**Vaccination brings ‘new hope’ to 500 people**

Niagara Regional Native Centre hosts clinic for Indigenous people

Penny Coles  
The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s first vaccination clinic took place Monday, at the Niagara Regional Native Centre on the Waterfront. Just under 500 Indigenous people, aged 55 and older, received their first doses from the Public Health staff.

The clinic followed two days of vaccinations at the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre last week, which was so overwhelmed with requests for what was intended to be a day-long clinic, it was extended to a second day with extended hours, allowing more than 1,100 people to receive their vaccinations. With urban Indigenous people considered a vulnerable population and a priority for vaccinations, in Ontario and across Canada, Karl Dockstader, Niagara Regional Native Centre executive director, was happy to offer the facility to host a clinic. Native centre staff made appointments for about 500 people, based on the amount of vaccine they expected to receive. Not wanting to waste a single dose, and accounting for those who might not show up, the goal was to get as many people vaccinated as possible, says Dockstader.

Members of the Indigenous community are not on a level playing field when it comes to combating the impact of the pandemic, especially in the 55-plus age group, where there is a high rate of underlying medical conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and other health problems. Indigenous people are over-represented when it comes to medical problems, and underrepresented in terms of jobs and income, he says. Dockstader refers to society seeing medical disparities as something Indigenous people have brought on themselves, but points to their colonization history, including children being removed from their families for residential schools or adoption, as the deeply-rooted cause of several factors, including job and food insecurity, that lead to the increased risk of disease among their population.

While vaccination clinics are not something the native centre has experience...
Residents asked to act like we’re in lockdown

With health experts predicting a third wave of COVID-19 is inevitable — some saying it is already here — and as the provincial booking system for vaccinations is open and Niagara clinics are set to open, Dr. Mustafa Hirji is suggesting we act like we’re in a lockdown.

The number of variant cases is increasing rapidly, and there is little time “to turn this trajectory around,” said Niagara’s acting medical officer of health.

“I really do think we all need to continue to have the mindset that we had back a year ago when we had the first lockdown,” when we were all moti- 

vated to stay home and flatten the curve, he said. That’s the best way to control COVID cases without again closing down businesses, and might only be necessary for a couple more months, he added.

The concern across Ontario is the impact of rising variant cases on the hospital system. An increased need for hospital beds and reduced capacity in intensive care units would be a cause of a third wave and force the province into a third lockdown.

At his weekly Monday press briefing, Hirji said there have been 118 variant cases in Niagara, nearly 40 per cent of the region’s 265 active COVID cases, a sharp increase from March 1, when he reported 17 cases of variants.

He said the provincial vaccination portal, which opened Monday morning to those in the 80-plus age group, was working successfully. At least it hadn’t crashed, as some municipal booking systems had, although seniors were reporting long waits online and on the phone, and there were news reports of glitches that were quickly fixed.

Those born in 1941 or earlier can register either online at Ontario.ca/book-vaccine, or by phone at 1-888-999-6488. Residents of Ontario may register for any clinic in Niagara, Hirji said, or across the province, as long as they fall into the correct age group and have a health card.

Lord Mayor Betty Dese- 

ro said she took her moth- 

er to the Seymour Han- 

na vaccination clinic last week, after being offered an appointment by her doctor, and discovered it was “old home week.” She had to wait outside in her car, and saw several other residents from Ni- agara-on-the-Lake as they were leaving after being vaccinated.

Dave Hunter, his wife Dena Broeders and their neighbour Joan Wilkes, 94, were all at the clinic thanks to Dr. Karen Bertic, who had called to say she could get them a spot. Hunter said he isn’t overly concerned about COVID, but his wife was “extremely happy” to have the opportunity to be vacci- 

inated.

“This was a real weight off her shoulders,” he said. Their bubble has been small, but this may allow them to safely, when permitted, travel to see their grandson’s new home in Barrie, which they are anx- ious to do.

They were given an appointment for a second dose in three weeks’ time, he said.

Hirji explained that numbers, Niagara is doing well in its vaccination program, which was late getting off the ground com- pared to other health units in Ontario, due to a lack of vaccine.

There are about 28,000 people in Niagara aged 80 and over, 20,000 of those not in long-term care, one of the largest per capita senior populations in the province. More than half, about 15,000, have already received their vaccination or are booked for one, Hir- ji said.

“We’re making great progress. We’re a third of the way already done” as far as people either vacci- nated or waiting for an ap- pointment that had been made by noon Monday.

Vaccination clinic schedule

The first community clinic to vaccinate people aged 80 and older will be held in Niagara Falls on March 18.

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s first clinic at the community centre is scheduled for two days, March 31 and April 1, and then again on April 9, from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The schedule for the 11 Niagara community vacci- nation sites for the 80-plus age group was announced Friday, and goes from March 18 to April 10.

Clinics will operate on a rotating basis, and are expected to increase in frequency over the next few weeks. Once there is enough supply of vaccine available, clinics will be of- fered to local pharmacies and family doctors. Vac- 

inations are by appoint- ment only, and seniors in the 80-plus age group can register online or by tele- phone through the provin- 

cial registration portal.

To book a vacci- 


For a complete sched- 

ule of Niagara clinics from March 18 until April 10, visit https:// www.niagararegion. ca/health/covid-19/ clinic-schedule.aspx.
Clinic ran smoothly, with 500 people vaccinated

Continued from page 1

organizing, they recognize the significance of having their members vaccinated, and they have the space, and with most programs shut down, staff available to help organize it, he says.

With the exception of a computer glitch that delayed the start of the vaccinations Monday by about 15 minutes, the clinic ran smoothly, with a short wait for those lined up for their shots.

Most of the public health staff who came to NOTL for Monday’s vaccinations had also been at the Fort Erie clinics last week, and “were able to work some of the kinks out” in the two days at the Friendship Centre, says Dockstader, allowing the day in NOTL to go smoothly, finishing on time, right around 6 p.m. “We got lucky. The staff worked it all out in Fort Erie, and it was smooth sailing for us.”

He said the mood at the centre was very positive.

“Staff was definitely energized,” he says. “I was a little worried. We have our team and our culture, and public health has their team and their culture. I was worried about bringing the two together. But they have a great work culture. They were very professional and courteous. When we had our mini hiccup at the beginning, they didn’t flinch.”

He had a conversation with one of the public health staff, he says, who has been on the front line of health care for the last 12 months, but showed no signs of fatigue.

Instead, the feeling at the clinic was one of hope, that “this vaccine is the new hope for those who have been waiting.”

There was just enough vaccine left at the end of the day for some of the native centre staff, including Dockstader, to be vaccinated, he says.

The clinics were the nat-ural next step following a year of staying connected to the Indigenous community through the pandemic, with so many programs cancelled, including providing meals at the centre. Instead, says Dockstader, the money that would have been spent on those events was direct-ed to making sure people in need received food. There were also wellness checks made by phone, and many, especially the seniors, appreciated that native centre staff making the calls had the time to chat with them.

Although he was concerned about “vaccination hesitancy,” Dockstader says the Fort Erie clinics were also helpful in that respect, with a positive message reaching many in the community. That “helped increase the uptake in our own community,” he says.

Dockstader, who would also like to see the space used for a clinic to vaccinate offshore farm workers. “I see migrant workers getting vaccinated as a priority, and I’d be willing to host a clinic here for them. That’s something I’d like to see happen,” he says.

---

Little blue buggy creating quite a stir around town

Penny Coles
The Local

The little blue buggy you may have seen at boogies its way through the streets of the Old Town is getting a lot of attention these days. It belongs to Grace Tomlinson, who lives in the two townhouses at the corner of Mary and Naussau Streets, and works at the Oban Inn.

She told her husband she doesn’t need a car, but wanted something to get her back and forth to work, to do her grocery shopping and to pick up mail at the post office, she says.

Last November, he presented her with the perfect birthday gift, which she calls a Boogie Buggie.

Made by a Toronto company called Daymak, it is powered by a solar panel that continuously charges a lithium ion battery.

It is really a covered scooter — it is considered a scooter as far as rules of the road — but with the luxury of a built-in air conditioner and heater.

And yes, says Tomlin-son, “it even has a radio”!

Her seat has a seatbelt, and there is enough room behind her for another person, she says, although it’s advertised as cargo space.

Those who have seen it will know it has a large sign on the front saying Oban Inn, which is where she’s usually headed when she leaves home. Asked what she does at the Oban, she answers, “almost everything.”

