Wilma Morrison leaves a community in mourning

Penny Coles  
The Local

Wilma Morrison was best-known across the Niagara Region for her tireless efforts to educate the public about local Black history. She was a highly respected historian, speaker and educator, but to many, she was also a dear friend, known for her warmth, kindness, humility and sense of humour.

Morrison died last Thursday, April 23, at the St. Catharines Hospital site, after a battle with COVID-19. She had spent the last year or so living in Lundy Manor in Niagara Falls, where she contracted the disease.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, two of the people closest to Morrison were Alexis Spieldenner and Chris Mori of Bravo Niagara! They met her in 2014 at a Niagara Investment in Culture meeting, says Spieldenner. "Wilma gave us a brochure of Niagara’s Freedom Trail, and was eager to share with us the incredible history of the region. Having just recently moved to Canada from the US, we were unaware until then of Niagara’s significant Black history. Meeting Wilma changed the trajectory of Bravo Niagara, and our lives,” she says.

At that point, Bravo Niagara was a fledgling organization that had presented only a couple of concerts, “but with her encouragement, we decided to create the Voices of Freedom Festival in 2015. Wilma was instrumental in guiding us and supporting us every step of the way.”

The mother and daughter duo behind Bravo Niagara spent many hours talking with her, learning about Black history, and visiting with her at the Nathaniel Dett Memorial Chapel of the British Methodist Episcopal Church in Niagara Falls, where former slaves were known to gather after escaping to Niagara via the Underground Railroad. Morrison helped save the church from demolition, and also as a result of her efforts, saw it declared a heritage site.

"Wilma was passionate about sharing her knowledge of Black history," says Spieldenner. "(Bravo Niagara) continued on page 3

Wilma Morrison was passionate about sharing her knowledge of Black history. (Bravo Niagara)
Residents of all communities in NOTL had fun banging on pots and pans — even a garbage can — Saturday evening, shouting, and enjoying seeing their neighbours outside, while respecting rules of physical distancing. Photos in top and bottom rows are Chautauqua residents, by Penny Coles; middle row photos were taken by Rene Bertachi of his neighbours on Shaw’s Lane.

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**Niagara-on-the-Lake Escalates Deterrents of Visitors**

Niagara-on-the-Lake has escalated efforts to deter out-of-town visitors from coming to Town during its State of Emergency. These measures became necessary because it was clear there were some still ignoring the Town’s consistent message to “Stay Home.”

The Town closed its public washrooms on March 17, yet Staff have been receiving recent reports of people urinating and defecating in public parks. This is simply not acceptable.

Residents may still walk within Town, but our consistent message of “Walk from Home” remains – exercise, don’t socialize. Those wearing masks or gloves are reminded to dispose of these properly. It is never OK to leave home health care waste on the ground.

Visitors, we respectfully ask that you, too, walk from home and come back after our State of Emergency is lifted. Residents of neighbouring municipalities may still enter to quickly drop off essential supplies to vulnerable family members.

Please note that these signs have been strategically placed in areas that typically attract a high volume of visitors. This decision is in no way meant to slight any particular hamlet. “Local Traffic Only” applies to all of Niagara-on-the-Lake residents. We are all locals.

To review all Town updates related to COVID-19, read answers to frequently asked questions, and see up-to-date information on the status of Town services, please visit www.notl.com/COVID-19, or call 905-468-3266. Town Staff will continue to assist and serve citizens online and over the phone between the hours of 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM Monday to Friday. For immediate alerts, follow the Town on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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**Niagara-on-the-Lake Escalates Deterrents of Visitors**

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**Town staff ‘all essential workers’**

Penny Coles
The Local

Following a discussion about the Town’s staffing during the COVID-19 pandemic, Coun. Erwin Wiens spoke passionately about the work employees are doing to maintain services, and suggested councillors might give up their salaries before any further layoffs are considered.

In Lord Mayor Betty Disero’s update at the start of Monday’s phone-in meeting, she outlined the number of full-time and contract staff, which total 76 per cent of the Town’s normal full-time complement. 44 contract or seasonal employees, 24 have not been hired back for the season, and nine have been laid off, she said. There are currently 87 full-time employees and 12 contract staff.

Under the rules of the Town’s collective bargaining agreement with staff, contract employees would have to be laid off first, with every department except the fire department having contract staff, councillors heard.

“Every employee is essential to our operations,” said Ciavero, adding the Town is working really hard at maintaining the essential services it has promised to residents.

The Region has reported it has not laid off any staff, she said, and is redeploying as many people as possible. One of the messages from the Region to local municipalities is not to push to make cuts too quickly — this will cause an even greater problem in years to come, she said.

