Locals with relatives in Ukraine wait and worry

Penny Coles
The Local

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, as around the world, we hoped for a diplomatic solution to stop the attack on Ukraine we feared was coming. When the invasion began last Thursday, locals with ties to the Ukraine, surprised by the extent of the attacks, began waiting for news of relatives.

They are learning some had hunkered down, some were trying to escape to Poland or other safe havens, and others were still struggling to make a decision about what to do.

Local Shirley Madsen has family in the western part of Ukraine, and heard Friday morning they were safe, but she is still frightened for them. She is praying for them, she says. “This has hit me harder than I thought it would. I feel like I did when 9/11 happened, just numb.” One of her cousins lives in Ivano-Frankivsk, with her daughter-in-law, who had never been outside her hometown, and two young children.

Despite the recent lead-up to the Russian invasion, they had no plans to leave. Madsen’s cousin’s son was in Poland, where he works, and once the attacks started, if he had gone home, he wouldn’t be able to. On Thursday, when the military airport in their town was hit by a missile — captured on video and shown around the world — her cousin’s grandkids were crying and scared, and they decided to pack up what they could to fit in their small car, get money from the bank, and head to Poland.

They live just three hours from the Polish border, says Madsen, but there were so many cars on the road, it took them all last Thursday night to drive one kilometre.

Friday morning, she heard they were only three kilometres from Poland, and then learned later they had crossed the border safely. She heard Sunday they were heading to a Catholic women’s monastery 90 kilometres away to live, the children separated from their father, “and their lives behind them,” she says, at least for now. They feel once the war is over they will all go back home.

Madsen also has a cousin Roman, who lives in Kyiv, but travelled to Sokal, north of Lviv, to stay with his parents. Attacks continued to focus on the capital city, and he doesn’t know if his apartment is still there.

“He said there is no bombing there (in Sokal), so for now they are safe.”

Continued on page 3

Local man joins rally for Ukraine

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Local resident Bob Oleskiw was at the rally in support of Ukraine at a rally Saturday that began at Sts. Cyril and Methodius Ukrainian Catholic Church in north St. Catharines.

According to Irene Schumylo Newton, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress - Niagara Chapter, almost 1,000 people turned up to march from the Niagara Street church down Facer Street to St. George’s Ukrainian Orthodox Church, many waving the blue and yellow Ukrainian flag or holding signs denouncing Russian president Vladimir Putin.

“The overwhelming support for the Ukrainian community has been fantastic,” Oleskiw told The Local Sunday. “The community is interested in what is going on in Ukraine. It really means a lot to us. It’s hard to believe that in this day and age a situation that is so reminiscent of what happened in World War II is happening right in front of us.”

Oleskiw is of Ukrainian descent, as is his wife Tina. With Tina’s relatives still living in Ukraine, the couple usually visits the country every second year. Their last trip was about three years ago, and they would have made another recent trip if the pandemic hadn’t made that nearly impossible.

“She has aunts and cousins there, who we stay with when we visit,” he explained. “Thankfully we’ve been able to get in touch with them recently. At this point in time everybody is safe. They live in a smaller village, about 40 kilometres from one of the airports that was bombed.

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Continued on page 2
The destruction is severe, and those watching and those imposing harm and violence against them. The news we have observed coming from Ukraine is devastating," she said.

"We stand with Ukrainians worldwide, those experiencing these horrific actions, and those watching and hearing the disturbing news reports. The destruction is severe, and the actions taken against Ukraine are unwarranted.

Together, the town and members of council "support the Prime Minister of Canada and world leaders in their response to this attack." Other members of council also spoke in support.

Coun. Allan Bisback said he too is saddened by events in Ukraine, and encouraged council members and residents to print out the Ukrainian flag to post in their window. He has one in his window, and has also printed out copies for friends and a few businesses on Queen Street to post as "just a small measure of support." Coun. Clare Cameron spoke of the people, the energy and turnout that occurred in St. Catharines at the rally held Saturday, and suggested when people are shopping they can support some of the Ukrainian businesses in the Facer Street area of St. Catharines, and through online fundraising.

Coun. Wendy Chorot- ta said her grandparents on her father's side were born in Ukraine, "when the borders were different than they are today". She still has relatives there, and "even just acknowledging the situation with the words is appreciated.

"Ukrainians are tough, strong people," she said. They don't feel powerless. They feel empowered by all of the support, prayers and the many acknowledgments around the world that make them feel stronger. So know that's how Ukrainians are, and that they will succeed, that this will be over, and they will survive.

"It's important to take a few minutes talking about this," said Coun. Gary Burroughs. "I'm sure we've all been watching on television, day in and day out, being amazed every time another day has gone by and seeing the strength of individuals. I'm so impressed by the people of Ukraine that are able to stand up and really defend their country, and I wonder if we could all do the same. So yes, we need to support them any way we can."

"It is astounding to me," said Coun Norm Arsenault, "that one individual, one tyrant — the only word I can use — can actually cause this kind of angst around the world. It is encouraging to see all the communities, the countries around the world and all the people that are showing their support.

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"It is astounding to me," said Coun Norm Arsenault, "that one individual, one tyrant — the only word I can use — can actually cause this kind of angst around the world. It is encouraging to see all the communities, the countries around the world and all the people that are showing their support.

They saw some of the action but weren't in immediate danger." For Oleskiw, it's the uncertainty that Ukrainians are feeling as Putin's attack on the country continues that is concerning. On the day he spoke to The Local, he was driving to Toronto to help a friend from Ukraine who was in Canada when the Russian invasion began.

"He's here for a visit, and his wife and daughter are there in one of the villages," Oleskiw explained. "His English skills are not the best. He's not sure how to navigate the situation and figure out what to do. He wants to know if she gets to the border how the situation will turn out the way it has, though."

In October, 2019, Russia kicked off a test of the country’s nuclear arsenal, dubbed Thunder-2019, close to the border between the two countries.

"There was always hope that that’s all it was," he said, “that it wasn’t part of his master plan to overify bring all these troops in and execute this devious invasion. No one thought that the hands of sanity could be turned back. When I watched the footage at my parents’ place the first day, it was surreal.

Seeing average, every-day Ukrainians being weaponized to join the defence effort hits home for the fire-fighter. His own father did exactly that in the Second World War. Once he emigrated to Canada, the elder Oleskiw never revisited his birthplace.

Watching the footage of men leaving their families at the border and going back to fight has been a gut-wrenching experience for the father of Jane and Julia.

"Those are families that may potentially never be together again. But the men realize that they have to defend their country. Who knows what they will be going back to?"

Like many, Oleskiw worries about the threat of a full-bore nuclear conflict.

"The hard part is to see the world standing by and watching,” lamented Ole- skiw. “Putin’s nuclear threats are legitimate. He has noth-
Gardens of sunflowers can honour Ukraine

Shirley Madsen grew up in a Ukrainian community in Toronto, and still has family living in Ukraine, in a few different areas.

Since late last week, she has been keeping up-to-date with their whereabouts, deeply distressed about the Russian invasion, and fearful for the safety of her relative.

She really wanted to do something to help, and by Monday morning, with support from the Canada-Ukraine Foundation, she had a plan.

Madsen, a gardener, remembered sunflowers are Ukraine’s national flower. She had already put blue and yellow flag along the fence of her Lakeshore Road home, and has decided she will plant sunflower seeds as well. She is encouraging others to do the same.

She quotes Helen Keller: “keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadows. It’s what the sunflowers do.”

“My mother lived through all of this. My grandmother lived through this. Now we’re doing it all over again. We have to stop this.”

She and Finn attended a rally in St. Catharines, and both found it very emotional. Shirley says she doesn’t understand why more isn’t being done to stop the attacks.

“If nobody stops him (Putin), nothing will stop him from going to Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia. He’s an evil man who will just keep going.”

“Putin needs to be charged with war crimes by the World Court. He should also lose Russia’s position on the Security Council. The financial and banking penalties against Russia are only a start. It’s not the Russian people, it’s Putin!”

Helen Arsenault, who has worked for The Local since shortly after it opened, is another NOTL resident with family in Ukraine. Hers was new found. After losing her father in the fall of 2019 — her mother and brother had already passed away — she decided to find a reputable genealogist to track down her family, and she discovered she had relatives on both sides of her family, in the East and the West. On Ukrainian Christmas Day, Jan. 7, 2021, she made her first phone call to connect with them, and talked for hours.