She says she has many people stop to chat about her Boomerbuggy, the perfect little vehicle for buzzing around close to home. It goes 12 kilometres an hour, just fast enough, “as long as you get off the road so drivers behind you don’t get an-gry,” she says.

“Everybody asks about it. Everybody wants to know about it.”

It’s garnered so much positive attention her husband is thinking of starting a Boomerbuggy business, which she drives to get around the Old Town. (Photo supplied)

---

Chris Kagesheongai welcomes people, including Richard, to the Niagara Regional Native Centre

Helen Sheppard receives the first vaccination of the day at the Niagara Regional Native Centre from Rosemary Bagnulo of Public Health. (Penny Coles)

Grace Tomlinson says she is always being asked about her covered scooter, called a Boomerbuggy, which she drives to get around the Old Town.

---

WE’re hiring spectacular real estate agents.

NEW LOCATION
Right At Home Realty
Team Office in Old Town
Niagara-on-the-Lake
Join the largest independent Brokerage in Canada!
905-468-8777
angelika.zammit@gmail.com

Robert Bradley
Painting in Niagara-on-the-Lake for more than 40 years.
905.380.0298
paintersnotl@gmail.com

THE NOTL LOCAL
March 17, 2021
notllocal.com
Front Page 3
Misinformation about coyotes lead to incorrect labels

Owen Bjorgan Special to The Local

Lately, I’ve noticed some back and forth communications about coyotes online. This is a species that can’t stick up for itself or voice its own thoughts, so that’s what I am here to do from both an ecological and cultural point of view.

Unfortunately, misinformation can lead to unfair labels with serious consequences. This is a lesson of life, but also for our local coyotes.

Last nights ago, I was sleeping in my tent at -8° on top of the Niagara Escarpment. I relished the opportunity to sleep by coyotes. They are just online comments, but they are woven out of real thoughts of real people. And thoughts can be contagious, too. Coyotes deserve a role in the ecosystem as the new "top regulator" in town, not as a villain or pest.

Ten seconds later, others would join in. The familiar NOTL chorus of yipping, yapping, barking, presumably arguing, and singing ensues. It is a soundtrack to my sweet escape, my childhood, and a hint of wildness that these canids bring to our growing human community.

The song comes to an abrupt end, and the silence of the winter night takes over again. I lie in the tent, and briefly find myself contemplating the comments I have seen online about these coyotes.

As southern Ontario, NOTL included, continued to chop into our remaining habitat coverage, we saw coyotes successfully adapting to farms and more urban environments. These are intelligent, social canids, remember. When our hometown has less than 10% tree coverage remaining, combined with increased human habitation and an animal who has no more natural predators, we might have to get used to hearing it more.

In the time I wrote this and then got it to The Local, we had Four Mile Creek rerouted in a part of St. Davids with tree loss, and additionally, a quick logging session has occurred at three spots around the Glendale/York Road area. And some of us wonder why we see more coyotes.

In February 2020, there was a disturbing surprise to our town when we learned that several coyote carcasses had been dumped over the bank of the Niagara River. Extravagated by means of poison, hunting, or perhaps both, it was clearly a human intention to rid a local population.

We may never know the reasons or the culprit behind this senseless act, but what we know it comes from a place of misunderstanding. Were they concerned about coyotes creeping up on farm animals? It's really quite rare, and with adequate fencing (which most farm animals should have), coyotes should almost never make a visit. Were they perhaps nervous about letting their small dog out into a big backyard? Life in the country means you are a part of nature. It's this very nature — it’s coyotes, bees, blossoms, and worms that make the very soil we love so much work. Besides, it’s normally in coyotes' nature to seek out eastern cottontails, mole, vole, and field mice. Oh, and your delicious garbage, should it be left out in a place where a forest once stood years ago.

What caught my attention the most in this divisid comment section was the labelling of coyotes as a public safety issue, which is a gross exaggeration in consideration of these crazy times. I look at the thousands of cumulative hours I have spent in Niagara's outdoors. How many negative coyote encounters have I experienced? Zero. And I've seen dozens upon dozens. How many domestic dogs have I had negative, physical encounters with on our local trails and backroads? I can probably count on two hands. These statistics would likely apply to many others I'm sure, too. Yet, I still love dogs.

I wrote this to combat misinformation about our local canids, the coyotes. Our town hockey team deserves a more positive image in their dwindling landscape — a landscape that serves us as a community. I hope the day when we don't hear coyotes never comes, as then, it would feel like NOTL had lost its last touch of wildness.

During a recent winter campus location, Owen Bjorgan says he was harmlessly snarled to sleep by coyotes. (Owen Bjorgan)

Hollow trees are a safe spot for coyote pups to call home. (Photo supplied)
No matter where you are, we have the same anxieties and worries about our kids, our families, our friends, our society and our future.

Dr. Robin Williams

Dr. Robin Williams (Photo supplied)
It’s interesting to read about our thoughts and fears of this time last year, and realize how much the details have changed, while the emotions have not. We were listening to the early conversations about COVID-19, those who were doubters versus those who were predicting doom and gloom. We were getting mixed messages then, although there was one constant from the beginning: wash our hands. Social distancing was a new phrase, as was “unprecedented.” Being asked to avoid crowds and refrain from travel was making it all seem too real.

We’ve learned so much about the science of the disease, but we still get mixed messages from various professional bodies and different provinces across the country. A year ago, we were learning about contact tracing and herd immunity. Now we’re talking in waves, and we’re being asked to do the best we can to protect us.

The talk has turned to vaccinations and how they are rolling out, what is safe and what isn’t, types of vaccine, age groups, who gets what when. How many people have already received theirs, and when we will get ours, which is pretty amazing in just a year. How can we be given the opportunity, but it seems always in another area, not ours. Other people are being protected, but not us.

Yet Dr. Mustafa Hirji, our acting medical officer of health, assures us Niagara is doing well with its vaccination numbers.

It’s the confusion, the mixed messages that seem to be breeding dissatisfaction and the feeling that everyone else in the country is further along with their vaccination program than we are. Slightly different approaches across the province and even region, different age groups, different locations and how different vaccines make it all so difficult to track.

Some people are frustrated about having to wait, but our turns are all coming. Before we know it, the sun will be shining, we’ll be outside enjoying time with family and friends and we’ll all have had at least one shot, if we want it.

It’s really good to see those who need protection the most receiving their vaccinations, or at least their appointments, even if it’s only the beginning of what it’s to come.

It was great to feel the excitement, the enthusiasm at the vaccination clinic in Port Colborne organized by Pohlin Health and the Niagara Regional

It was great to feel the excitement, the enthusiasm at the vaccination clinic in Port Colborne organized by Pohlin Health and the Niagara Regional

gional Centre, and we’ll be experiencing the same at the community centre soon.

Local drugstores are ready to go with vaccinations, and primary health care clinics will be vaccinating patients, if they wish to participate. They are waiting to get the call, to get their turn, as is the region, so clinics can be ramped up if it should happen soon.

And in the meantime, we’re being asked by Dr. Hirji to act like we’re still in lockdown. That’s tough for having stores, restaurants and other businesses open, the way to avoid actually being in lockdown, instead of pretending.

Just another couple of months, Dr. Hirji says. For kids who don’t get to play with their friends at school, and those who are vaccinated or not, and grandparents who just want to hug their grand-children, a couple of months is a long time. And even more so for those living alone, those feeling lonely and isolated, those dealing with mental health issues and not getting the help they need.

But if we’re good, if this pandemic lockdown works at least until we have more people vaccinated, it will be over. And if we think it’s too hard, too much, or being too strict, we can always adjust. So let’s do it, let’s practise our Oscar-winning performances, with a little help from our friends. I know we can, we must, and I do hope we can see a glimmer of hope some day and hope for a different message.

— we know how exhausting it has been for you all so difficult to track.

Let me close by saying thank you to all of you at the Lion’s Club of Virgil, Queenston, Glenendale, St. Davids or the Old Town itself, everyone’s life has been affected by this virus. This year, 2021, began with even more frustrations as we found out our life-saving Moderna vaccines were diverted away from Niagara and sent elsewhere in the country. To those who have emailed, called or flagged me down, I want to say this: I heard your concerns loud and clear, and am doing everything to elevate them to the highest level. Given Niagara has the third highest population of seniors in Canada, it was unacceptable to us that even one dose of our vaccines were diverted. I took your concerns to Premier Doug Ford and ultimately to General Rick Hiller, directly. I’ve received a positive response.