“If there were to be any discussion of laying off staff, said interim CAO Sheldon Randall, it would require direction from council about what services should be cut. “Our staff complement right now is what we need to deliver services.”

Coun. Allan Bisback suggested the Town could communicate with residents about what services are being maintained and running efficiently, including provisions related to services such as water and sewers, and what they’re doing above their regular services. If anything, he said, there is extra stress and more activities being put on staff.

Coun. Clare Cameron said she’s heard comments from residents wondering what staff at the Town are doing, and if they’re working from home, what they’re doing there.

She agreed that communicating the work of employees could be an opportunity to express to the public how much activity is going on at the Town.

“In a motion made by Bisback, to have council approve all decisions made on its behalf by the emergency control group since the declaration of a state of emergency March 23, he also asked that all staff be thanked for their efforts toward protecting residents during that time.”

Erwin Wiens said that is sending out a “mixed message,” thanking staff for all they do while also talking about laying off full-time staff and reviewing what they’re doing.

The Town is already working with a skeleton crew, he said, short a CAO, and with other staff off with long-term illnesses.

Employees are moving from one position to another without hesitation, yet they are continually bearing lay-off discussions, he said.

Councillors have asked the interim CAO if all staff are essential, have been told they are, “and we have to take him at his word,” said Wiens.

“We could reduce our costs by reducing what we’re paid, about $12,000 to $15,000. That would show leadership right off the bat,” he said.

Before the Town starts laying off the guy who is cutting grass, we should look at ourselves.”

The Town is one of the few that has a collective bargaining instead of a union, and on average NOTL employees get paid less than everywhere else, with staff rates lower than everywhere else, “so where other places may cut five, 10, 15 people, we can’t cut because we’ve already cut,” said Wiens.

“If we’re going to send out a message, we’ve got to mean it.”

Without commenting on Wiens’ suggestion to give up their salaries before employees are laid off, councillors voted to approve emergency group decisions, and to thank all staff.
Historian also warm, funny, and humble

Continued from page 1

She was a true trailblazer... — Alexis Spieldenner

"She was a delight to work with, says Kaufman, very warm, kind, and really funny. "Every time I talked to her, she’d make me laugh. And she was so passionate about her work. She wanted people to understand, to know how the Black community contributed to the history of Niagara." The museum looked to Morrison for guidance with the Voices of Freedom project. She often shared research with Morrison, helping save from demolition and had designated as a national historic site. (Bravo Niagara!)

"I was so disturbed to hear about the outbreak at Lundy Manor in Niagara Falls. We are heartbroken to lose such a dear friend and mentor," says Butler. "She was an amazing person. I’ll really miss her."

The museum’s main resources. "She has been one of some who were mentored by Morrison, "who will have to carry the torch and carry on the work. She wanted people to imagine what will happen now that she’s gone. She contributed greatly to our understanding of Black history. She was such a wealth of knowledge."

"It makes you both sad and angry, everything at one time, because of how this virus is playing out. It’s taking so many loved ones. I was praying she would make it. She was such an inspiration to all of us," says Spieldenner.

Sarah Kaufman, managing director and curator of the NOTL Museum, worked with her on several occasions. "She was the pillar of Niagara’s Black history," says Spieldenner. "It’s hard to imagine what will happen now that she’s gone. She contributed greatly to our understanding of Black history. She was such a wealth of knowledge." The museum looked to Morrison for guidance with the Voices of Freedom park, says Kaufman. And in recent years, Morrison has ensured Black history is one of the subjects to be given more attention, says Kaufman, and Morrison would have been called on to help. "There are a few others," some who were mentored by Morrison, "who will have to carry the torch and carry on her work."

"That her life was taken by COVID-19, says Kaufman, "is awful. Losing Wilma in such a way, it’s just awful. She’s gone too soon." Morrison lost her husband Lorne in 2001. She leaves many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews, several godchildren, and many friends and admirers across Canada and the U.S. A Celebration of Life service will be held at a later date. Memorial donations to Nathaniel Dett Chapel BME Church, Niagara Falls would be appreciated by her family.
Hand-crafted fabric masks available for residents

Penny Coles
The Local

More residents are appearing around town in masks, as the message to the public has changed in support of the benefits of wearing them outdoors.

Many doctors and top medical health officials are encouraging the use of masks, not so much for personal protection but as a way to stop the spread of COVID-19 to others.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is recommending wearing non-medical masks out in public.

But as one senior, who contacted The Local, said, “we’re being asked to wear a mask when we go out, but where are we supposed to get them?”