“There were so many tears, so many stories about family,” she says. “We’ve been in touch ever since.”

“In a nutshell,” Arsenault adds, “I went from no relatives, or so I thought, to 10 on my maternal side in Western Ukraine near Lviv, and to 19 in Eastern Ukraine near Odessa. On both maternal and paternal sides, my grandfathers and my cousins’ grandfathers were brothers.”

Arsenault learned Friday that her maternal cousin’s daughter, Viktoria, married with two three-year-old twin boys, tried to get to Poland from Lviv, where they live. She and her husband were traveling with her brother, wife, and their two children. But when they reached the border, the men were told they couldn’t leave, men from 18 to 60 years old are being conscripted to fight for their country. The four adults decided to take their children back to a family farm outside Lviv, a place where they felt safe, while deciding what to do. They were struggling with the choices — stay in Ukraine, keep their families together and risk death, or leave the men behind, the women taking their children to safety in Poland amidst bombardment along the way. They felt they would stay put, and Viktoria was working with a group of women putting together the middle of the sunflower represents sadness, while the bright yellow petals symbolize the possibility for happiness and sunshine.”

Many young men, fathers and grandfathers have left their families behind, she says, picking up arms to defend Ukraine against the Russian invasion. “Many women, grandmothers and children have fled the country or are huddled in subways or bomb shelters. Many have left their homes.

The Local

Shirley Madsen, with relatives in Ukraine, is showing her support for all Ukrainians with a flag on the fence of her Lakeshore Road home. (Photo supplied)
Russian student doesn’t feel safe in her own country

Mike Balsom Special to The Local

Through a contact, The Local was able to speak last weekend with a 20-year-old student currently studying at a university in Russia. She needed to remain anonymous to avoid being targeted for arrest by Russian officials.

Having grown up in Russia, she expresses dismay at the direction her country’s politics have been taking as of late, resulting in the current invasion of Ukraine.

“In my view, Russia has been developing its politics in the wrong direction,” she says. “Now we are going even further from Europe. I don’t know how we will be able to communicate with other countries after such an event. I’m scared to be isolated from the rest of the world. I feel a lot of hatred right now toward my government.”

“Ukraine is an independent country,” she continues. “Independent from Russia, from everyone. They have their own direction to develop their country. Russia, I feel a lot of hatred toward my government.”

“Ukrainian student doesn’t feel safe in her own country”

She fears that Russians of a certain age, those per- ched with memories of the Cold War-era USSR, are buying into that propagan- da. She says one of her rela- tives in Ukraine actually supports the war, suggest- ing that the influence from those sources has worked.

Meanwhile, younger people are turning to alter- native sources online via so- cial media and video blogs, getting the real story from people on the ground in Ukraine. But rumours are that the Kremlin is starting to put pressure on those sources and censoring many of them.

She has set up a website, SunflowersforUkraine.ca, encouraging residents and businesses to plant sunflow- ers, and to raise funds to help Ukrainians. She hopes anyone who decides to plant sunflowers will register on the website, which has a link for dona- tions to the Canada Ukraine Foundation, which is work- ing to complete several proj- ects with continued finan- cial support.

Madsen is still working out the details, but is contact- ing seed companies with a plan to link them to her website — she has several onboard so far.

She also will be contact- ing other organizations, hoping that since this is the Year of the Garden, they might want to piggy- back their projects with hers.

She has also set up Face- book, Twitter and Instagram accounts, and is hoping for help volunteers to help her man- age them.

The Canada Ukraine Foundation and the Ukrainian Canadian Cong- ress (UCC) have launched a campaign to raise $5 mil- lion to provide humanitarian assistance to those in need in Ukraine, and to address any further aggression by Russia. By Monday, total donations were over $2.3 million; their medical mission in Ukraine popularized on CTV’s W5.

“Let’s plant sunflowers to be a messenger for peace, and donate what you can to the Canada Ukraine Foun- dation,” says Madsen.

For more information e-mail: donatesunflowers- forukraine@gmail.com or contact Madsen at 905-468- 2323.
Hirji goes along with provincial, local lifting of restrictions

Doesn’t mean pandemic is over, he warns public

Penny Coles  
The Local

Pandemic restrictions local to Niagara have been lifted by acting medical officer of public health Dr. Mustafa Hirji, who says he has no plan to continue any of the measures the province lifted Tuesday — at least not at this time.

That includes all capacity limits, and the need for vaccination passports to enter restaurants, theatres and gyms.

Hirji’s orders and letters of instruction, which imposed local restrictions on restaurants, some retail stores, and sports and recreation facilities, have also been rescinded.

But taking these steps, Hirji warned, “doesn’t mean the pandemic is over.”

It does mean individuals will now be responsible for making their own decisions about what level of risk is acceptable, and the personal actions they will take to reduce that risk, he said.

Hirji, the region’s chief medical officer of health, has made no secret that he is afraid it might be too soon to lift restrictions, and that hospitalizations in the coming weeks could increase to a level that is unsustainable. Vaccinations, he says, become even more important, because as infections spread, they will all help to keep people out of the hospital.

Despite limited availability to COVID-19 testing, Niagara’s positivity rate is still about 15 per cent, higher than during previous waves, he added.

At his Monday news conference, he said he is hoping and recommending businesses such as restaurants will voluntarily continue to call for proof of vaccination, although he won’t require it.

His own local orders and letters of instructions have been the subject of discussions across the region in recent weeks. Hirji said again Monday, as he told regional councillors recently and has repeatedly in media interviews, that the province allows for and encourages local restrictions.

He went further in his defence of the measures, about which he said “there’s some false narratives that maybe have taken hold,” explaining that there have been more than 100 such measures imposed by public health units across the province, and that 100 per cent of the 34 health units in Ontario have been subject to some local regulations — Niagara is by no means alone.

He explained he rescinded the orders and letters of instruction, with the exception of one designed to keep agriculture workers safe, because with the lifting of provincial measures “they are no longer likely to have significant effect.”

And if hospitalizations surge, he added, the province has indicated it will likely be up to local public health units to decide when and if restrictions should again be implemented.

Hirji said he would like to see mask regulations continue, because though they are uncomfortable, they continue to be helpful.

Premier Doug Ford has suggested mask regulations could be lifted later this month.

Four locations recommended for rainbow crosswalk

Penny Coles  
The Local

The towns’ diversity, equity and inclusion committee has made recommendations for the location of a rainbow crosswalk.

Councillors agreed to the decision. "On behalf of Town Council, thank you to Niagara-on-the-Lake residents who participated in consultation and for continuing to support the idea of public consultation before making any decisions."

The diversity committee is recommending a rainbow crosswalk be located at one of four possible locations on Niagara Stone Road at Anderson Lane, the intersection of Queen and Mississauga Streets; the intersection of Wellington and Picton Streets, or King Street, where Ricardo Street turns into Front Street.

The committee also recommended that "expedience of installation be a factor in the decision." The committee supports the idea of public consultation on the choice of one of the four locations, the minister of the Feb. 14 meeting indicates, and also asks that the public be given an opportunity to financially sponsor the crosswalk through fund-raising.

Since the committee was tasked with considering alternatives to the proposed location of King and Queen by the Prince of Wales Hotel, the Anderson Lane location was suggested as on the route to town which greets visitors.

It was also suggested the crosswalk be located where a lot of visitors would see it, and in an area that is identifiable as Niagara-on-the-Lake; the committee minutes say, "to help get the message across a really broad geographic area.

There were suggestions for the Anderson Lane location, where the Shaw Festival is going to be built; or the intersection at King and Front Streets, where the new welcome wall is over, he warns public

Four locations have been suggested for rainbow crosswalk. (Marc Bruxelle Shutterstock.com)

Penny Coles  
The Local

The town hall and the operations building have reopened for in-person service to the public, and resume regular hours of Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

CAO Marne Cluckie told councillors Monday night during her COVID update that “staff did a really good job welcoming people back into the building,” and staff reported that many returning customers were “delighted” to be back in person, and also said how much they appreciated the remote service they received during the time the building was closed to the public.