You can be sure that as Phase 2 of the vacci- nation process begins this week, Niagara will be getting more doses. I am working on securing additional dosages to ensure that we do not become a hot spot for further spread. As Niagara, we are living in a world where Niagara Region Public Health is set up to vaccinate clinics at the community centre, and hopefully soon through our local pharmacies, we can say the end of this pandemic is in sight. I am proud that we were able to expand the crit- teria of Phase 2 to include so many essential workers once our vulnerable seniors are safe. But it is not over yet. We are still encouraging residents to wear their masks, to distance and to stay home when possible for just a little while longer. If we act now, we can avoid further spread.

Of course as many of you know, despite this good news, I still vehemently be- lieve the overall speed of this vaccine rollout is not going fast enough and the actions by our Premier to address the economic crisis have fallen short.

I remain committed to raising my voice every single day to say that Ontario should not fall behind any single other province when it comes to vaccina- tion — especially for our se- niors. It is unacceptable that other provinces are getting vaccines to residents faster than Ontario, given how many months Ford has had to prepare for this. If there are vaccines available in this province they should not sit in a fridge and be sent out to local health teams immedi- ately. Those clinics should be run for as many hours as nec- essary to get those shots into arms. One of the reasons we are vaccinating so many is because we are not at the whim of foreign private companies and we have supported the local pro- cess to bring more of these life-saving dosages.

Beyond that, evidence is overwhelming showing that a major cause of com- munity spread is workers who are going to and from work.

Too many workers are being forced to face the agonizing decision of keeping food on their tables or possibly going to work with symptoms. Now
**Wellness committee provides vaccination update**

In a continued effort to provide timely and relevant information to Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, below is a summary of the most recent information currently available about the distribution of vaccines in Niagara-on-the-Lake and throughout the Niagara Region. These updates are also published on the town’s website (notlocal.com/COVID-19).

**Vaccination clinics have been posted in the local post offices and other frequently visited locations throughout the community.** As of Monday, March 15, all residents 80 years of age and older (born in 1941 or earlier) have been able to book their own vaccination appointment through the provincial appointment booking system available online at ontario.ca/bookvaccine or over the phone (1-888-999-6488). To book an appointment, individuals need to have a green health card (OHIP) card as both numbers on the front and back of the card are required. Expected cards will be accepted.

Individuals who still have a red and white health card, or who require assistance with booking, can call the Provincial Vaccine Information Line number at 1-866-721-2219 to book an appointment at any clinic across Niagara and can bring an essential caregiver with them to their appointment. It is important to note that wait times are expected for the provincial appointment system, both online and by phone. The phone line may be busy. If residents experience a busy signal, they should be encouraged to try again. Now that the provincial booking system is operation al, all persons in the 80+ age group must use it to make their appointments. If you know a NOTL resident who is eligible for their vaccination and may require help in booking their appointment, please reach out to them to offer your assistance. Note that Niagara Health System and other designated organizations are continuing to arrange for vaccinations for other Phase 1 high priority groups.

The first clinics in Niagara-on-the-Lake are scheduled for Wednesday, March 31, Thursday, April 1 and Friday, April 9 at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre located at 14 An derson Lane from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day. Niagara Public Health has stated that “clinics will operate on a rotating basis and will increase in frequency over the next few weeks. The clinics will be offered in addition to local pharmacies and family doctors who may also provide the vaccine once supply is made available.” For more detailed information, please visit niagararegion.ca/news. When the vaccinations are completed for the Phase 1 high priority group, residents in the Phase 2 groups will be able to schedule and receive their vaccinations. These groups include older adults, beginning with those 79 years of age and decreasing in five-year increments, and other priority groups.

In early March, Niagara Public Health announced that they were looking for a wide range of volunteers to work in the vaccination clinic. Due to an overwhelming response, the process for applications was closed on March 10. This is gratifying news, indicating the willingness of community members throughout the region to help in this critical effort.

As of March 12, over 37,000 doses of vaccines have been administered to residents throughout the region. To get the most up-to-date statistics on the progress of vaccination delivery in our region, please visit both the Niagara Region website, as noted above, and the Niagara Health System website at www.niagararegion.ca/site/vaccination-clinic. The Niagara Health System website reports the vaccination process for patients 80-plus years old in one of their hospital’s complex care patients in hospital and those at home who are supported by Home and Community Care providers and other essential health care workers.

As we’ve reached the first anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic and we move closer to a return to normalcy, it is important for everyone to remain calm and patient. It is the intention that every Niagara-on-the-Lake resident who wishes to receive COVID-19 vaccination will not be forgotten or left behind. The goal of the town and the Community Wellness Committee is to deliver timely information about COVID-19 vaccines in Niagara-on-the-Lake to everyone as soon as possible.

What you can do now: Continue to follow all COVID-19 pandemic and continues and until vaccines are completed, we must all continue to

**Local LETTERS**

**Plant trees – they perform miracles**

Trees have been in the local news recently. The shade, habitat and beauty appeal to us, and we forget the necessity of trees. They are essential weapons in our war against climate change. Climate change is caused by human activity, with the continuous release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Government and citizens work to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide. We need improvements to the framework surrounding new development in our rural areas so not just agriculture is protected, but our residents as well. Thank you to all of the councillors that gave fair consideration to our concerns and didn’t back down.

Marion Hassebrook NOTL

We are hiring for the May to October season (three and five day a week positions available). If you are customer-service-oriented, enthusiastic about wine and enjoy working in a fast-paced environment, email your resume to: hospitality@strewnwinery.com

**Local LETTERS**

**Council lauded for standing up for residents’ rights**

In the article entitled Coun cillors discuss planning appeals and legal costs to town (The Local, March 10), Penny Coles shines a light on two different perspectives among town councillors when it comes to decisions which may lead to an appeal to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) and ensuing legal costs. There have been many situations where the town has had to defend itself at the LPAT, but will speak to the case involving 963 Queenston Rd. that Councillor Erwin Wiens refers to in this article. Our town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is very unique in that we have many smaller agricultural properties inter-spersed with residential properties. The proliferation of secondary uses on farm properties has led to more conflicts with neighbouring residents. As a neighbour of 963 Queenston Rd., I have been involved with the situation from the beginning. I have attended all LPAT hearings. At these hearings there are rules and plans regulating development from every level of government that are taken into account. What I have discovered is that residents do not have the same protection that the owners deserve equal protection.

So what do we do? After putting in all the time and effort to work through the town’s bylaw amendment process, we do not get what is needed. The last minute because someone threatened to go to the LPAT. Do we hand over the keys and walk away because somebody forced to close a loophole? No! The town needs to stand up for its residents by providing a strong, effective team to represent us at these hearings. There is something wrong with a system that does not allow the substantial efforts by a local council to carry any weight. It is not a system that knows its community better than any other level of government. I understand Council’s frustrations. Believe me, I am even more frustrat ed, but we were not wrong to pursue this and I agree with Councillor Gary Burroughs view that “we should never make a decision because we are afraid of losing.” Of course we would rath er have had local laws, but this is on the developers as well who are constantly pushing the envelope. It is sad that the tribunal system doesn’t respect council’s efforts or a resident’s right to the peaceful enjoyment of their own property. We need improvements to the framework surrounding new development in our rural areas so not just agriculture is protected, but our residents as well. Thank you to all of the councillors that gave fair consideration to our concerns and didn’t back down.

Cynthia Rand NOTL

When when we wash our hands and when we wash our hands, we get rid of germs. We get rid of germs, we get rid of germs. And...
Notice of Virtual Public Information Centre #1
Municipal Class Environmental Assessment for York Road and Four Mile Creek Road Intersection Improvements, St. Davids, Ontario

Niagara Region is undertaking a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) to address and improve conditions for all modes of transportation at the intersection of Regional Road 81 (York Road) and Regional Road 100 (Four Mile Creek Road), St. Davids. The MCEA schedule will be determined when the study team confirms the potential cost and environmental impact of the alternative solutions.