Fran Boot, co-founder of Niagara COVID-19 Masks, first organized a group of sewers to make masks for front-line health care workers to fill in the gaps until supplies could get to them.

The group was launched March 21, led by Boot, her sister in Grimsby, and Julia Buxton Cox. With a group of 60 volunteers, they designed, sewed and distributed more than 3,750 masks in four weeks.

Orders have slowed as frontline workers have masks now, and official personal protective equipment is making its way to them, says Buxton Cox.

After donating 150 masks for migrant workers to wear when they go into town, the women read about a woman in Iowa who was tying masks to the tree in her front yard, says Buxton Cox. “Fran rigged up a bird feeder pole at her house and voila! In no time they had set up several mask trees around the community, to make masks available for residents who need them.

The trees are outside from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., although some are taken inside if it’s raining, she says.

The group is asking for a donation of $10 to $20, and 100 per cent of the proceeds will be split between three organizations: Southridge Shelter in St. Catharines, which provides essential services such as food and shelter to people in need; The Raft in St. Catharines, which helps youth throughout the Niagara Region with shelter, support services and programs; and Night Light Youth Services, a Niagara Falls shelter for homeless youth.

Mask trees can be found at 2252 Four Mile Creek Rd., 2002 York Rd., 607 Simcoe St., 387 Simone St., 474 William St., 43 Colonial Butler St. and 13 Kirby St.

As masks sell out, some trees may be inside or empty, but those looking for masks are encouraged to try again in a few days. Volunteers are continuing to sew, with a main goal of getting masks into the hands of NOTL residents, says Buxton Cox.

On Bay Berry Lane, those looking for fabric masks can be found at “the equivalent to a lemonade stand,” says resident Monique Kruppa.

She loves to sew, and she loves bright, colorful fabrics.

For several years, she and her sister owned two fabric and yarn stores, one in the Old Town and one in Virgil, and although the stores are closed, she still considers herself a collector and hoarder of beautiful fabrics.

She also likes to keep busy, and so, while self-isolating, with a job of painting houses and refinishing and painting furniture and kitchen cabinets on hold, she decided to go to work making bright, cheerful masks for anyone who needs them.

“I was sitting here at home doing nothing,” says, “I decided to make some masks for my family, and then I made some for neighbours, and for neighbours’ friends.” She also made some for a business contact in Queenston, and now, she says, pretty much everyone in the village must be wearing her masks.

She sells them for $15, and is donating $5 from each sold to Gillian’s Place, which provides shelter and resources for women and children living with domestic violence. She donated the total sales from the first 100 masks she sold, she says.

She is selling them from her 55 Bay Berry Lane porch, she says, with a cof- fee can for people to deposit their cash, and a good view from inside to keep an eye on the porch.

She can sew about 20 a day — without a supply of elastic, she makes fabric ties, which take more time, and that allows her to have a sufficient supply on her porch, more than she had any idea she would be making when she first began this project.

Kruppa is staying at home with her family, which includes her husband, a teenager, and a young adult son with his girlfriend.

“We’re very fortunate we can be home with loved ones, and we’re all getting along with each other,” she says.

But not everyone is so fortunate, she adds. A lot of people are forced to stay home with people who are not treating them well, who are abusive, which is why she has chosen to donate to Gillian’s Place, which con- tinues to help women and children during a time when the need to help is greater than ever.

And as a word of caution, physical distancing rules apply to those who may be purchasing a mask. Kruppa is concerned about being unable to police that from inside her home, so she asks, please, to follow guidelines and stay safe.

To women and children in need of help, call or text the Gillian’s Place 24/7 cri- sis support line at 905-684-8331.

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

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

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community.

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

Businesses outside NOTL contact
Julia at 905•934•1040
at julia@notlocal.com

One of the mask trees is on York Road, with others scattered around St. Davids and the Old Town. (Photo supplied)
Local pharmacy opens online store

Mike Balsom
Special To The Local

If there is one thing all businesses around the world have had to learn in the COVID-19 era, it’s how to adapt.

Locally, one of the first businesses to adapt to physical distancing guidelines was Simpson’s Pharmacy. Recognizing the vulnerability of his senior customers, owner Sean Simpson instituted seniors-only hours from 8:30 to 11:00 a.m., the first hour his store was open. That decision was made March 15, and implemented the next day.

Not long after, to protect the safety of both staff and customers, the store itself closed its doors. Customers were offered free delivery or parking lot pick-up, in lieu of browsing the shelves. Which brings us to their latest adaptation.

