time for Canada at that age.

“It’s important to me that we take guys that are going to play, that are going to make a difference,” Jacobs says. “We can roster up to 25, but we choose players who will be able to complement one another. Fast, first and fearless, those are the ingredients. With that, good things will happen.”

Jacobs has spent 20 years coaching and playing in ball hockey, and 11 years with the national team at the U16 and U18 age groups. The world championship are held every two years, with Jacobi’s past teams scoring medals at U18 at the age of 15 excellent players and two goalies will have a chance to take home the gold even if it’s the first time for Canada at that age.

“They’re still the same, they play the same game, you’re going to play, that are going to make a difference,” Jacobs says. “We can roster up to 25, but we choose players who will be able to complement one another. Fast, first and fearless, those are the ingredients. With that, good things will happen.”

Jacobs has spent 20 years coaching and playing in ball hockey, and 11 years with the national team at the U16 and U18 age groups. The world championship are held every two years, with Jacobi’s past teams scoring medals at U18.

“His parents are taking the trip. His parents are taking the trip. I understand. ” Stafford says.

“Good coaching has benefited Cohen a lot,” adds Jacobi. “Cohen’s mom Michelle and his eight-year-old sister Lulu, will be trying to line up some sponsors and putting together some fundraising efforts to cover the cost of Cohen and one of his parents to take the trip. And when they do fly to Europe, Cohen will have to remember the responsibility he takes in wearing the red and white on the international stage.

“That’s a whole code of conduct that he has to adhere to,” Rob says, referring to the correspondence received recently from the NBHAC. “That includes a very strict dress code. He has to remember he is representing Team Canada.”

Ball hockey champ Cohen Alexander (Photo supplied)
RULLER, WILLIAM CHARLES—The world has lost a man of God, the definition of a humanitarian, loving husband, caring, wise and supportive father and grandfather (Pa), brother, brother-in-law, uncle and great uncle, friend, and mentor to so many around the world.

William Charles Ruller was born March 18, 1947, in Niagara Falls, Ontario, to Kenneth and Marjorie Ruller, the third oldest of six children. Will passed away suddenly while on a father and son road trip on Saturday, January 29.

Up to the age of 20, Will lived in Canada, graduating from Niagara District Secondary School, before moving on to Forestry School. Following his graduation, he moved to New Zealand and within five years met and married the love of his life, Annie. They were happily married for 42 years, raising their four children, Kimberley, Keren, Philippa, and Nicholas, before Annie passed away in 2014. Will and Annie shared in the joy of their growing family through loving relationships with their children’s spouses and grandchildren.

Will lived a principled life that was full of adventure, including world travel, his reach through his ministries with Youth for Christ, International Child Care, his Christian music business and Pastoral roles in the church spanned across Canada from coast to coast, the U.S., Haiti, Egypt, Central and South America, New Zealand and the South Pacific. So many lives were touched and positively impacted by Will’s commitment to his convictions.

Will instilled his love of the outdoors in all his children and grandchildren. In his youth in NZ, he enjoyed white water kayaking, mountain hiking and spending time in the Kauri forests of the NZ North Island. Upon his return to Canada in 1980 with his family, many great memories were made at Algonquin Park, Bowron Lakes, and Rainbow Falls, to name a few special places. All who knew Will knew his “One Way Willy” motto to get the most out of any outing. He took this to a new level once he had his motorhome under him over the last ten years, enabling him and Annie to further strengthen adult relationships with siblings, children, and grandchildren on his cross Canada trips, never missing a chance to put in a 1000km day. He was happiest behind the wheel, out on an adventure. The recent addition to Will’s life, Lily, his Labrador puppy, put a new spring into his step and was his co-pilot for this past year’s road trips known as the “Willy and Lily show.” He will be missed!

Those that knew Will (and there are MANY) knew him to be the definition of integrity, empathy and compassion. He was unique in his ability to see a need and match it with the required resource, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. Will’s genuine gift and ability to listen and give council will make his passing all the more real as he is the one you would go to with matters of the heart in times like these.

Will leaves a legacy through all those he encountered and those fortunate enough to call him father, brother, uncle, Pa, and friend to be your best self, live life to the fullest, follow your convictions, and never miss an opportunity to help someone in any kind of need.

A ceremony will be held at a later date.
Two new Predators play on home ice Friday

Mike Balsom
Special To The Local

When the Niagara Predators finally return to the Meridian Credit Union Arena ice to restart their 2021-2022 Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League (GMHL) schedule Friday night, they will be suiting up a couple of new players.

The Predators have added 6’7” Morgan Penwell to their goaltending ranks. Owner, coach and general manager Robert Turnbull had signed Penwell last year to the other team he owns, the St. George Ravens, before the season was shut down due to COVID.

Prior to last season, the 21-year-old Bracebridge resident had played for the GMHL’s London Lakers, where he went 7-8-0 with a 4.90 goals against average and a .902 save percentage with one shutout in 2019-2020.

Penwell joins Iain Riddell as looking for the final pieces. We have a great group of players that all get along. We need to make sure that whoever we bring in is of the same fabric,” Turnbull says. “Andrews can play forward and defence and will add a veteran and physical presence to our lineup,” Turnbull says. “And Morgan solidifies our crease as we make our push for the Russell Cup.”

Friday will mark 46 days since the last game for the Predators, a 5-3 loss on the road to the South Division-leading North York Renegades. The team was scheduled for practices Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday this week, with a possible game-day skate being mulled over for Friday.

Turnbull knows there might be a bit of rust to shake off the skates before the season was shut down due to COVID. Prior to last season, the team was hosting the Durham Roadrunners.

“Are we ready for it? Absolutely,” Turnbull insists that they are. “We all take a look at the video, ‘Turnbull tells The Local. ‘It’s a very pleasant surprise that most of the players look at it too. When I ask them questions, and when we run through certain drills, they understand.”

Turnbull insists that he’s still not done making moves. “Am I still looking to add a couple more forwards?” he asks. “Yes I am. I’m still in negotiations with a couple of players. The teams that have a chance to do well are looking for the final pieces. We have a great group of players that all get along. We need to make sure that whoever we bring in is of the same fabric.”

The Predators now have 13 confirmed game dates prior to the end of the regular season on March 6. Turnbull was able to work with the league and the other teams to reschedule two of the three matches that had yet to be decided upon as of last week.

A fourth home game, scheduled for March 4 against Tottenham, has been added, as well as a ninth road game. He is still trying to find a slot to fit the final game against their rival St. George Ravens. That one will either be played on the road in St. George or possibly another Niagara arena that has a time slot open.

With the return of live events this week, there is a 50 per cent capacity limit in place for the Meridian Credit Union Arena, as at all such facilities. With the local arena approved for a normal capacity of 1,000 fans, including standing room, that means there is more than enough room to hold a usual Friday night Predators crowd of around 100 to 125.

The visiting Tottenham Thunder hold down the bottom spot in the GMHL’s South Division, with a record of 3-21-0-1. On Sunday, the Predators head to Windsor to take on the Aces for a 4 p.m. game.

Game time Friday night is 7:30 p.m. Adult tickets are $8 while seniors and students are admitted for $5. Kids under 10 are admitted free.