Cluckie explained the plan to lift the State of Emergency that exists in Niagara-on-the-Lake and other municipalities is to do it at the same time, “soon, hopefully.”

The following provincial changes to public health and workplace safety measures are in effect as of March 1.

• capacity limits have been lifted in all indoor public settings
• proof of vaccination requirements have been lifted, but businesses and organizations may choose to require proof of vaccination upon entry
• other protective measures, such as mask/face covering requirements and passive screening of patrons remain in place
• businesses and organizations that are open must continue to have safety plans in place

Aligning with provincial regulations, proof of vaccination is no longer required to enter town buildings.

In the town announce-ment of the lifting of restric-tions, Lord Mayor Betty Disero said, “after two very long years, the province and chief medical officers of health have determined it safe to re-open and move the majority of public health restrictions.”

“I know that a great deal of sacrifice, determination, and cooperation has brought us to this place,” she added.

“On behalf of Town Council, thank you to Niagara-on-the-Lake residents and businesses for working together for themselves and others throughout this pandemic. The road has been long, but the end is finally near.”

Town buildings reopen

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The Local

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Environmental work and education come with mixed feelings

Owen Bjorgan Special to The Local

In this week’s article, I’m going to open up about my personal challenges of being a biologist, tour guide, and public educator. What do all three of those positions have in common?

The unbiased, unprejudiced, and irreplaceable ecosystems on the third rock from the sun serve our entire human existence, and their own inherent wonder.

With local and global ecosystem quality declining, I find myself bounding between optimism, pessimism, and realism.

Admittedly, I spend little bits of time in each sphere of thinking. A peculiar blend of professionalism and emotion can surface, and providing these thoughts don’t stay in class. Climate change was just beginning to make a rumble. Nowadays, both are discussions in public school, among other institutionalized settings. This makes me happy and comforted to know. On the flip side, there are undeniable pockets of pessimism, which you shouldn’t keep in your pocket for any length of time, but let’s address the human condition that impacts how we see the fate of the natural world.

I have been in the loop for, and often exposed, dozens of questionable, and sometimes right up unlawful removals of our natural heritage. They seem to happen overnight, with little or no major repercussions. Sometimes, I think about how monstrous the immovable object of money seems, especially when backed by corporate greed or political objectives. Money weighs nothing, but goodness me, it is heavy.

Spearheading the movement to save the Thundering Waters Forest in rural Niag- ara Falls was a classic example. People were sued for speaking out, with others, publicly labelled “a special interest group.” I got a first-hand taste of how big money will shut down or silence opposition. Seeing those deemed wrong in motion right here in Niagara left me knowing it can happen again, and still happens all around us.

While the pandemic got more people exploring nature, it also dangled and clouded our airwaves, screens, and dinner table conversations for two years straight. I often wonder what sort of paperwork, deals, and signatures have allowed development of our natural areas while we were occupied.

Ultimately, I find my resting place in realism. No sugar-coating, and less emotion. We recognize when you love something, as I love the environment, emotion allows and sometimes finds a way in. I could tell our social relationship with nature and how it’s going to realistically run out, I see it going down, but how much are we willing to save? And how can we celebrate what we save? The key word being we. This is going to take a collective effort from citizens and governments alike.

To deliver the plea of realistically valuing our natural heritage with confidence and positivity, even on top of the realities, this is always the highest road you can take if you ever want to see real change and bestow it upon others.

It can feel weird and kind of cosmic to fight for something else, but as long as I have felt that way about the environment my whole life, and especially about my fellow humans over the past 2002) is a story of love, infinity, and complex the task at hand is, you have to move forward with confidence and positivity. Even on top of the realities, this is always the highest road you can take if you ever want to see real change and bestow it upon others.

We are all human, experiencing mixed feelings in our day-to-day lives. However, no matter how challenging and complex the task at hand is, you have to move forward with confidence and positivity. Even on top of the realities, this is always the highest road you can take if you ever want to see real change and bestow it upon others.

Donald Combe Special to The Local

**View from the Couch**

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has generously agreed to share his opinions, through “short and sweet” articles, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

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**Environmental work and education come with mixed feelings**

Owen Bjorgan describes this as a photo of him, in the middle of realism, with a symbolic representation of optimism and pessimism for nature on either side. He bikes on both sides of the road, from time to time, he says. (Photo supplied)
Dear Premier Doug Ford and Minister Steve Clark:

I am writing to you as a resident of NOTL and I am concerned about the government’s proposed restrictions on housing in NOTL.

As NOTL Post Office superintendent, I have seen the impact of the pandemic on our community. The postal service has been a lifeline for many during this time, and I am worried about the potential for further restrictions to impact this service.

I am particularly concerned about the government’s proposed restrictions on housing in NOTL. These restrictions could have a significant impact on our community, and I urge you to reconsider them.

Sincerely,
Karen

NOTL Post Office

Comment

Post office has eliminated outdoor line-ups

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

A daily ritual for many who live in Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake just got a little more normal.

On Friday, Canada Post lifted limits for customers allowed inside the building. Gone are the days of one visitor in the box lobby at a time, and there is no longer a cap of two customers in the retail area. And, miracle of all miracles, the door, which was behind the two indoor spaces has now been unlocked. It is now possible to collect your mail and walk directly up to the counter to retrieve your packages that was too large to fit in one’s mailbox.

When the news was conveyed to me last Friday, it seemed the staff at the Queen Street Post office was as excited about it as the customers who were there to retrieve their mail. Staff member Valerie Novacek, who recently has been juggling that the pandemic restrictions would change by the year 2030, was overjoyed when she informed me of the change.

Forgive me if I am making a mountain out of a molehill, but to me this is indeed a momentous occasion. I might even put forth the idea that this is a true turning point after just under two full years of this COVID-19 pandemic.

As NOTL Post Office supervisor Doug Binning reminds me, Canada Post operates under federal statutes, while other locations along Queen Street fall under provincial guidelines.

As of Tuesday morning, the post office had lifted indoor capacity limits and vaccine passports, but there was no longer a cap for entry into places such as restaurants, theatres, gyms and clubs. But Binning mentioned it was cut from one ahead from Ottawa on Feb. 25 where indoor capacity limits were no longer required.

Hearing the news at the post office five days before the provincial changes made it seem that much more momentous.

When I tell people who are no longer a cap that I have to go to the post office to pick up my mail I am always met with a quizzical look.

Some laugh, and ask if we have party lines on our phones as well, conjuring images of Eddie Albert and Eva Gabor in Green Acres answering their phones only to find a ring on it back at them, hoping to connect with local celebrity Swine Ar-nold Ziffel.

It’s a quaint little quirk that comes with reading within ears of NOTL where there is no home mail delivery.

In fact, I myself may have graced my nose-wipe Mishka with one of those quizzical looks in 1999 when we were first dating. We saddled up two of Jack and Fred Sentinels horses and trotted to the loading dock be hind the post office to pick up her mail one afternoon. The staff at the loading area loved it, and it was the last time that I had seen Mishka Deuxy and Dusty the horse local celebrities in a while.

Visiting post offices is a quick. I soon grew to love. For 21 years it was part of my daily ritual. But I do mean daily as I usually make a point of visiting the post office Monday through Friday. I’ve come to know the names of most of the staff, and often stay long past my welcome social with the locals.

When my children were lit tle they loved being handed the responsibility of holding the key and opening the mailbox. And run in on the second round from the bottom. For many, directly in line with our mailbox, a staff member had placed a teddy bear in the mailbox on a regular basis, so everyone looked for every time.

I know I am not alone in my love of those daily visits. Canada Post is almost like a town hall, a place where residents come together and often run into one another, stopping to take time to catch up.

My days of visiting, however, were reduced to weekly during much of the pandemic. With fears of the spread of COVID-19 and its various variants, it made less sense to so frequently put oneself out there where there could be risk of bringing the virus to the home.

And when I did visit, I duti fully followed pandemic proto cols, wearing a mask and waiting outside two metres away from the box lobby door and from anyone else in line, until who ever was in front of me walked out with their mail. That was the case through rain, sleet, snow and frigid temperatures.