The first Public Information Centre will be held in an online format. As part of this event, the Study Team will deliver an online presentation followed by a Q&A on March 25, 2021 from 6 - 8 p.m. Information about the Online Public Information Centre #1 will be available on the project webpage starting March 25, 2021, and comments will be welcomed through one of the project managers below, until April 8, 2021: niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-100

If you would like to receive future notices via email, or if you have any questions or comments, please contact one of the project managers identified below:

Maged Elmadhoon, M.Eng., P.Eng. Manager, Transportation Planning Niagara Region 905-980-6000, ext. 3583 Maged.ElMadhoon@niagararegion.ca

Phil Weber, M.Eng., P.Eng. Senior Project Manager CIMA+ 905-695-1005, ext. 6732 Phil.Weber@cima.ca

Personal information collected or submitted in writing at public meetings will be collected, used and disclosed by members of Regional Council and Regional staff in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). The written submissions including names, contact information and reports of the public meeting will be made available. Questions should be referred to the Privacy Office at 905-980-6000 ext. 3357 or FOI@niagararegion.ca.

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in meetings or events, please let us know in advance so that arrangements can be made in a timely manner. Please contact the Accessibility Advisory Coordinator at 905-980-6000 ext. 3252 or accessibility@niagararegion.ca.

This notice was first issued on March 10, 2021

Row your boat!

Former Olympic swimmer, medal winner and author Elaine Tanner, anxious to get back on a rowing machine, was relieved to hear the community centre fitness centre is now open. It can accommodate 10 people at a time, with one-hour reservation time blocks available. Reservations can be made one day in advance, and only by phone at this time at 289-696-1894. The track has been moved down to the auditorium, and will be unavailable on days the vaccination clinic opens, at this point, March 31, April 1 and April 9. The community centre hours are Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Photo supplied)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Have your say on Regional incentive programs

Did you know that Niagara Region offers incentive programs to help businesses create jobs, build affordable housing, protect our environment and improve our communities?

These programs are an important part of growing Niagara’s economy, but we need to make sure they’re hitting the mark. We’re reviewing these programs right now, and we want your input. Visit niagararegion.ca and search “incentive review” to give us your feedback through a brief online survey, and register to attend a short virtual information session.

Virtual Information Session

Wednesday, March 24 – 6:30 p.m.

Pre-registration online is required

The session will be hosted using Zoom and can be accessed through your smartphone, tablet, computer, or by phone through teleconference. Register online at niagararegion.ca or call 905-980-6000 ext. 3357.

If you are unable to attend, you can also contact the project team by calling 905-980-6000 ext. 3357.

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in meetings or events, contact the Niagara Region’s Accessibility Coordinator at 905-685-4225 ext. 3252 or accessibility@niagararegion.ca

Personal information collected or submitted in writing at public meetings will be collected, used and disclosed by members of Regional Council and Regional staff in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). The written submissions including names, contact information and reports of the public meeting will be made available. Questions should be referred to the Privacy Office at 905-980-6000 ext. 3357 or FOI@niagararegion.ca.
MP reflects on important women in his life

by our Deputy Leader, Can-
be displayed every week
have strong leadership
servative caucus in Ottawa,
my professional career.
many strong and hard-work-
ate to be inspired by so
society.
portunity throughout our
promoting equality of op-
that remains to be done in
upon the continued work
achieved, but to also reflect
mendous accomplishments
was an opportunity for us to
International Women's Day.
First celebrated in 1911,
Monday, March 8 was In-
ternational Women’s Day.

For instance, in Canada’s
demic as a nurse with Niaga-
on the front lines of this pan-
demic, one year ago, this
sector was immediately shut-
down. These advisors had even
back from as early as 2019.
Regardless, independent
travel advisors had no
choice but to cancel booked trips, and
re-
scheduling them in the future, despite
great uncertainty about when life would return
to normal. 

As I reflect on the signif-
ificance of International
Women’s Day, I also wanted
to provide my thanks for the
Hard-working women
have contributed and
sacrifice so much in their
lives, to make our world a
greater place.

Regardless, independent
travel advisors had no
choice but to cancel booked trips, and
re-
scheduling them in the future, despite
great uncertainty about when life would return
to normal. 

As I reflect on the signif-
ificance of International
Women’s Day, I also wanted
to provide my thanks for the
Hard-working women
have contributed and
sacrifice so much in their
lives, to make our world a
greater place.

Regardless, independent
travel advisors had no
choice but to cancel booked trips, and
re-
scheduling them in the future, despite
great uncertainty about when life would return
to normal. 

As I reflect on the signif-
ificance of International
Women’s Day, I also wanted
to provide my thanks for the
Hard-working women
have contributed and
sacrifice so much in their
lives, to make our world a
greater place.

Regardless, independent
travel advisors had no
choice but to cancel booked trips, and
re-
scheduling them in the future, despite
great uncertainty about when life would return
to normal. 

As I reflect on the signif-
ificance of International
Women’s Day, I also wanted
to provide my thanks for the
Hard-working women
have contributed and
sacrifice so much in their
lives, to make our world a
greater place.

Regardless, independent
travel advisors had no
choice but to cancel booked trips, and
re-
scheduling them in the future, despite
great uncertainty about when life would return
to normal. 

As I reflect on the signif-
ificance of International
Women’s Day, I also wanted
to provide my thanks for the
Hard-working women
have contributed and
sacrifice so much in their
lives, to make our world a
greater place.

Regardless, independent
travel advisors had no
choice but to cancel booked trips, and
re-
scheduling them in the future, despite
great uncertainty about when life would return
to normal. 

As I reflect on the signif-
ificance of International
Women’s Day, I also wanted
to provide my thanks for the
Hard-working women
have contributed and
sacrifice so much in their
lives, to make our world a
greater place.
This photo shows the distinct bedding layers of the prized Queenston limestone, says Frank Rapiocco, who will give next week’s lecture. He explains the distinct horizontal lines are natural seams in the limestone rock where they split apart to separate the blocks off the wall. The wood hut is a steam engine that operates the derrick crane to lift the blocks off the wall and onto a horse and carriage trailer, or onto rail cars. (Courtesy of the NOTL Museum)

Frank Racioppo, the co-owner of the Queenston Quarry Reclamation Project, will talk about the past and future plans of the quarry. (Photo supplied)

This photo shows the distinct bedding layers of the prized Queenston limestone, says Frank Rapicoppo, who will give next week’s lecture. He explains the distinct horizontal lines are natural seams in the limestone rock where they split apart to separate the blocks off the wall. The wood hut is a steam engine that operates the derrick crane to lift the blocks off the wall and onto a horse and carriage trailer, or onto rail cars. (Courtesy of the NOTL Museum)

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum’s virtual lecture on the Queenston Quarry, given by Frank Rapiocco, co-owner of the quarry reclamation project, promises to “unlock the secrets of this magnificent site overlooking the Niagara Peninsula, where ancient geological forces and retreating glaciers gave rise to the extraordinary biosphere of the Niagara Escarpment,” says Barbara Worby.

Worby, who looks after visitor and member services for the museum, explains the rehabilitation of the quarry provides a “unique parallel into the history and evolution of Upper Canada.”

The lands fell under the auspices of the 1764 Treaty of Niagara, which reserved land along the Niagara River for military use, “but an influx of Loyalists gradually saw the growth of early settlements, and eventually an agricultural plan was established, which included the quarry site,” she says.

The Queenston Quarry is home to natural, geological, and cultural resources that provide a rich historical significance to the land. Rapioppo will present an in-depth look at this diversity and productivity, as well as its indigenous and settler history, says Worby.

From the day in 1837 when stonemason John Brown removed the first large cut stones from the quarry, and railroads criss-crossed the Niagara Escarpment, this site has symbolized growth, productivity, and industrial development. Queenston stone has been prized by masons, builders and architects for some of Canada’s most important and monumental buildings across Canada, Worby explains, and Rapioppo will highlight the journey of this historic limestone.

“The quarry’s next era is designed to capture and embrace its natural and cultural richness,” said Rapioppo, a real estate lawyer and founder of the Queenston Quarry Reclamation project. “We are creating a sense of place that is a totally unique residential and recreational experience, and will always honour its history, and its beauty.”

Part of a series of virtual lectures, the Queenston Quarry talk will be online March 24 at 11 a.m. Registration is required at www.nhsm.ca/events. For more information email aklassen@nhsm.ca.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum offers virtual Queenston Quarry history lecture
continued from page 1

Since 1980 raised his family in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He now lives in St. Catharines, and owns several properties in Niagara Falls. His daughter Jessica, who lives in St. David’s, has taken over control of the company.

Gale says he wants to represent the riding at the provincial level to ensure Niagara isn’t left behind during the economic recovery from the pandemic, which has crippled small businesses and the tourism industry.

“I want to be there to help make business decisions on the table and costs and services to the people. Niagara deserves someone who is a strong advocate for the region, and can bring their concerns directly to the Premier,” he says.