Shaw struggling with ‘difficult measures’

Based on provincial and federal regulations regarding mass gatherings and physical distancing, the Shaw Festival has ceased all business on-site, including cancelling all public events and performances, with the intention of resuming on July 1.

Two weeks ago, the festival’s executive director and CEO Tim Jennings announced the Shaw was exploring “every possible new program and idea that can enable us to support our company members as long as possible. During this time, we are continuing to rehearse while developing some online content to keep our audiences entertained while they practice physical distancing.”

“It is clear that further changes will require us to significantly rethink our 2020 season and contingency planning is well underway for that possibility,” he said.

Last week, he said “further, more difficult measures” were required, although he was still “looking forward to a time when we can return to the stage.”

Those who are able to work at a distance are receiving 100 per cent of their wage, he says, but those who cannot work at a distance have had their wages cut to 75 per cent.

“While this has saved most jobs, we have been forced to lay off about 20 people for whom a reduction to 75 per cent of their normal wage did not make sense. This decision has primarily impacted part-time and seasonal personnel. The executive team has also chosen to donate 50 per cent of their own salaries back to the Shaw in solidarity, and to help stretch dollars in some small way.”

Independent contractors, which include the acting ensemble, will continue to work and receive pay at 100 per cent, but with “rolling two-week notice of termination of their contracts. We hope to extend the notice of termination each week as we explore every possible new program and idea to keep us all under the same umbrella,” Jennings says.

“These decisions have been incredibly difficult and we hope we are able to provide the softest possible landing for everyone in the Shaw family.”

A quick perusal of the website reveals a well-organized platform, with 23 different categories. Clicking on a section reveals the items available, each represented by clear, bright photographs. Facial tissue, for instance, falls under the Household Essentials category, while Tylenol and other painkillers can be found under Pain Management. Some brands have their own sections. There is also an easy-to-use search function.

Some of the categories currently have very few options, as Simpson is still in the process of populating the menu.

Due mainly to privacy concerns, prescriptions can’t be directly ordered and paid for via the same platform. Customers can, however, enter prescription numbers in another area of the website to place those orders. Prescriptions can then be bundled together with the store orders for pickup or delivery.

For those who prefer to place orders by phone, Simpson says that, of course, is still an option. But he would encourage customers to visit the website if they can, to first find what they are looking for.

“The online store helps to recreate the shopping experience that we’re not allowing people to have right now,” explains Simpson. “As we get more and more product on-site, there, it gives people a chance to tour and see all the different things that we do have to offer.”

The new web store accepts payments via all major credit cards and PayPal accounts.

And Simpsons is offering 20 per cent off a customer’s first online order using the discount code StayHomeNOTL

Visit the website at simpsonspharma.ca or simpsonsparmacy.store.

Simpson’s Pharmacy was able to order a supply of energy bars at a discounted cost for the Town to give to local long-term care homes as a thank you for the work they do. Simpson helped load a vehicle Tuesday morning for Ray Hunter, the Town’s fleet hand in the road department. Simpson’s also ordered 10,000 bars for United Way to distribute through local agencies, and donated 500 bars to Newark Neighbours. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Love Dorothy, Brianna and Daniel, Mackenzie, Taylor and Jessica, friends and family.
Lessons from pandemic could include doing a better job for society’s vulnerable in the future

There is good news this week, for all those residents who feel they’ve had to wear a mask while they’re out in public, but haven’t been able to find one.

There are local workrooms busier than bees, using their time in isolation to put together fabric masks, with filter pockets, for residents. Hopefully they can keep up with the demand, because the message is changing, and public health experts are recommending non-medical masks could cut down on the spread of COVID-19.

As the talk has begun to turn to re-opening of non-essential businesses, with the Province putting plans in place — but no dates yet — it’s sounding like the message may be to wear masks when going out. Hopefully stores will be carrying supplies to accommodate the demand.

With all the many events cancelled, one was the National Day of Mourning, a day to remember those who lost their lives from a workplace accident or illness. A ceremony is traditionally held at the little monument in front of the entrance to the Centennial Arena, and has in recent years been attended by Niagara high school students. It’s a reminder to them of their right to demand safe working conditions when they enter the workforce.

Lord Mayor Betty Due- ris asked for a minute’s silence during Monday’s council meeting to remember “all Canadians who lost their lives contributing to our society,” and to also remember Fire Department volunteers and captains Mike Vivian and who passed away in 2019 from an occupational illness.

During that moment of silence, it was impossible not to draw the thought of not only of the deaths of health care workers during this pandemic, across the country, but of the risks they take every day they go to work. They too have a right to a safe work place, but we know that hasn’t always been the case in recent weeks.