I knew it wasn’t easy for many. The Local received se veral inquiries about the indoor limits, wondering why during the colder temperatures more people couldn’t be admitted or why one couldn’t walk through the door and do the task without having to line up again outside. As Binning would reply, we couldn’t do both, and nothing could change with out their go-ahead.

Then there were the people in line who sometimes lost their cool, watching as someone emptied their mailbox and sub sequently stood at the sorting table leafing through envelopes like a lid from the 1960s going through a pack of baseball cards looking for a Mickey Mantle.

I once witnessed a woman three spots behind me in line Saturday. She opened the door to say to someone inside, “there are people outside waiting to get in. Why don’t you let someone in at home?” When the sorter in question slowly inched out the door with the aid of her cane in one hand and a pile of mail in the other. I hope the impatient woman felt just a little embarrased at her tirade.

Thankfully, uncom fortable moments should be coming to an end. Binning, though, informed me Monday that people have been slow to pile into both indoor spaces, and the door divinding the box lobby from the retail area has not been swung off its hinges.

Perhaps that because I don’t know about the change, or perhaps it’s because they were still being cautious. But as time goes on, I hope things move around.

However, I do still wear a mask as I return to my daily visits, and I’m still giving people enough space to ensure the highest level of comfort in all social situations.

As we move forward into a NOLTL that feels a little closer to normal, isn’t it great that some of us can ease into feeling com fortable after living this way for so long.

I am still wearing a mask as I return to my daily visits, and I’m still giving people enough space to ensure the highest level of comfort in all social situations.

As we move forward into a NOLTL that feels a little closer to normal, isn’t it great that some of us can ease into feeling comfortable again.

Mike Balsom and others who use the Queen Street post office are delighted to see restrictions lifted. He demon strates that the door between the lobby and the retail area is now unlocked. (Photo supplied)

Readers take exception to editorial

Wore Penny Coles. Yup spoken like a true NDP’ er LOL … everyone changed the order. Miss sent more and compassion (Editorial, The Local, Feb. 3).

Not sure Jagmeet could have written it herself.

So how proud are you of Jagmeet Singh who was so upset the other day by being unhappy a bill only to be revoked 48 hours later by an equally inept leader. So serious and so urgent was this threat that it dissipated before they could pass the bill. An emergency so serious that it was gone before any emergency took place.

Woner if you will have the integrity to write how wrong you were to praise such a piece of legislation. Write it with the same anger and admiration on how wrong he was. How wrong the entire emergency act was. How wrong it was to invoke such unecessary powers to a government to wage against protesters who is losing a agenda different than the liber al elites. How wrong it was to allow this country to allow the authority to invade and freeze bank accounts.

There was no such emer gency existed when socialist Da vid Suzuki said blowing up the pipelines would be constitutional and when Black Lives Matter protested shut down streets. No, that narra tive doesn’t fit with your personal bias.

I suspect there will be no such editorial. It’s folks like you who have a platform to influ ence the politically illit rate of us that is real of concern. Your pouring of praise for such premature as pence speaks to your naivety, incompetence and bias.

Matteo Gentile
NOTL

Housing affordability hands plans to developers

Dear Premier Doug Ford and Minister Steve Clark:

The recently released Housing Affordability Task Force report could only have been produced by a select group of developers, builders and service providers ancillary to that industry.

The recommendations contained therein, if enacted by your government, would most likely lead to a dismemberment of the entire level of municipal and regional governance in the province of Ontario. It would hand the entire planning process over to the development industry and their financiers and completely destroy the concept of home designation, community planning and environmental protection in the surrounding areas of dealing with the housing affordability prob lem.

It is not just the development industry and their cohort of experts have been yearning for a lack of supply driving prices. However, municipal red tape and draw out approval processes pre ceding buildings from getting on line. And I do mean daily, as I usually make a point of visiting the post office Monday through Friday. I’ve come to know the names of most of the staff, and often stay long past my welcome social with the locals.

When my children were lit tle they loved being handed the responsibility of holding the key and opening the mailbox. And run in on the second round from the bottom. For many, directly in line with our mailbox, a staff member had placed a teddy bear in the mailbox on a regular basis, so everyone looked for every time.

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However, I do still wear a mask as I return to my daily visits, and I’m still giving people enough space to ensure the highest level of comfort in all social situations.

As we move forward into a NOLTL that feels a little closer to normal, isn’t it great that some of our daily rituals, as bemused as they may seem, can again be enjoyed? I bet even Arnold Ziffel would ink about it.
Minerva Ward up for challenges she expects to face in NOTL

Penny Coles
The Local

Minerva Ward, the next president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, will take over the position March 7, and is already becoming acquainted with her new job.

Ward spent a couple of hours in what she calls a “quick handover” in Niagara-on-the-Lake Thursday with former president Eduardo Lafforgue, whose resignation took effect Monday. He has left to take the job of director of tourism for the Yukon Territory.

As one of the members of the selection committee, Lafforgue said he has great confidence that Ward is the right person for the job, and he is delighted she will be taking it on.

Ironically, Ward’s most recent job was as the Government of the Northwest Territories’ regional tourism development officer — she spent three years living and working in the Arctic.

She says the attraction of working in the Arctic.

"The value of tourism is not coming to town with any ‘preconceived judgments,’ she is also aware of the balancing act necessary between support for tourists and residents in any mature tourism destination — typically, as a tourism industry grows and more people come to town, and there is an increasing physical impact on residents, that has to be increasingly measured and managed, including their understanding of the value of tourism, its impact on property values, and the availability of services and amenities it presents.

"The value of tourism is closely tied to why people want to live there,” she says. "As desirability increases, so do property values and amenities. The number of visitors increasing is important, without the town being "overrun," she says. "There has to be value, and there has to be quality. But I’m saying all this before I even get to NOTL, so I’m saying it without judgement until I start my role and begin understanding the sentiment and vision of where tourism will go.”

That leads Ward to the topic of the development of a tourism strategy, which she knows is a hot topic in NOTL, and a process she is excited to be part of.

“A tourism strategy is so important, and I would love to be a driver, with the town." She sees it as a road map to allow the town to be "active rather than reactive" as the tourism industry continues to grow, “so everyone is on the same page with the strategy — the industry and residents.”

Ward holds a master’s degree in tourism and hospitality management and a bachelor’s degree in tourism management, both from the University of the West Indies, in Jamaica and the Bahamas respectively. She holds a certificate in digital communications from Simon Fraser University, and leadership development from the University of Alberta. She is pursuing her economic development accreditation from the University of Waterloo.
Russian tank, destroying it.

Her daughter, Alexa, who lives in Toronto, by extensive personal and business networking, was able to secure rooms in a hotel in Poland, close to the Ukrainian border, for relatives and their immediate circle if they can make their way to Poland. Alexa and her brother Jonathan are trying to pay for all their expenses: accommodations, food, gas and anything else they need for as long as needed. Arsenault says, “if they didn’t have relatives, she and Jonathan would do it anyway, for anyone else.”

They are doing this for relatives they have never met. They just discovered a year ago, but that they have grown close to through texts and messaging using online translations.

“My kids are now saying they have never been so proud of being part Ukrainian. There is nothing they wouldn’t do to help, not just relatives, but wherever it is needed. They are texting and messaging them to say ‘you’re not alone. We’re here for you – you just have to ask for help.”

Arsenault speaks Ukrainian and has spoken to her family in Ukraine by phone — they were all delighted to discover a year ago that they have relatives in Canada. The Arsenaults had been planning a trip to Ukraine this July to meet everyone and visit ancestral homes. If any of them want to come to Canada now, her family is ready to help in any way they can, Arsenault says.

“By phone and through texts, her relatives have expressed the gratitude of Ukrainians for Canadian support.”

“Phone calls are a source of pride for them, but they say Ukrainians are grateful to know Canada is opening their doors, and grateful the world is standing by them. They are very optimistic, very hopeful they will win this. That’s the feeling they have, that the world is on their side. That’s very important to them. This is giving them the strength and courage to fight back. They’re hoping Russians can see the world will keep it up. They are entitled to freedom, not an authoritarian government,” she says. “These are real people. There are bombs, rockets, drones and missiles all around them, and we don’t know if they will survive this.”