“I think Doug Ford has done a great job during this pandemic, and I like that he talks like the everyday person. He’s honest, and is working tirelessly to keep us safe.”

Economic recovery will be a top priority, and tourism is the industry hardest hit, says Gale.

“We need a representative at Queen’s Park that has tourism experience, and I believe my tenure on the board of the Niagara Parks Commission is exactly what I need to accomplish there speaks to my experience.”

He is also running for his children and grandchildren, and what the future holds for them. “I want to make sure that everything I can make to Niagara a better place for not only their generation, but their grandchildren.”

Gale says he has spent his life working for Niagara, first in public service as a police officer, then as an entrepreneur for 35 years, with businesses covering NOTL, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie, and most recently as a regional councillor.

“His keen ownership in many properties throughout our riding, and I truly care that our taxes are controlled. I should, because I pay a lot of them.”

Niagara has the best people in the world, he adds, “and I care very deeply about what happens here.”

Gale lived in Niagara-on-the-Lake for 38 years, “and I have a ton of respect for everyone there. It is a beautiful, quaint town with some of the best hospitality in the world. I have both family and friends living in all areas, NOTL, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie. I care about what happens to them, and all the people of these areas,” he says.

“I want to make sure that the hospitality, wine, construction and small business sectors are heard and without competing proposals. The attention on the issue forced the commission to call for bids for the ferry service in the Niagara River, which led to Hornblower Canada replacing the Maid of the Mist as the boat-tour operator on the Canadian side of the river, saving provincial taxpayers up to $300 million, says Gale.

He’s also faced some battles when the facts didn’t support his position, he says, and when that happens, “I move on. But I’ve been right more often than not.”

The year he has been a baseball and hockey coach, a Big Brother, and spearheaded the Gale family’s involvement in many volunteer and philanthropic endeavours to benefit the community, including: the Gale Centre in Niagara Falls. He formed and funded the Bob Gale Recreation Fund, organized Ten Men in a Tent in 2009 and 2010 to benefit Project SHARE, and was president of the Boys and Girls Club, where he was made an honorary board member.

Regional Coun. Bob Gale will represent the Conservatives in the next provincial election. (Photo supplied)

Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie Special to The Local

The full week of Auchterlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL Local, and on the website www.auchterlonieonastrology.ca.

Saturday, March 20: Happy birthday to all Ar- tes. And Happy New Year to everyone. On March 20, 2020, Sun entered Ar- tes, which meant that we have the official start of the astrological year. If 2021 had a birth chart, it would be cast for March 20. Last year the March equinox chart had Sun conjunct Chiron, and a tense Capricorn stellium. This year, the Sun is closely conjunct Neptunus and has a much more optimistic vibe. Yes, there is still healing work to be done, but at least now we have an ally. Life doesn’t have to be that hard. Today, number 4 celebrates number 73. Bobby Orr, the greatest defence man in NHL history, was born March 20, 1948, in Parry Sound. Sunday, March 21: Ve- nus enters Aries, hand in hand with the Sun, getting ready for a total rebirth of the heart. There is a beauty and innocence to Venus in the first sign of the zodiac. Her heart is pure, and she instinctively knows what she wants. It was March 21, 1973, that Frank Ma- hovlich became the fifth player in NHL history to score 500 goals. He was playing for the Montreal Canadiens.

Tuesday, March 23: Mercury (at 11 degrees Pisces) is square Mars (at 11 degrees Gemini). Mer- cury-Mars squares have a reputation of being confrontational, however Gemini and Pisces are mutable, and rather compromising signs. If anything, Mercury square Mars is about “let’s sort things out” rather than having arguments for the sake of having arguments. Tuesday, former Buffalo Sabre and Leaf goaltender, Daren Pappara, celebrates birthday number 56.

Next time, a couple of rare events make things better. Until then, shine on!

We are thrilled to welcome Jane Elloft to our Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty family! Born and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Jane is now part of the Elliot team – a 3 member seasoned team serving clients through strong market knowledge and a combined 50 years of experience. Jane returned to Niagara in 2005 to raise her children Madison & Ben Madison after spending 10 years living in the heart of downtown Toronto. She brings with her a Bachelor of Commerce Degree, an extensive career as Director of Publicity/Promotions RSVP Canada - The Walt Disney Co., as well as 15 years of sales and business entrepreneurial experience. Jane’s background ensures she has the experience, confidence, and necessary negotiating and problem-solving skills to successfully represent you. Her love and knowledge of the Niagara Region, along with her care and patience, will ensure that you are represented by someone who will help you find exactly what you are looking for. She is a member of the Niagara Board of Trade, Niagara Glen Community Association and a Member of the Niagara County Women’s Business Network.

Jane Elloft Sales Representative 905-486-3009 905-988-8776 Sales Office: 905, 463, 3205 email: jane@notlrealty.com www.notlrealty.com

Dr. Kevin Clark and Dr. Rebecca Zabek-Clark, Dentists and their registered Dental Hygiene Team, 369 MARY STREET NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE www.niagarodontal.ca

We are thrilled to welcome Jane Elloft to our Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty family! Born and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Jane is now part of the Elliot team – a 3 member seasoned team serving clients through strong market knowledge and a combined 50 years of experience. Jane returned to Niagara in 2015 to raise her children. She now lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake with her husband and two children. Jane is passionate about Niagara and has a deep understanding of the real estate market. She brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the team, having worked in the real estate industry for over 10 years. Jane’s expertise in marketing, negotiation, and client communication make her an invaluable asset to the team. Her attention to detail and commitment to exceeding client expectations ensure that every transaction is handled with care and efficiency. Whether it’s finding the perfect property for a buyer or helping a seller achieve their goals, Jane is dedicated to providing exceptional service. Her genuine approach and professional demeanor make her a valuable member of the Elliot team. Welcome Jane Elloft to Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty! 
Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Representing the Niagra Falls riding at the third annual Daughters of the Vote conference last week has left Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Carrie Robinson inspired and energized.

The day-long event wrapped up on International Women's Day last Monday, appropriate for a virtual gathering of 338 young women and gender-diverse youth from all 338 ridings across the country. From her student apartment in Sherbrooke, Quebec, Robinson was able to participate and work with politically-minded college-age students across Canada.

In her third year at Bishop's University, Robinson is taking a double major in international studies and political science, with a minor in world religion. As the communications director of the university's Policy and International Studies Association (PISA), Robinson saw Daughters of the Vote as a perfect opportunity for her to learn more about the political process and to network with women who are making change.

"It's the third year Equal Voice, a multi-partisan organization dedicated to educating more women to political office, has run the program. The objective is to expose participants to Canadian political institutions and the women and men serving in them. The hope is to inspire young women to participate in the political sphere, and take action in their local communities in the years and decades to come.

Robinson, like all the other delegates, had to apply to represent her local riding. In her application, she focused on two issues she felt were not only front and centre locally but also impacted personally. "The first was the recovery of the tourism industry," she says. "Our town of Niagara-on-the-Lake was especially affected by it this year. My family's business (Oh Canada Eh?) was affected by it, and I didn't find employment last summer because the whole tourism sector was shut down."

"Backlash against the visit to the riders who did actually come to NOTL in 2020 fueled her second focus. "Niagara Falls has become so increasingly diverse," she begins. "This summer, with all the people from the GTA coming down instead of American and international tourists, I was able to have a chance to talk to women who were treated, and how people looked at them. I really wanted to discuss with other delegates about being allies to Muslim women and others."

"What I study is the way politics and religion interact," Robinson continues. "I was really hoping to talk to other delegates to get their insight on multiculturalism, and the fact that when people are educated about other religions, they not only tolerate it but can see how beautiful all these cultures and religions are."

Both issues fit in well with her studies at Bishop's. Robinson expresses interest in pursuing one of two future career possibilities upon graduation. One would involve her working in cultural preservation internationally for a non-governmental agency (NGO), such as UNESCO. The other option would see her being involved in domestic politics, running a campaign or perhaps putting her name forward as a candidate herself.

Daughters of the Vote featured a number of sessions that linked strongly to Carrie's educational focus. Workshops on provincial, territorial and municipal policies were featured. Panels focused on topics such as Canada's feminist foreign policy, reconciliation, employment in politics, inclusiveness, the realities of rural politics and engagement from the LGBTIQ2S perspective. Each day ended with a chance for the delegates to discuss and reflect upon their experiences, and the final day wrapped up with a virtual House of Commons session.