Or the workers in a meat plant out west, whose safety has been totally disregarded, but who have to go to work because their finances are so marginal they can’t risk losing their jobs. On April 28, 2021, we’ll be remembering those who died of COVID-19 because of the lack of protection at their workplace.

We could consider this year’s day of mourning a reminder that as a society, we have to do better for the seniors, our most vulnerable in society, who live in conditions deteriorating to such a degree that we’ve witnessed sisters called out. We have to do better for workers who care for them, and for all those who risk their lives protecting the health of all of us. For the children who consider school their one safe place, and often where they get their only meal of the day. For our Indigenous people, who are in isolated communities where health care is not assured. For the abused who feel trapped at home, which should be their safe place, and instead is the place where they live in dread of physical or mental abuse.

Last Saturday evening, residents in all communities of town showed their support to the frontline workers and essential services. They went out and made noise, dancing, shouting and waving at their neighbours, and having fun. Their pleasure was contagious — they showed gratitude, for those who are keeping us safe, and for living in a community that feels safe.

As angry as we may be about visitors coming to town who shouldn’t, residents going out who shouldn’t, we have so many reasons to feel fortunate. While bylaw officers were looking after our protection by ticketing those who were parking where they shouldn’t — apparently about 40 in a couple of hours Saturday morning, most, but not all, of them visitors to town — some of us were at home, learning that we can live more simply and happily than we could have imagined. And out of gratitude, many want to reach out to help those in need.

We can also see the results on our environment, as nature gets a vacation from the harm we do, and well like to continue to recover from the damage we’ve done.

It’s really a lot to ask, to expect or at least hope that some of these lessons can carry on after this is over. We’ll be out enjoying the sunshine, the outdoor, and being with family and friends, but for many, the old norm wasn’t so great, and the new normal might not be any better. Maybe when it’s time to celebrate the end of the pandemic, we could also think, as a society, of doing a better job of caring for those who have so much less to celebrate.

Penny Coles
The Local

GREEN TIP from the Crossroads Coyote Eco Club

GROW YOUR OWN

Despite the fact that we humans are in a bit of a lockdown, nature is uncontrollable and doing her thing - spring is sprouting! We all have time on our hands ... so, what better time to grow your own? Plant a wee garden!

Put some seeds in the ground and watch the magic of nature. It doesn't get more local than harvesting tomatoes, cucumbers and kale from your own backyard.

Stay well & healthy, the Crossroads Coyote Eco Club
Eliana McNamus, Fiona Bell and Ella Edgecombe

Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne du cancer

For information about services the Canadian Cancer Society continues to provide during the COVID-19 pandemic, call 905-684-6455, or 1-888-939-3333.
Online donations are needed more than ever, and can be made at Cancer.ca

NEED HELP? MAKE THE CALL

DISTRESS CENTRE
For depression, distress and crisis.
24 hour help line: 905-688-3711

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS ACCESS
(Toll Free) 1-866-550-5205

KIDS HELP PHONE
Service for youth
416-586-5437
1-800-668-6868 (Crisis Line)
kidshelpline.ca

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
Meetings every Wednesday evening
8 p.m. to 9 p.m.
St. Mark's Parish Hall
41 Byron St., NOTL
or find a meeting 905-682-2140

GAMBLER'S ANONYMOUS
905-351-1616

ASSAULTED WOMEN'S HELPLINE
Mobile calls to: #SAFE (#7233)
1-866-863-0511 (Toll Free)

CRIME STOPPERS
1-800-222-8477 (TIPS)
niagaratips.com
Text 274637 (CRIMES)
keyword: Niagara, then your tip

Watchman ‘enveloped in flames’ by Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Patrick was the watchman on the steamer Zimmerman when it burned at the Niagara Dock on the night of Aug. 21, 1863. He was “enveloped in the flames and was burned to death.” This monument stands alone in the east corner of the cemetery of St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church.

PATTERSON LAWLESS
BURNED ON THE STR ZIMMERMANN
AUG. 1863.

MARTIN, MARY & ANDREW CHILDREN OF PATRICK & MARY.
LAWLESS.
Treading water, trying to stay positive

We Canadians have, and will continue, to adhere to both our federal, provincial and municipal guidelines when it comes to self-isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There will always be exceptions in every community where you will see or know people who have returned from outside of Canada, and do not conform to the guidelines, or individuals who just generally ignore the guidelines set by our government and medical experts.

So, let’s all agree, most of us are doing what was asked of us, and we can see and hear what is working in other countries.