Irene Schwyno New- ton, who is president of the Croatian community and who is president of the Niagara chapter of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, also knows firsthand the anguish, fear and heartache shared by Ukrainians in Niagara — she is not sure of the exact number, but says likely around 20,000 to 30,000. Like her, many have family in Ukraine, some staying put, others trying to flee to safety.

She was in contact with them Thursday, “and thankfully they live close to the Polish border. They were not feeling the shellfire at that time. They locked their doors and were holding tight.”

But they are lacking the most basic supplies, she says. “The people in Ukraine need help. Basically, they have nothing — store shelves are empty, banks, pharmacies have nothing, schools, airports are closed. People are in dire straits.”

Newtown said people who want to help can donate through the Canada-Ukraine Foundation at cufoundation.ca.

“They are an amazing group of people. They did this first in 2014, when there were a lot of casualties. They know how to do this,” she says. “They sent hospital equipment, doctors, medications, food supplies. ‘That’s what they will do again.’”

She has confidence that anything donated to the foundation will arrive at its destination, although it might take some time — with airports closed or bombed, aid will be flown to Poland, close to the border, and then transported to Ukraine any way possible.

In the past, the Canadian government paid for a cargo plane to ship goods, and she is hoping to hear that will happen again.

The town is also supporting Ukraine. The blue and yellow flag was raised at the town hall Friday, and a message from Lord Mayor Betty Derozo on behalf of town council says the town “stands with the people of Ukraine and extends a plea for peace to those imposing harm and violence against them.”

The province is offering $100 million in aid, and a pledge to expedite the settlement of potential refugees, with jobs and settlement services for them when they arrive.

Premier Doug Ford also said Russian vodka would be removed from LCBO shelves.

NDF leader Andrea Horwath has said what the province is offering isn’t enough, and has called on Ford to immediately commit at least $3 million to the Canada-Ukraine Foundation, and to match all donations by Ontarians.

Ontario has the largest number of people of Ukrainian descent in Canada, and Canada has the largest Ukrainian population outside Ukraine and Russia.

Niagara residents who wish to donate to the Red Cross Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis Appeal at https://donate.redcross.ca/ or by calling 1-800-418-1111.

Several ways to support humanitarian aid

Public to be consulted

Continued from page 5

The diversity committee is recommending that since five rainbow benches are expected to be installed in town, one of which is being funded through a grant, the other four benches be placed in suitable locations throughout the community, with public consultation on the location of the benches, and private funding pursued.

Coun. Gary Burroughs, said he expects the public to be involved in the decision of the location of the rainbow crosswalk “before any money is spent on it,” and that the public might have other recommendations of locations. He is hoping, he added, that when staff go to the public “they don’t use the same format as they did for the wall committee for the Queen’s Mississauga Street project,” which was to present options and ask residents to choose.

He suggested instead the public be asked, “What do you think of a rainbow crosswalk, where should it be, and do we want one.”

“I get that diversity committee wants this,” he said, “but I think we have a history in NOTL of looking after a very diverse community for 50 to 60 years. Maybe it’s for visitors. Maybe I’m misunderstanding what this is for,” he said, adding he hopes for a good response from the public “so we understand how they feel.”

CAO Marnie Cluckie said she is not sure of the exact number, but says likely around 20,000 to 30,000. Like her, many have family in Ukraine, some staying put, others trying to flee to safety.

She was in contact with them Thursday, “and thankfully they live close to the Polish border. They were not feeling the shellfire at that time. They locked their doors and were holding tight.”

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March 2, 2022

Meals on Wheels hoping for awareness, volunteers

Penny Coles
The Local

Erica Lepp was delivering Meals on Wheels for 16 years, and although she has done other volunteer work, this is her favourite, she says. Her kids have always helped her when they could, although now it is just Tia, 12, the youngest and only one still living at home, left to help.

Meals on Wheels has continued to provide a much-needed service throughout the pandemic, and although meal delivery was adjusted to ensure safe dropoffs and continues to protect clients and volunteers.

Pre-COVID, Meals on Wheels provided not only a nutritious meal, but a friendly face, five days a week, says Lepp. “It’s also a kind of wellness check,” she adds. Volunteers get to know their clients, and before the pandemic, could take a few minutes to chat with them. If volunteers notice any concerns about health issues, they pass on the information to the office, so family members can be notified.

“During COVID times,” Lepp says, “Meals on Wheels has been offering the same hot meal and frozen meal deliveries, direct to homes, but they have adapted their protocol so the delivery is contactless and safe.”

And it is still a wellness check, she adds. Volunteers drop the meals at the door in a single-use plastic bag, and watch from the car to ensure recipients receive them. “We don’t give them a wave from the car – instead of the usual hello and small talk we used to enjoy, they get a friendly ‘thank you’,” Lepp says. “We hope for at least as much once a month.”

If the client doesn’t come to the door, she says, they’ll call them from her car, and if there is no answer, will take the meal and let the office know it wasn’t delivered.

“This means so much to Meals on Wheels clients. They are so appreciative, says Lepp. “You can sense as a volunteer that it’s really important to them.”

Not all clients are house-bound – some just choose meal delivery because they get a good variety of balanced meals they don’t have to cook.

Meals include a soup course with meat or fish, two vegetables, pasta or a potato, and dessert.

There is a four-week cycle of menu, and substitutions will be made for a limited number of food preferences and intolerances. All therapeutic diets, such as for diabetics, or salt-restricted, can be accommodated.

Meals are prepared and packed by staff in the kitchen of the Niagara Ina Grafton Gage Retirement Village in St. Catharines, under the supervision of qualified dieticians, and sent to Niagara Falls in heated bags, to be loaded in volunteers’ vehicles and delivered Monday through Friday between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. “Frozen meals can also be ordered, and are delivered on Tuesdays, around noon.”

Volunteer deliveries take about two hours, and those interested in helping can sign up for as little as once a month, says Lepp. “They choose to be a flex driver, which means rather than having one set day, she fills in for other drivers when they are away or for some reason unable to deliver on their usual day. She typically has one or two days a month scheduled, and the occasional morning call with a request to drive for someone who is unavailable that day.”

Marianne McRae and Ann Ellis, the women who run the Niagara Falls program, which covers Niagara-on-the-Lake, make it a pleasure to be a volunteer, says Lepp.

“They make it easy. The service is very efficient, and very reliable. And the the program is amazing, I love it.”

“We get to know people on our routes,” adds Lepp. “And for some people, we might be the only person they see all week.”

Since most of the volunteers are retired, she says she’s always one of the youngest, and on the days when her kids could go along with her, many clients really enjoyed chatting with them — some offered the kids candy, and she had one client who always produced an apple.

“It was the first volunteer gig I did with my kids,” Lepp says. “I wanted to show them a way to give back that isn’t monetary. It’s your time you’re giving. Meals on Wheels has been a great way to get them involved. Everyone loved seeing the kids. And my kids never argued about doing it; they liked it. Sometimes they’d bring their friends along. The clients were so appreciative, so sweet and nice about it. It’s an easy way to be engaged in the community.”

Kelch says Meals on Wheels is a good way to become involved in the community. When she and her husband, Alan Cobham, moved to St. Davids, they decided to devote some of their time to Meals on Wheels.

They deliver meals on Mondays, one day a month, and fill in occasionally on other days when needed.

Knowing they are the only people a recipient might see that day makes it very rewarding for them, as does knowing that person will have one hot meal, Kelch says. “They also appreciate it’s done safely to protect against the spread of COVID. “We have long arms to reach out, and we always wear a mask. Sometimes I just leave the meal on a chair, and step back, but we always make sure we see them. It’s important to have eyes on them, to know they’re okay. Sadly some of them are very isolated, and so much more so during COVID.”

Kelch says she and her husband have both lost their parents, “but we know that if they were in need, we’d have appreciated having someone to help them. We do this in their honour.”

They also grew up in families who were involved in their communities, and who taught their children to do the same.

“We both had parents who passed that on to us, that it’s important to give back. Even if it’s just a little,” Kelch says. As seniors themselves, they continued to help others.

Kelch has friends whose elderly parents receive Meals on Wheels, and she’s heard from them how grateful they are that someone is checking on their family members when they make their dropoffs. It’s “good to hear that from other family members. And I feel this is something I can do for others who are still working, and can’t do it themselves for their parents.”