"I was really inspired by the strength and resilience she has to have to have run and won as an independent," says Robinson. "She spoke about how partisan politics, as important as it is, forces you to believe in x, y, and z, while as an independent, she can really speak on what she believes."

Jean Augustine was the other guest who made a mark on Robinson. In 1993, Augustine, an immigrant from Grenada, became the first African-Canadian woman to be elected to Parliament. She won four consecutive elections in the riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore before leaving politics in 2006.

"I had never heard of her before," Robinson admits. "Her energy was amazing. The way she presented her story, in a more casual tone, but very energetic. She spoke about how the structures of government were not set up for women. When she first got to the House of Commons there were no female washrooms. The microphones weren't adjustable to her height."

"Robinson continues, "as the only black woman she had such a unique perspective, and she felt an obligation to speak for so many people. She didn't go to school for political science, she was a teacher and a principal. She spoke about how politics is for everyone, you just have to be the right person, be driven and want to do it."

"Being driven and interested in politics seem to have come naturally to her. She speaks fondly of the many political conversations she has had over the years with her parents, Anne and Ross Robinson, as well as her former step-father, Art Frank and her brother Scott. She suggests that it's just the way she was brought up.

Looking to the future, Carrie hopes to get involved in local politics this summer when she is back home from Sherbrooke. As well, if a federal election is called, she has plans to be very involved, though she can't give specifics yet.

In the meantime, she will continue to be a key member of the PISA group at Bishop's, and she will be working for a professor on an alumni involvement project. As well, Robinson will represent the school as part of their model United Nations delegation at a virtual simulation in New York City. All experiences that could result in a deeper commitment to her town, province and country in the future.

"I was inspired by Carrie Robinson, a student at Bishop's University in Sherbrooke, Que., is "inspired and energized" after a four-day conference on women in politics. (Photo supplied)
Penny Coles
The Local

It’s patio season — almost — and local restaurant owners are keeping their fingers crossed for some warm weather this weekend.

The town gave those who received patio permits last year permission to open last weekend, although the decision won’t be officially approved by council until next week.

The weather was looking like it might be okay, and with sunshine expected, it seemed a good opportunity to extend dining restrictions from the 10 people allowed inside to an extra 25 outdoors.

Jovie Joki, owner of the Irish Harp on King Street, said there were some hardy people enjoying the sunshine on the restaurant patio last weekend, for which she obtained a permit last year.

Even if it’s cool, “some people feel safer outside,” she said.

She was hoping the weather would make it an attractive option for St. Patrick’s Day, with the restaurant a popular choice for locals to celebrate the occasion.

Maria Mavridis was also relieved to be able to open her Corks Wine Bar and Eatery and Firehall Flame patios on Queen Street last weekend.

The patio at Corks is pretty much closed in, while the Firehall Flame is more open, but has four heaters to keep diners toasty.

Even though the region is in red, with restaurants able to open to in-person dining, she wouldn’t have made the decision to reopen without the use of the patios, Mavridis said. With just 10 people allowed inside at a time, taking about an hour to eat, it just wouldn’t have been worth it.

But she’s glad she did reopen. “I’m happy to have the staff back, and they’re happy to be back. It’s important for mental health reasons.”

She under-ordered food supplies, and was surprised to run out. It’s difficult to know what to do, when the weather is such a big factor, she says. “It’s supposed to be a sunny weekend, but that could change.”

She said she’s constantly wondering how to figure out operating during a pandemic, when rules can change quickly, and this week is just praying for good weather on the weekend.

When council discussed allowing the patios to remain over the winter, there was talk about how much locals enjoyed them, and Mavridis says she has seen locals sitting in the patios already. “It gives them another reason to get out.”

Kim Gauld, owner of Sunset Grill on Queen Street, would like to see the patios remain permanently.

Although sales were significantly lower last year for downtown restaurants, Gauld said she couldn’t imagine what the season would have been without the outdoor tables.

Last September she wrote to Lord Mayor Betty Disero and councillors “to open the conversation” about the potential for patios this season.

“It is very possible that we will still be feeling the effects of the pandemic next summer. There is a possibility of a second wave, and even in the best-case scenario we will still be recovering from the losses this year,” she said then.

She wasn’t imagining the worst-case scenario, a second wave, another lockdown, further restrictions for restaurant owners, the arrival of variants of concern, and now the potential — or the arrival, depending on who you ask — of a third wave, just as this tourist season is approaching.

She says now she’s looking ahead at the tourist season in 2022 as the time for recovery from the pandemic. People may be vaccinated and moving around more freely this fall, but it will be too late for this season.

She hasn’t opened her patio yet, and while she’s grateful the town is allowing them to open early, she isn’t sure why restaurant owners have to go through the permit process again.

The Sunset Grill patio is more exposed to the elements, and the weather is still too cold. She also doesn’t want to take a chance on ordering too much food for two or three days. But she is conflicted about making the right decision, and says she could change her mind.

Sunset Grill’s pop-out patio endured the winter and the snow plows without incident, which was a concern to town staff, and if she does change her mind, it just needs a bit of cleaning to be ready for customers, she said.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero spoke this week of making patios a permanent fixture on Queen Street, but only with input from the municipal heritage committee to make sure they are compatible with the Old Town.

For now, patio approvals are still working their way through the approval process, and a staff report is expected.

But Disero’s vision is for widened sidewalks to eventually allow for permanent patios that don’t have to pop out onto the street.

About a year ago, she presented a plan for the make-over of Queen Street, which she says is a little time-looking, with aging infrastructure that needs to be replaced. Her plan showed narrowed streets, with no loss of parking spaces, and wider sidewalks, which would allow patios to be closer to the restaurants with room for people to walk around them.

“It’s an investment for the future, for NOTL as a mature destination,” she said. “Something we could include as we recreate NOTL for the next 10 to 20 years.”

Reserve your appointments today!

* GREAT FOOD
* RESERVATIONS A MUST
* OUTDOORS ONLY
* DINE AT HOME

The full page is made up of a HALF PAGE AD
and HALF PAGE ARTICLE

The Lash & Brow Bar
SWAG Hair Company

Article word count: 450-500
Ad size: 10.25”w x 7”h
Publication Date Subject to Availability

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local
The Trusted Voice of the Community

NOTL Businesses contact
Karen at 905•641•5335
at karen@notllocal.com

Businesses outside NOTL contact
Julia at 905•934•1040
at julia@notllocal.com
More buyers competing for fewer homes driving market

Penny Coles

The Local

There is no doubt the Niagara housing market is hot, and even more so in Niagara-on-the-Lake. How hot is it? Very, say local real estate agents, indicating 2020, expected to be a difficult year during a pandemic, turned out to be a spectacular year for selling houses.

And 2021 is looking even better, as a growing number of potential buyers, many from the GTA, want to move out of crowded urban areas to the small town environment and slower lifestyle Niagara-on-the-Lake has to offer.

The local market could get even hotter, if possible, thanks to a recent online report listing NOTL as one of the best places in Canada for those wanting to escape a busy urban environment, where there is a lack of live-homebuyers, it says have moved or plan to move from a major city hub to a small town/rural area.

The reasons vary, from those close to retirement considering making a move, pushed by the pandemic to accelerate their schedule, to those looking for a safer, smaller community to raise a family to have.

To assess why real estate sales have taken off during a time when it was predictably there would be a slump, The Local talked to several sales representatives with their fingers on the pulse of the local market.

Kim Schwenker of McGarr Realty says looking back to the November and December of 2019, and January 2020, before the pandemic hit, sales were “significantly under” the average year for the same time period.

In the last 90-plus days of 2020 and early 2021, new listings were up by about 25 per cent over the same time period of the year before, but the number of sales was up 88 per cent, the average sale price was up almost 19 per cent, and the average time in four days it took to sell a house was considerably less, says Schwenker.

“The inventory of houses for sale has been driving up prices, and also reducing the length of time a house is on the market, she says. “Prices are going crazy across the region, she explains, with the percentage increase isn’t as high in NOTL as in other municipalities, simply because homes are so high to begin with.

Sales people have been dealing with multiple offers in the $1.5 million range and up range recently, something that Niagara hasn’t experienced much, if at all, in the past."

Schwenker says in the past four months she has been involved in four situations with houses in the $1.65 million price range receiving multiple offers, an unusual situation for real estate priced that high.