The people on the front lines are all performing far beyond expectations. You name the profession and they are performing at 100 per cent-plus, on behalf of the Canadian people and their country.

So here we are treading water, and struggling to stay positive, knowing that thousands of people are getting infected each day, and hundreds dying each week.

Now I ask you, what exactly is our government (at all levels) doing to present a strategy to the Canadian public that will address the next three, six and 12 months?

What are they doing to provide us with hope and confidence in order to gradually bring this country back to some status of work and productivity?

Is it so difficult to look at the countries that have succeeded in getting their economies started and partially growing again?

Just look around and see what Taiwan, South Korea, Iceland and Germany are doing. Testing, testing, testing and more testing.

They are keeping a tight handle on their borders, enforcing self-isolation, and working with industry, medical specialists, scientists and the experts in other countries to develop their long-term strategy.

Every day that goes by, our Prime Minister performs his duties, but does not say where we are going and how we are going to get there. The Canadian people need hope, and a map of where we are going to be in three, six, and 12 months.

This is not drawing a line in the sand that governments are so fearful of, but rather laying out a plan of hope and light.

We don’t need to look back to see how we got here. We need to be clear when we ask our government to come up with a plan.

One last point. Each week I look at the results of the status of COVID-19 in Canada and the world. When I go to find out what the status of COVID-19 is in our Niagara region, I end up with the total number of cases, deaths, and a breakdown by age. Nowhere, on our Niagara Regional website, can I find statistics by town, city or community of the active number of cases and deaths.

Apprently, our officer of health for the Region believes in privacy over transparency.

On the other side of the border you can access Niagara County Department of Health and they provide all the details, every municipality available, by mapping and daily tracking for each county.

From Sunday’s statistics on COVID-19 in our region:

**Niagara Region**
- Total cases: 51 total deaths: 37, translates into 8.2% ratio in the Niagara Region.

**City of Toronto**
- Total cases: 3,682, total deaths: 181, translates into 4.9% ratio in the City of Toronto.

**Ontario**
- Total cases: 14,432, total deaths: 835, translates into 5.7% ratio in the Province of Ontario.

**Canada**
- Total cases: 46,644, total deaths: 2,560, translates into 5.4% ratio in Canada.

When you take it a step further, the Niagara Region constitutes approximately 4.4 per cent of the total deaths in Ontario, yet the Niagara Region only constitutes three per cent of the Ontario population.

**Bottom line**, Niagara Region has a considerably higher ratio of deaths to total cases (8.2) versus Canada (5.4), Ontario (5.7), and Toronto (4.9).

Again, while these numbers may not appear to be large relative to the over all population in Canada, it continues to hit home no matter where you live.

Each of you must decide whether it is important for Dr Mustafa Hirji, acting medical officer of health (905-888-8248 ext 7388) to publish more detailed reports by community and locale, rather than leave it up to our media to keep the public informed.

Finn Madison
NOTL

Good Samaritans providing masks, making homeless

Recently the scientific and medical community recommended that everyone should be wearing a face mask when leaving their residence due to the COVID-19 problem.

Good idea, but just try and find such an item.

All retail stores who have a supply of masks carry the professional type which are properly reserved for hospital staff etc. An employee at Shoppers Drug Mart who was wearing a “basic” mask told me that she had been forced to sell them to customers who just went home.

I finally telephoned Penny Coles at the NOTL Local newspaper to see if maybe she was aware of any local volunteer groups who may be making masks. Within a few hours Penny called me with a local address and I was surprised to find the Good Samaritans lived only a few short blocks from me.

This lady is part of a volunteer group who sews these masks and all donated proceeds go to a local homeless shelter.

While the masks are very well made and include a filter, they are meant for the regular population and not for professional use such as hospital staff.

This group of volunteers should be congratulated for the time and effort spent in not only helping locals with protection, but also raising funds for the less fortunate.

My personal thanks to the volunteers and Penny and NOTL Local newspaper D. Todd NOTL

Letters! We want letters!

If you have a letter to the editor you’d like to see published, please send it to penny@notlocal.com.

Please try to keep it to about 350 words. Sorry, but we won’t publish anonymous letters. The deadline is Monday at noon.

NOTL LOCAL

Letters

Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie Special to The Local

While the pandemic shrank the number of pages of THE LOCAL, Auchterlonie on Astrology will also downsize to one paragraph.

Thursday, April 30: The Sun is in stubborn Taurus, and the Moon is in luxurious Leo, and they together form a perfect 90 degree angle at 4:38 p.m.

One part of you says yes, yes, yes. The other part says no, no, no. Fortunately, a clever idea later in this evening opens a door that was previously invisible. This is the door to your feelings.