Ann Ellis, program coordinator for Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake, says since people aren’t travelling as much since COVID, at the moment they have a strong demand for awareness, volunteers.
Retired women teachers group fill welcome kits

Penny Coles
The Local

A group of retired teachers in Niagara have enthusiastically embarked on a project to help farm workers as they arrive in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Melanie Kelch, vice-president of the St. Catharines branch of Retired Women Teachers of Ontario (RWTTO), and also a St. Davids resident, says members decided, as one of their outreach projects, to fill welcome bags that are distributed through the Niagara Workers Welcome organization.

Tuesday afternoon, 75 brightly coloured green bags, filled with all sorts of necessities and goodies for the men and women as they arrive to work on local farms, were delivered to The Farm Workers Hub at Cornerstone Church, filled by retired women teachers.

“Our motto is caring and sharing, and it’s not just about each other, it’s about other communities,” she says. Kelch taught for 30 years, mostly elementary schools, in many different communities, all over Ontario. When she and her husband settled in St. Davids, after years of moving about, living in big cities and small communities — she and her husband both preferred a smaller community for their retirement — she began to learn about the offshore workers who are so important to learn about the offshore work of their outreach projects, to help them in some way. When she heard about the welcome kits, she took that idea to her group of retired teachers, and they were quick and eager to come onboard.

At a meeting just before Christmas, when the group was able to meet in person, she was able to distribute the bags, and recently, the women who had filled them dropped them off to her and another member of the group could get them to the hub in Virgil. The retired teachers organization has an interesting history; starting out in the mid-50s with a small group of women in Toronto known as the Rendevous Club.

At the time it was formed, its purpose was to persuade the Ontario government to raise the level of pensions for retired women teachers to the same level as their male counterparts — women’s pensions in the ‘50s were not even adequate, says Kelch. For years, the Toronto women met with government officials to lobby for improved pensions, until they realized they could present a stronger case if they brought women throughout the province onboard, and many new branches were formed, becoming the Ontario Association of Superannuated Women Teachers. That eventually gave rise to the Retired Teachers of Ontario, representing both men and women, with the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario continuing to exist to represent the special interests and well-being of retired women teachers.

“There are still women who like to hang out with other women who were teachers,” says Kelch. “There are groups all over Ontario, and five branches just in the Niagara Region.”

Her branch really liked the idea of helping offshore workers, she adds. “It connects us to an international community. And they’re coming more to the forefront of our community. People are starting to better understand the importance of the work they do. It feels humbling to be able to do something for this group of people.”

They also like that there are more and more women who come to Niagara to work on local farms, she says. “We’re starting to see more women, but we get the feeling that the public is not as aware of them, and it’s important for us to see them recognized as well.”

Kelch says the more she learned about the offshore workers, the more she wanted to do something to help, and she was very pleasantly surprised by the response she received from her group when she shared what she learned. “This project turned out to be bigger than I thought it would be,” she says. “As teachers we always want to educate others. Once a teacher always a teacher.”

And teachers are people who are caring, giving and generous, she says — they are used to giving their time to help their students in need, and often spent their own money on classroom supplies to benefit their children. "The caring and sharing in our motto, that doesn’t stop when we retire."

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Retired teachers Melanie Kelch and Monica Forbom drop off 75 welcome kits for Jane Andres of Niagara Workers Welcome, at The Farm Workers Hub in Cornerstone Church. (Photo supplied)

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Wellness check important

Continued from page 10

base of volunteers. But that isn’t likely to last, as people begin to travel more, and she always welcomes more help. “We need a pretty big stable of volunteers to fill those gaps, and to have more people at the ready.”

There are about 15 to 20 clients in NOLT, and about 75 to 80 volunteers at the moment.

She says she’s watched Lepp’s kids grow up in the last 16 years, and although they haven’t had many volunteers bringing their kids along, they have sometimes seen grand- children help out.

“Occasionally we’ll hear a volunteer say they can’t work on a particular day because they’re looking after their grandchildren, and we suggest they bring them along. It works well in NOTL because there aren’t many apartments, and in most situations, one person can stay in the car with the kids.”

She also has parents and grandparents bringing their teens along for the volunteer hours they need to graduate from high school, she says.

Next week, a flag will be raised at town hall to show its participation in March for Meals, a time when providers across Ontario participate in the annual campaign to increase awareness and community engagement with local Meals on Wheels providers. It’s important not only to attract more volunteers, says Ellis, but to remind seniors and their caregivers of the value of the program, for the nutritious meals, and also for that wellness check, especially when often family members live far from their loved ones and can’t visit regularly.

Sometimes, she says, it’s a matter of a senior’s health declining slowly, “and by the time they get to the stage they aren’t able to make good decisions for themselves. It’s a gradual slide, and then all of a sudden it’s hard to get that sorted out.”

Anyone interested in volunteering for Meals on Wheels, or arranging meal delivery, can contact the Niagara Falls Meals on Wheels office at 905-356-9194 or visit https://mealsonwheelsniagara.ca/niagara-falls/.
Ontario is getting stronger

Across the province, more workers are joining the skilled trades as resources and industries in the north become part of the future of clean steel and electric vehicles.

More jobs are being created by building new bridges and highways, expanding public transit and constructing new homes—all for a growing province. Homegrown businesses are manufacturing more of the things we rely on.

Ontario’s economy is getting stronger. See what’s happening at ontario.ca/stronger
Collective aims to promote NOTL as arts destination

Continued from page 12

have to live in NOTL, but they do have to have very strong connections to NOTL.

It’s been a long-standing goal to help promote the local visual art community, spearheaded by Lise Andreanna, chair of the Pumphouse, which she says as a non-profit organization is well-placed to grow the artistic community, while building strong ties to cultural partners through collaborative public events.

The Arts Collective came together last summer, and now has grown to 21 artists, and they put a lot of effort into preparing an exhibit that was to open in December.

Once the most provincial shutdown was announced, that didn’t happen, and the exhibit remained ready to open.

Haftar is one of the collective’s members of the networking committee organizing the exhibit that opens at the Pumphouse this Sunday, March 6, with a “soft opening.” The artists involved will be on-hand for a reception that will run from 2 to 4 p.m. in the Joyner Gallery.

This is a beginning for the collective, says Haftar, “which will take a while to build to what we’re looking for,” which is attracting attention for NOTL art.

It is also a start of what they plan to be many more events, including another exhibit beginning April 3, with the work of some of the newer members who did not get in on this one.

The collective and the events they hope to present are designed to increase awareness and appreciation of local visual arts, and to put NOTL on the map as a destination for visual arts.

The artists, many of whom work from home and may feel disconnected from other artists, are excited about showing their work and promoting the local arts community. At this coming exhibit, Haftar says, local artists will show pottery, sculptures, glass pieces, abstract, realism and “a whole variety of art for people to enjoy.”

Galleries involved include the Upper Canada Native Art Gallery, Art Space 106, RiverBrink Art Museum, and Lakeside Pottery.

Artist Pat Haftar’s painting, The Hiker, is part of the upcoming exhibit at the Pumphouse. It is done in acrylic with a palette knife. “I was drawn to the casual pose of the young lady and how relaxed and confident she looked,” says Haftar. (Photos supplied)
Did the Canada Revenue Agency really contact you?

Last year, about 100 Canadians a day were victims of a scam! Many of these scams imitate the CRA’s programs and services to gain access to your personal and financial information. So, how can you avoid getting tricked?

Here are three tips to avoid being scammed by someone pretending to be from the agency:

1. Know how to recognize a scam
   - Scammers may insist they need your personal or financial information, such as your SIN or credit card details, to send you a refund or collect a payment. Beware when you get any message, whether it’s by telephone, mail, text or email, that requests this information.
   - Callers may use threatening or coercive language to scare you into paying a phoney debt. Know that the government will not demand immediate payment or threaten you with arrest.
   - Fraudsters may urge you to visit a fake website where you’re asked to verify your identity by entering personal information. The CRA will not email you a link asking you to fill in an online form with personal or financial details.

2. Protect yourself from identity theft
   - Monitor your tax accounts by registering for My Account or My Business Account. Once registered, sign up for email notifications, which will notify you of changes made to your accounts or if paper mail from the agency was returned.
   - Use unique and complex passwords for your CRA and online banking accounts. You can set up a personal identification number (PIN) in My Account or with the help of one of the CRA call centre agents to help confirm your identity for future calls.