The fact that more houses are going for more than $1 million in the region is important for NOTL, she adds. “It tells us more people who are coming to Niagara can buy houses in that price range, she explains, in the past, the number of people who could spend $1 to $2 million on a house was limited. “Now we’re seeing more of them, and a huge number of sales in a shorter amount of time. The high end sales are becoming more common, and that is really significant. It will make a change in the face of the region.

However, she sees this March showing something a little different, with more houses coming on the market. “If the pace for new listings continues this month, we will have a record number of new listings on March 15. My 10 years. We will see what effect this has on sales and prices as the month moves forward, but this may bring a bit of a relief,” she says, “a glimmer of hope” for buyers.

Spring is typically when more homes go up for sale, as people begin to move outdoors, after hunkering down during a long winter. They also start to think about a new house to enjoy the summer, and moving before kids go back to school.

Having more inventory will also make it easier for agents, who have been finding it difficult to adjust to the new pricing. “It’s hard to keep up with pricing in a hot market,” she says, “when the only real determining factor is how much it sells for.”

Despite having the lowest number of listings in a long time, and a hectic market, “2020 turned out to be a great year. The real estate market is totally dependent on human behaviour, and this hot market was unpredictable, based on the number of people deciding to downsize and retire, finding the city was congested and discovering they could work just as easily from home.”

They saw it as an opportunity to get out of town, decrease their mortgage, and change their lifestyle, she says.

This pandemic is changing how we live at our lives. We’ve been running ourselves ragged, and the ability to work from home has made us realize we can change the way we live. We can live, think and play in the same place in Niagara. We’ve all had a shift of priorities, an awakening during the pandemic, says Rempel. “In-home offices and virtual teachings required the use of COVID protocols, he says. “Real estate people have adapted to the rise month after month.”

During the pandemic, says Rempel, “there was an avalanche of people coming to Niagara. How big that avalanche was is not clear, but it is significant, and that is why we’re seeing the increase in sales.”

He adds, “we sold a lot of properties to people who could spend $1 to $2 million on a house, and the average sale price is $967,300.”

Kim Schwenker told The Local of one of her recent sales, a $1 million home in Niagara-on-the-Lake’s February report, the Niagara Association of Realtors reported that Niagara had a decrease in the average selling price, to $808,700.

Doug Rempel, Bosley Real Estate Ltd. (Photos supplied)

Doug Rempel, Bosley Real Estate Ltd. (Photos supplied)

Continued on page 15

more buyers competing for fewer homes driving market

Doug Rempel, Bosley Real Estate Ltd.

Doug Rempel, Bosley Real Estate Ltd. (Photos supplied)
Continued from page 14

E-communication and electronic signatures enable remote negotiations, he explains, the completion of contracts, and even the transfer of funds. “COVID has introduced new tools and business practices, but has accelerated their implementation, and they are continuing to evolve and are becoming more sophisticated.”

For most, the sale or purchase of the family home involves their single largest asset, and it is one of the top-three emotional and stressful dynamics, says Rempe. “As real estate agents, it is our privilege to be facilitators. We get to know our clients and their needs and wants; so much of what we do relies on building a strong, understanding, and empathetic relationship, which can be very challenging without a one-on-one, face-to-face interaction. While technology can provide a significant amount of information, neighborhood and property visits with our clients is a critical part of the selling and buying process. We miss the interaction, and we are impatiently waiting for the day, hopefully not too far in the distance, when we can return to the new norm.”

Doug Widdicombe of Sotheby’s International Realty points to the pandemic as the cause behind the lack of the housing inventory for sale, the driving factor of today’s market.

Typically there would be about 200 listings across Niagara-on-the-Lake. Right now, the number is in the 60s, he says, including some mobile homes in St. Davids and on Mewburn Road, and two houses priced at more than $5 million.

The shortage of houses for sale, especially those priced under $1 million, is scary, he says. The good news is that the spring market is beginning across the Niagara Region, with multiple offers, houses selling quickly, and asking prices are being supported by banks, at the prices as the “new norm.”

“The locals who decide to sell during a pandemic are excited to see the money they will get, but they have to be careful. It can be tricky. A lot of people are afraid to put their home on the market, afraid they won’t have anywhere to go. They are still dealing with the same stress as the previous lockdowns,” Widdicombe jokes about the phone calls home owners receive from time to time, from realtors asking if they want to sell. “They say, ‘I’ve got some interest in you home.’” When now they say it, it’s real. “He says he’s hoping the spring market and more inventory coming up will take some of the pressure off the rising prices, making it easier for everyday.”

“Right now, the number is about 200 listings across the region,” he says. “The pandemic hits, we go into lockdown, and for the most part, everyone’s lifestyle, and day-to-day work routine, changes. As we recovered from the first lockdown, we quickly realized that people started making changes in terms of housing. The exodus from urban to rural areas started.”

Fast forward to February 2021, says Johnstone, and in NOTL much has changed over the past year. We have 1.6 months of inventory, average sale price year-to-date is $1,148,000, and 33 homes at $1 million-plus have sold already this year. Local sellers are now capitalizing on this strong appreciation in the market, and might consider downsizing, but may find it difficult to find a house in that price range, with the limited inventory across the region.”

Last year was historic for everyone, says Nancy Bailey of Engel & Volkers. “It has been a time to expect the unexpected, and to learn and adapt every week, and ever-changing needs of our clients. The housing market has entered 2021 blazing hot, with the off-the-charts demand, and an extreme shortage of homes for sale. Home sales and property prices are expected to keep rising in 2021 as coronaviruses vaccines become available. Inventory will continue to rule.”

Several economists are predicting a storm year for home sales in 2021, says Bailey, even stronger than 2020. “Clients are looking for lifestyle, not just a home,” she adds. “Location … location … lifestyle.”

Adapting to the consumer means it’s time to add a fourth “L” to the guiding real estate fundamentals as a reminder to in-voke the lifestyle elements a home possesses, she says. “For example, potential homeowners can imagine themselves exploring European cooking classes in the open kitchen plan, stargazing with their children in the outdoor living room, hitting the bike trails after work, or strolling the downtown galleries. NOTL offers all of this and more.”

In this environment, pricing a home to be “in the market,” and not just on the market, is critical, she says. Statistics show that buyers who oversell their home, the buyer will net less money, and it will expose them during the pandemic through their homes but won’t purchase them. “Also, the pandemic has encouraged sellers to improve their qualifying skills to avoid putting themselves and others at risk by showing homes to people who are not financially in a position to make a purchase,” says Bailey.

Tom Elltoft of Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty says he believes the pandemic “accelerated” something that would have happened eventually. “He’s seeing clients who, thanks to the proliferation of telecommunications, are working from home, and others who were taking their time thinking about retiring now moving up their schedule.”

He’s finding younger couples with a family wanting to move from the GTA, and older couples, grandparents, looking for homes with multiple bedrooms and bathrooms, a pool and a big backyard to create a ‘safe haven’ for their families to visit. “As well as seeing rising prices, he says, houses in the high end of the market that might have sat for a year are now moving quickly.”

Although bidding with a fixed date to look at offers is popular in some places during hot markets, it’s not seen that often in NOTL, he says — certainly not like Toronto.

When people have driven an hour or so — and 90 per cent of his clients are from Toronto — they want to see multiple listings, and real estate agents fear they will miss the buyer that may make the trip the next weekend.

The locals who decide to sell are people who would have sold anyway, although in the current market, some are nervous. They may be afraid to move during a pandemic, as people are hesitant to be able to get a moving company — “you absolutely can,” says Elltoft — or they might be anxious that with houses selling so quickly, they won’t be able to find what they’re looking for.

“I would love to have another 20 listings,” he says. “Usually we average about 50 to 60 listings. Now we’re down to 10, and they sell quickly, so we don’t get to build up an inventory.”

In many ways it has become easier to see a house during the pandemic, because people spend more time online, where the viewing tours are more extensive.

“People are doing their homework before they get here,” he says. “They might have already decided where they want to be.”

Whether they have decided on the Old Town or one of the other communities, “we very rarely go to work, and others who were taking their time thinking about retiring now moving up their schedule.”

“People are doing their homework before they get here,” he says. “They might have already decided where they want to be.”

Whether they have decided on the Old Town or one of the other communities, “we very rarely go to work, and others who were taking their time thinking about retiring now moving up their schedule.”

“People are doing their homework before they get here,” he says. “They might have already decided where they want to be.”