Watch for the full Auchterlonie on Astrology on the notlocal.com Thursday, and on THE NOTL Local Facebook page.
NOTL Golf Club ‘ready to go’

Penny Coles
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Course is busy these days, but with a different purpose.
The course was in good shape and set to open March 25, with owner-operator John Wiens expecting a great start to the season.
He was ready for it, after two years of disappointing spring weather, but this year, “the way the spring was unfolding, we were excited to get going and to have the club house open.”
Of course that hasn’t happened, but members have been “incredibly supportive,” Wiens says.
Fortunately, the club “has put some money aside for a rainy summer, never expecting Bottle drop-off for cadets a permanent fixture

Penny Coles
The Local

Scott Ruttan has the perfect set-up to help local cadets in their bottle collection fundraiser.
The owner of J&S Performance on East and West Line, at Niagara Stone Road, busy at this time of year with sales and service of mower equipment.
But one corner of the property is also busy with locals dropping off bottles and cans that represent a significant amount of cash for the 809 Newark Squadron. The Van Noorts donated the J&S Performance sign.
The business and bottle drive for the J&S Performance sign.

Local staff

Village markets may open, but will look different

For those who drive by the brightly coloured picnic tables along Niagara Stone Road by The Village, and wonder whether the popular weekly markets will return this season, co-ordinator Sharon Brinsmead-Taylor has some information to share.
Public events are on hold until June 30 at this point, and “if and when things do begin to open up, we know that the SupperMarket will not be able to run it as it has in the past.”
What that means, she says, “we really are not sure.
We are working on a few scenarios to attempt to salvage some type of a season, and support our vendors.”
That will depend on getting approval from the Town, and the Niagara Region public health department, she says, promising to keep the public “updated as things transpire.”
The good news, Brinsmead-Taylor says, is that she is working closely with the regional health department to have the Farmers’ Market open on the scheduled date of May 23. “The provincial government has deemed farmers’ markets as an essential service, but it will be by no means be business as usual. The health of our customers and our vendors is our number one priority.”
There will be strict social distancing and food handling rules in effect, in accordance with the guidelines of the public health department, says Brinsmead-Taylor. “As an alternative to grocery store shopping, we will offer an open-air ‘Food Less touched option.’”
Getting local food into local hands, while supporting the farming, community, is more important now than ever, she says.
“However, the uncertainty of the SupperMarket in 2020 presents us with challenges in operating our Farmers’ Market this season. The income that the Market @ The Village has received from the SupperMarket over the years has been used to subsidize our Farmers’ Market, making it an affordable place for our farmers and food vendors to sell their goods.”
The costs incurred to run the weekly seasonal market are not covered by the reasonable rates the farmers are charged, she says.
“This year, we will need the help of our community more than ever. Several local businesses have come forward, offering us cut-rates on their services, and donations. We truly appreciate their support.
If any of our local businesses feel they could be of assistance, please ask them to reach out directly to me.”
Also, to give people something to brighten their days, says Brinsmead-Taylor, on the weekends leading up to the opening of the Farmers’ Market (May 1, 2, 3, May 8, 9, 10, May 15, 16, and 17), Niagara Flower Growers will set up at the site with “contactless sales” of their hydrangeas and Boston ferns. They will be open those days from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
To reach Brinsmead-Taylor, email notlmarket@gmail.com.
Young couple walking for Canadian Cancer Society

Adrienne Keller and her husband Matt, a young couple living in the Old Town, like to walk, and getting outside has become even more important now, with them both working from home in close quarters. Adrienne says they feel very fortunate to be able to go out their front door and head towards the Commons and the Niagara River Recreation Trail, two beautiful places to walk, getting some exercise for themselves and Ernie, their energetic puppy.

Earlier this month, when Adrienne realized it was Daffodil Month, and all fundraisers, including the door-to-door campaign, and many other events, had been cancelled due to COVID-19. She calls herself a “cancer fighter,” and has participated in several Relay for Life and Rankin Cancer Run fundraising events. Realizing this year that wouldn’t be possible, she wondered what she could do to help out with such an important cause, “without breaking any rules of this lockdown.”

They are very grateful to be living in a small cottage on Platoff Street, which belongs to Matt’s 90-year-old grandmother. It allows them to live in the Old Town, while being close enough to her to check in and make sure she’s okay. Although the cottage is small, there is a definite advantage of being close to walking trails.

With support from the Hamilton office of the Canadian Cancer Society, they have committed to walking 20 kilometres along the Niagara River Recreation Trail this Saturday, May 2. That takes them, and Ernie, from home to Queenston and back again, says Adrienne.