3. When in doubt, check your online account
   - If you receive a call, letter, email or text saying you owe money or have received a refund, check your My Account or call the CRA at 1-800-959-8281.
   - If you think you may have been the victim of a scam or have been tricked into giving personal or financial information, contact your local police service.

www.newscanada.com
Vibrant Living at Royal Henley

At The Royal Henley Retirement Community, we believe that enjoying life is what Vibrant Seniors Living should be all about. That’s why we hire only the best people – people who truly care about seniors, understand their needs and possess the desire to make a difference. Experience vibrant senior’s living with a world of choices, beautiful architecture, caring people and a monthly calendar of activities and services. At Royal Henley Retirement Community in St. Catharines, warm, welcoming, worry-free retirement living is waiting for you by Port Dalhousie, or just a 25 minute drive from Niagara-on-the-Lake.

We’ve built a reputation that will stand the test of time. Our mission is to be the leading purveyor of retirement lifestyles, where our residents receive unmatched choice and an enviable level of service in a positive, vibrant and caring environment. We know that everyone could use a little more get-up-and-go! So, if you want more out of life, with more energy and vitality every single day, then choose a retirement community devoted to helping you bring positive energy to all that you do; a place with a comprehensive program of activities and services designed to help make every day fantastic.

The Royal Henley Retirement Community offers a wide range of activities and amenities to appeal to everyone. Curl up with a good book by the fireplace in our cozy library; take in the scenery and enjoy the fresh air in our outdoor sitting area, meet friends over a hot beverage in the bistro; enjoy a game or two in our tea room; watch a movie in the theatre; or take advantage of our heated salt water pool and exercise room. Enjoy meals in our naturally lit dining room, or in the private dining room reserved for those special events.

Our specially-designed fitness program, CLUB-fit, was created just for our residents to help spark that sense of vitality. Whatever your physical condition, we have a program that can help you get more out of life.

“I moved to The Royal Henley from Toronto to be closer to my family and it was an excellent choice. My interactions with the staff have been personable and friendly. Everyone is always helpful! I enjoy the variety of meal choices and really like the location. We are close to the lake and I can walk to Port Dalhousie!”

-Resident Isabel

To learn more about our current suite availability please call Krista & Jessica today! 905-935-1800
Local News

Spring is just around the corner (18 days) which means all of the NOTL summer camps are going to be opening up for registration! We are so excited to sign up for this summer! Email joyousnotlkids@gmail.com to tell us about your favourite NOTL summer activities.

Interview with Cooper

- What do you want to be when you grow up?
  - A. I want to be a comic book writer and illustrator because me and my friend make comics for our class together.

- What is your favourite thing about NOTL?
  - A. My favourite thing about NOTL is that everyone here is very nice and environmentally conscious.

- How would you change the world if you could?
  - A. I would change the world so that all pollution ends.

- What is your ideal day in NOTL?
  - A. My ideal day in NOTL would be making books with my friends and playing on my trampoline.

- What is your favourite book?
  - A. My favourite book is one of the books I made which is Astro a book about a dog who gets sent to space and it's based on the two dogs that got sent to space Kira and Astro.

- What do you do to help others?
  - A. I help others by being there when they are hurt and I protect the environment.

- What is your favourite thing about NOTL?
  - A. One of the fun things we do at my house we have a family show that we watch every night.

- What is something special about you?
  - A. Something that is special about me is that me and my friend own a comic business at my school and everyone in my class and that we know how to make comics.

Crossword: SPORTS

Across:
2. An enthusiast of a team
4. To perform repeatedly to become proficient
5. A person who plays on the same team as someone else
7. One who instructs a player or team
8. A person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports or games
9. A cup or other decorative object awarded as a prize for a victory or success

Down:
1. An official who watches a game closely
3. Leader of a sports team
6. Someone who lacks experience

RIDDLE

Submitted by Jenna D.

Q. If you don’t keep me, I’ll break. What am I?
A. A promise

Winter Fun Facts

Nuts and seeds are not the only things an animal might store for the winter. Shrews store their favourite foods alive for the winter…insects rendered comatose from their bite.

Charity

We are looking for charities in which kids can participate. If you would like your organization to be highlighted here, please send your information to joyousnotlkids@gmail.com.
Matteo Giampa’s hockey journey will soon be bringing him back home, following four years of pursuing his dream in Connecticut and Alberta.

The St. Michael Catholic Elementary School grad and former Holy Cross Secondary School student has committed to the NCAA Division I Canisius College Golden Griffins in nearby Buffalo, NY. He’ll play one more year with the Bonnyville Pontiacs of the Alberta Junior Hockey League (AJHL) before joining the Atlantic Hockey Conference (AHC) team for the 2023-2024 season.

“I’m really excited, and my parents are super happy,” Giampa says from his billet home in Bonnyville, AB, where he is completing his first season with the AJHL’s Pontiacs. “I’ve skated there a number of times during my junior career, and I’ve done a couple of Junior Sabres camps over there. I love the rink, I love the facilities, and I love the staff.”

“Everything’s been great, Canisius has been great,” he continues. “I’m tremendous-ly honoured and grateful for the opportunity that they’ve given me.”

After playing hockey for his hometown NOTL Wolves, Giampa moved to the Niagara North Stars AAA U15 team in 2017-2018. The following year he played for that organization’s U16 team, with a call-up to the older U18 age group for a single game.

He captured the attention of Ontario Hockey League scouts, and in the April, 2019 OHL draft he was chosen in the third round by the London Knights. He was 15 years old.

Giampa never made it to the London camp, though. He had been playing his minor midget year with an injured wrist he didn’t allow to heal correctly.

“I didn’t want to get surgery and be put in a cast for my draft year,” he tells The Local. “I wanted to play even if it was extremely painful. I ended up playing the whole season with a broken wrist. After the season, I went to a doctor and I ended up getting surgery. When the camp was going on I was in a cast.”

At that point, he discussed his future with his parents Arc and Bonnie. He realized at the time he was a bit of a smaller player, between 140 and 150 pounds, and might need a little more time to develop to play competitively in a much tougher league.

The decision was made to set his OHL aspirations aside in favour of pursuing the alternative NCAA route, with the goal of earning a hockey scholarship to an American college. He withdrew from Holy Cross after his Grade 10 year and enrolled in the Frederick Gunn School in Washington, Connecticut.

“It was tough to move away from the family,” he

Continued on page 20
**LocalSPORTS**

**Preds in third place going into final weekend**

Mike Balsom  
**Special to The Local**

The Niagara Predators have clinched third place in the Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League despite some strange circumstances over their last four games, playing only two games but earning five points in the standings.

The Predators leapfrogged over their rival St. George after a COVID outbreak caused the Ravens to forfeit games scheduled for Friday night in Virgil, and this Tuesday night at the Vale Health and Wellness Centre in Port Colborne. Because of those forfeits, Niagara was awarded two wins and four points for those games, which show up officially as 3-0 victories on the GMHL website. It’s not the way Predators owner Robert Turnbull wanted to move past the native. Now the Preds have locked up third place North York.

Turnbull said this week, “We’ve played very well against them. One of their players got COVID, and of course, when you get one you’re going to get more. Another one tested positive the next day. You can’t take any chances.”

With the GMHL’s regular season wrapping up this weekend, there was no room to find a new date for either game. Tuesday’s ‘home’ game in Port Colborne had already been rescheduled from the extended January break when non-elite amateur sports were barred from continuing under provincial restrictions. With the Meridian Credit Union Arena fully booked, the Vale Centre was to be the better alternative.

“Our looked at rescheduling it,” added Turnbull. “But it would have been Thursday, and we’d have been looking at four games in four nights. To play four games in a row, that’s jeopardizing our players’ health going into the playoffs. And we’re already short. I refuse to put the players’ health in jeopardy.”

Their other two games over their recent four-game stretch resulted in a single point, with a loss in Oshawa last Wednesday to the Durham Roadrunners and a shoot-out loss to Platts­ville Sunday. In the Durham game, Niagara was outshot 54-41 in a 4-3 decision. Despite the loss, goaltender Morgan Penwell was chosen as the game’s first star for obvious reasons.