Whether they have decided on the Old Town or one of the other communities, “we very rarely go to work, and others who were taking their time thinking about retiring now moving up their schedule.”

“People are doing their homework before they get here,” he says. “They might have already decided where they want to be.”

Whether they have decided on the Old Town or one of the other communities, “we very rarely go to work, and others who were taking their time thinking about retiring now moving up their schedule.”

“People are doing their homework before they get here,” he says. “They might have already decided where they want to be.”

Whether they have decided on the Old Town or one of the other communities, “we very rarely go to work, and others who were taking their time thinking about retiring now moving up their schedule.”
Crossroads Coyotes celebrate a week of staycation days

Submitted by Crossroads Public School

This week at Crossroads Public School — the week traditionally when March Break is held — students celebrated with the Great Coyote Staycation, an entire week of school-wide, collaboratively built, curriculum-based activities that coincide with a different theme each day.

They dressed up and held activities for Beach Day Monday, Staycation Day Tuesday, with Rainbow Day, Kindness Day and Coyote Spirit Day to fill the rest of the week, each day with special snacks and contests, costumes, music … the works, says principal Kate Fish.

The week will end with the school’s first-ever online Trivia Night for the school community, with prizes donated by local businesses.

“We have 80 families registered so far for the trivia night,” Fish says. “It’s going to be an awesome week.”

Harrison Pohorly builds a sandcastle on the beach at Crossroads, as do Hope Gretzinger, Taylor Jonah and Kayla Thwaites.

Felix Vollmer, Eliana McManus, Addison Driedger, Camryn Wiens, Aobin Davidson, Ella Edgecombe, Levi Bayne, Brooke Whyte, Max Ruller, Alivia Nickason and Eva Zhakova enjoy a day of staycation at Crossroads. (Photos submitted)

Charlie Squire, in Kindergarten, is about to board a cruise to Fiji.

Kayla Thwaites is sunbathing on her staycation, as is Elliot Chard.

Grade 2 students Emilia Wiens, Hannah Allison and Madelyn Josiak enjoy a day of staycation.

Addison Driedger, Brooke Whyte and Megan Dyck, in Grade 5/6, are having a lazy day on their staycation.
Trying to get home as news of pandemic travelled

Randy Klaassen
The Local

Just prior to the announcement of the global pandemic a year ago, my wife Renate and I had arrived in Uruguay for a family visit. Her parents had also travelled there, where they had spent the early part of their young adult life. Motivation for our making the trip was to meet with Uruguayan relatives, and to hear stories of Renate’s grandfather. Before he died, he had written most of his memoir of life in Germany, but not the latter part of his time in Uruguay.

Before leaving Niagara, we heard news of a COVID virus, but there were no reported cases in Uruguay. We travelled with caution, yet had a purpose. The weekend after arrival was our story-telling session with family members. The following day Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called Canadians to return home. In Montevideo we walked to our airline office, where there was a line-up of people. The representative told us “everything was normal.” The only option of rebooking gained us two days from our scheduled return. Three days later, all flights were cancelled, and like Canada, Uruguay locked down.

We had registered our trip with the Canadian Embassy, and they kept us informed, giving us alternate options to get home as they became available. We lived with uncertainty as to when we might be able to return home.

Our extended time was spent with a cousin’s family, on a rural dairy farm. Unable to visit others, we enjoyed quiet days of summer weather. We tried to help our hosts where we could, and took afternoon walks on the country road. Peaceful, yet anxious.

Our three-week vacation extended to six, and it became a significant challenge, and cost, to make arrangements for getting home. A year later we are deeply grateful to relatives who hosted our extended stay, and thankful for the St. Catharines travel agent who booked our alternate flights. Our cousin had to lend us funds when we could not pay for a flight by credit card. Then family in Niagara assisted us during our time of isolation at home. Our experience was akin to the Come From Away story of stranded passengers.

When there is much to be discouraged about, we are very aware of the sense of care and compassion we share as a community when we act for the well-being of others. For this, the past year has taught us we have so much for which to be thankful.

Randy Klaassen had taken The Local with him to Uruguay to catch up on news from home a year ago, where COVID-19 was new to us. Klaassen is sitting in the Plaza Independencia, with the Palacio Salvo in Montevideo, Uruguay, in the background. (Photo supplied)
St. Michael Catholic Elementary School’s Grade 7 class, including Ben Raso, Elizabeth Nolan, Cal Wilkins, Peyton Leigh, Ella Murray and Gabryella Julien researched the notable Canadians that are potential candidates for the new $5 bill. Each day students shared the candidate’s history and contributions to Canada on the morning announcements, presenting persuasive oral arguments as to why their notable figure should be chosen. This week students will depict their choice on a $5 template, and the school will vote. They are looking forward to seeing if their choice will make it into Canadian currency. (Photos supplied)

Jayden D’Cruz concentrates on his St. Patrick’s day art work.

Ava Mieleand, Elliana Malachowsky (back), with T.J. Gauld, Ariana LeBrasseur and Auston Cwiertniewski make leprechaun rainbow hats and rainbows, with, of course, pots of gold at the end.

Mila Treanor and Lucy McSween show off their rainbow art.

St. Michael Catholic Elementary School’s Grade 7 class, including Ben Raso, Elizabeth Nolan, Cal Wilkins, Peyton Leigh, Ella Murray and Gabryella Julien researched the notable Canadians that are potential candidates for the new $5 bill. Each day students shared the candidate’s history and contributions to Canada on the morning announcements, presenting persuasive oral arguments as to why their notable figure should be chosen. This week students will depict their choice on a $5 template, and the school will vote. They are looking forward to seeing if their choice will make it into Canadian currency. (Photos supplied)
CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU

Across:
1. Kind of hoop
2. Ably
3. SAA
4. Hindu
5. Crab
6. Hot
7. Amok
8. Tape
9. Ism
10. Storm
11. Patio
12. Dan
15. Thor
21. End
23. Hula
25. One of a hundred in D C
27. Eye cell
28. Methods
29. Statement of understanding
30. The Beatles’ lovely meter maid
32. Apiece
33. Antidotes
34. Classic Ford model
37. Type of rechargeable cell
39. Man-eating giant
41. Sit in a tub
43. ATM
46. Mrs
48. Opt
50. Pep
52. Vigor
54. Afro
55. --- Vista, Disney brand
56. Military groups
57. Apt
59. Fun
60. Pew
63. H M S
64. P D A
67. Rein
69. Paco
71. Yearn
73. Onto
74. Inns
75. Canon
76. A-S W
77. Cent
78. Http

Down:
1. Hula hoop
2. Competently
3. SA A
4. Hindu
5. Crab
6. Hot
7. Amok
8. Tape
9. Ism
10. Storm
11. Patio
12. Dan
15. Thor
21. End
23. Hula
25. One of a hundred in D C
27. Eye cell
28. Methods
29. Statement of understanding
30. The Beatles’ lovely meter maid
32. Apiece
33. Antidotes
34. Classic Ford model
37. Type of rechargeable cell
39. Man-eating giant
41. Sit in a tub
43. ATM
46. Mrs
48. Opt
50. Pep
52. Vigor
54. Afro
55. --- Vista, Disney brand
56. Military groups
57. Apt
59. Fun
60. Pew
63. H M S
64. P D A
67. Rein
69. Paco
71. Yearn
73. Onto
74. Inns
75. Canon
76. A-S W
77. Cent
78. Http

PUZZLE ANSWERS

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.

Sudoku solution from March 10, 2021

Add: 7 9 7 3 4 8 1 6 2 6 1 9 8 7 5 1 3 9 9 7 2 5 6 1 9 3 2 1 4 6 5 8 2 5 3 6 1 4 7 8 9 4 1 9 3 5 2 7 6 8 6 2 4 9 8 3 5 7 1 2 1 8 8 9 6 3 4 7 5 3 5 7 6 8 1 4 2 9 8 9 3 7 4 1 6 5 2 4 7 5 1 2 8 9 3 6 1 8 6 2 7 5 3 4 9

Please recycle this newspaper
The Niagara-on-the-Lake
The trusted voice of our community.
This magnificent red-tailed hawk was spotted on a recent photo walk. (Photos by David Gilchrist)

The four goose pals have been active along the edge of the Niagara River this winter, and look to be thriving.

This red-winged blackbird was spotted on the road into the Peller Estate Winery.

A harmless coffee break can do more harm than you think.

Wear a mask, wash your hands and physically distance to stop the spread of COVID-19. Learn more at ontario.ca/covid-19