The Hamilton office is also helping to promote their walk, and they are hoping others may think about doing something similar.

There is a Cancer Society fundraising page for donations, and any help and support is greatly appreciated, she says. “We’re ready to get walking.”

To donate, go to https://support.cancer.ca/site/TR/IFE_ON_Event/IFE_ON_General?px=13404939&pg=personal&fr_id=27159

Adrienne and Matt Keller, with Ernie, will walk 20 kilometres along the Niagara Parkway Recreation Trail Saturday, hoping to raise money for cancer research. (Photo supplied)
Closure on Red Roof clients, families

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

For Dani Botbyl and her family, the past seven weeks have been challenging ones.

Her son Devon, 16, was born with a rare chromosomal condition that leaves him with global delays and autistic tendencies. For more than a decade, Red Roof Retreat has been Devon's "happy place." Since the COVID-19 pandemic became a reality, though, he hasn't been able to attend the various programs he usually enjoys.

Stefanie Bjorgan and her staff made the difficult decision on March 13 to close all locations of Red Roof Retreat. The shutdown was necessary, as the first Niagara on the Lake resident of Ina Grafton Gage Village in St. Catharines, contracted the virus was a resident of Ina Grafton Gage Village in St. Catharines.

That complex houses one of three locations for Red Roof Retreat, including the therapeutic swimming pool, a five-pin bowling alley, and activity rooms where Red Roof's adult day program, teen night, Saturday camp and Dad's Swim are held.

The services and activities provided by Red Roof at the Niagara Region School Board, and at Red Roof. "This has really thrown me for a loop," adds Dani. "It's heartbreaking to see the programs that bring so much joy to your child being cut off at the knees. His social network has been cut off. And we depend on a lot of the services at Red Roof to give us an opportunity to reenergize and get things done around the house. Now those things are on hold as well."

Luckily for the Botbyls, Dani can work from home, and Scott is off work during Devon's breaks. "We'd go and enjoy the outdoor space there," says Dani. "We'd visit the animals, play on the playground equipment, use the walking trail around the pond." As Devon grew older, he became involved in every program that was appropriate for his age.

With all those programs currently on hold, his mom admires Devon for being a "trooper."

"He's coping better than what I had anticipated," says Dani. "Though his behaviour has been calm, right from the beginning he would wake up and ask, 'is it Saturday camp today?' And still, seven weeks later, he's asking 'is there a Red Roof program today?' So he misses it, and we all miss it too."

Devon is an extremely social young man, she says, who thrives on his connections with others at Eden High School, and at Red Roof. "This has really thrown me for a loop," adds Dani. "It's heartbreaking to see the programs that bring so much joy to your child being cut off at the knees. His social network has been cut off. And we depend on a lot of the services at Red Roof to give us an opportunity to reenergize and get things done around the house. Now those things are on hold as well."

And when I picture some of our clients who are very physically active, or who have autism, they need to move, they need to get out, and they don't deal well with change. They don't deal well without a structure. It just breaks my heart."

Bjorgan experiences all of this first-hand with her own son, 26-year-old Garrett. She and her husband Moe share Garrett's care with nurses and Personal Support Workers, and that situation is still happening for the family, to a degree. "It's hard to know what to do, she explains. "To take him out of his routine is very stressful, and some of those workers want their jobs. We have been super diligent, cleaning, disinfecting, and communicating really well with each other."

"We did have a scare," she adds. "One of our nurses became ill, but she tested negative for COVID-19. Every day you just keep your fingers crossed." Looking to the near future, Bjorgan still can't say how Red Roof Retreat will get back to business as usual. "When we look at all of our programs," she says, "our most essential ones would be our daily programs and our respite. We would probably get those going first. We would do a slow start, we wouldn't just open our doors and say let's go. We don't know whether or not this virus is going to spike back up, and I'd hate to open all of our doors and then be shut down again."

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KNAUER, LOTTE—Passed away peacefully on Tuesday, April 21, 2020 with complications of a stroke. Predeceased by her beloved Rudy. Mother to Andrew (Karen) and Jason. Predeceased by her sister Wanda and brother Kurt of Germany. Lotte was born in Romania in 1934. She came to Niagara-on-the-Lake in the 1950’s to marry the love of her life Rudy. They built a legacy of love and laughter together. Lotte will be sadly missed by her furry sidekick “Schnitzel”. The main street of Niagara-on-the-Lake will never be the same without her smile. A special thanks to all of the kind and caring front line workers at Niagara General Hospital who went above and beyond to make her passing peaceful.

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com.
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