“He played a hell of a game,” raved Turnbull. “Fifty saves! We had nine forwards and five defence­men. Two players couldn’t come due to work commitments, as it was a 9:30 p.m. game. We played fabulous, but we managed to lose the game on a freak goal with not too much time remaining.”

The goal in question came with just over six minutes left in the game. Players from both teams were gathered around the crease when Roadrunners forward Kevin Serio managed to come up with the puck. He took a shot that caromed off the skates of three or four players and found its way past the goal-line.

The Predators held leads of 2-1 and 3-2 in that game before Durham’s Trevor Urquhart tied it up late in the second. Georgy Kholmovsky, Jason Humphries and Reese Bisci all found the net for Niagara. Sunday’s game turned out to be the Predators first taste of overtime and first shootout of the season.

Alexander Insulander opened the scoring 1:33 into the game with assists from Humphries and Kholmovsky. Malcolm Campbell tied it up just a minute and a half later, then Noah Caperchione and Bisci scored for the Preds before Platts­ville’s Lucas Bast closed the margin to 3-2 by the end of the first period. Niagara couldn’t solve Lakers goalie Rahul Bola from that point. Platts­ville’s Kyle Struth forced the tie with five minutes remaining in the second, and both teams went scoreless in the third and through the overtime period.

Bola came through in the shootout for the Lakers. Humphries was first to try for the Predators, ringing his shot off the post. In succession, Caperchione, Insulander and Dante Mas­si were all stopped by Bola. After Niagara goalten­der David White stopped three Lakers attempts, Bast snuck one past him for the shootout victory.

“I thought we could have played a lot better,” reflected Turnbull. “I have to give Platts­ville credit. They played aggressively, moved the puck, had a good transition game, and their goal­tender was very good.”

The Ravens are two points behind Niagara in the standings with a single game to play, while the Predators will close out the regular season with three this weekend. On the strength of their winning percentage and their 4-2 record face to face, the Preds have locked up third place in the North Division, seven points behind second place North York.

Niagara will face either Platts­ville or Streetsville in the first round of the GMHL playoffs, depending on the outcome of the games played by those two teams this weekend. The Predators are 4-1 against both teams this season, though they visit Platts­ville again Sunday.

“We match well against both of those teams,” Turnbull said. “This weekend, we’ll give a couple of guys some rest to prepare for the playoffs. Josh (David­son) needs some rest for his shoulder, and a couple of others as well. We’re going to focus on the power play and the penalty kill, and we need to improve our transition game as we head to the playoffs next week.”

The last home game of the regular season sees the Predators hosting the last place Tottenham Thunder, with a 3:30-1 record this Friday at 7:30 p.m. They travel to Tottenham for a Saturday night rematch, before wrapping up the season with a 3:30 p.m. game Sunday at Platts­ville.

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Meet the Predators

**Name:** Brett Lee  
**Jersey number:** 19  
**Age:** 17  
**Birthdate:** 07/07/2004  
**Hometown:** Millgrove, Ont.  
**Nickname:** Erft  
**Favourite hockey player:** Shea Weber  
**Favourite ‘cheat’ meal:** McDonald’s  
**Secret talent:** Working on cars and constructing things

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**Happenings**

**St. Davids and District Lions Club**

1462 York Rd., St. Davids (NOTL)

**Friday Fish Fry**

**JOIN US**

March 4th

4:30 to 7 p.m.

1 piece dinner $11
2 piece dinner $15

TAKEN OUT & EAT IN  
(proof of 2 vaccinations required)

STDAVIDS.CLUB @STDAVIDSCLUB on Facebook

PLACE YOUR COMING EVENT COMMUNITY HERE!

With or without a border, colour graphics optional. Include your Logo/PRICING starting at 50¢

Deadline: Monday 3 p.m.  Call Karen 905-641-5335  
or email: classified@notllocal.com

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**Worship**

Sunday, March 6th

10:00 a.m.  
Worship Gathering  
Online & In-Person  
(Registration Required)

Message:  
Kevin Bayne  
The Sealed (Rev. 7)

**notllocal.com**
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.

Sell your unwanted items or advertise your garage sale in our CLASSIFIEDS
To place your classified ad, contact Karen: classifieds@notllocal.com
Deadline: Mondays at 3 p.m.

PUZZLE ANSWERS
Coast expects ‘instant success’ for Giampa in U.S.

Continued from page 17

says, “We’re a close-knit fam-
ily, but I knew if I wanted to
take the next step in hockey it
was a choice I had to make.
I want to play pro hockey for
a living. I just went for it!”

Known as The Gunnery,
Frederick Gunn is a U.S.
High School Preparatory, or
Prep, co-educational board-
ing school founded in 1850
by Gunn, a well-known American abolitionist. Like
many prep schools, The
Gunnery is known for its
athletics, and for feeding elite
athletes into the U.S. college
ranks.

“I loved The Gunnery,”
the 18-year-old says. “I loved
the coaches, and the school
itself is a great school. I
learned a lot as a human, not
just as a hockey player. The
experience was a great one
for me.”

Matteo played 35 games in 2019-2020, amassing nine
goals and 10 assists on the season. When he returned
for his senior year the next fall, the pandemic was in full
force, meaning hockey was out of the question. And after
only a short time in his dor-
mitory, an outbreak of the
virus on the campus forced
him back to NOTL, where he
completed his year remotely.

“I did great, I had the best
marks I’ve ever had in my
life, even though it was all
on Zoom,” Giampa reflects.
“Parents were happy I
was home. I trained a lot
during COVID, and kept my
skills sharp. I shot pucks and
stick-handled in the base-
ment, skated on some ponds
with my friends. I had to be
creative.”

Without a chance to
show his skills in his se-
niuyear, Giampa knew he
would have to impress col-
lege scouts some other way.
When the opportunity to
join the Bonnyville Pontiacs
came up, he was chomping at
the bit.

“This year has been kind
like a new beginning for me,” says Giampa. “It’s a
high-level hockey here. Ev-
everyone is big and strong and
fast. It’s a competitive, tough,
nose-level league. It’s defi-
nitely added another compo-
nent to my game and helped
me develop as a player.”

Now weighing in at 180
pounds and standing 6’1”,
much taller than either of his
parents, Matteo has contrib-
uted 18 goals and 25 assists
in 33 games for the third
place Pontiacs, making him
the third-highest scorer on
the team. His wrist is fully
healed, though he has missed
a few games with some mi-
nor rib and hip injuries.

This past weekend he
scored a goal in both games
during a two-game road
trip to Whitecourt, against
whom the Pontiacs open the
playoffs at home this Friday
night.

Despite the cold tempera-
tures, he’s enjoying life out
west. Mom Bonnie has been
out for a couple of visits and
both she and Matteo love
his billet family, including
their three kids. Bonnyville
is a true hockey town, al-
most three hours northwest
of Edmonton, where the RJ
Lalonde Arena plays a cen-
tral role in the small commu-
nity.

He’s enjoyed barratstorm-
ing throughout the province
to town to town, and has
had the chance to spend a
day at the massive West Ed-
monton Mall with his team-
mates on a day off. He’s been
crossing the Peace Bridge
back home following an-
other season playing on the
ice. Coach Large and his staff
are getting a total gem in Matte-
vo with a very high ceiling. He
will become an instant suc-
cess to the Golden Griffins
program and school.”

Bonnie says she has been
delighted with the team’s
progress, impressed in her interactions
with Canisius head coach
Trevor Large.

“He’s Canadian,” she
raves. “He seems so authen-
tic. He seems to really have
the best interests of the play-
ers at heart. It’s so amazing.”

Interestingly, the Giam-
pas may soon be helping an-
other family member choose
a U.S. college. Sixteen-year-
old Madison, a Grade 11
student at Holy Cross, has
been playing this year for
the U22 AA Stoney Creek
Sabres of the Ontario Wom-
en’s Hockey League. By the
end of this school year she is
expected to be fielding offers
from a number of American
schools.

So, as Matteo will be
coming home following an-
other season playing on the
ice with Bonnyville, Mad-
ison may be heading out
to the next step in her own
hockey journey. Arc and
Bonny, though, will certainly
be crossing the Peace Bridge
regularly to cheer their son
on.