

# The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Town mourns loss of former councillor  
**Dennis Dick**  
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Although there was no permit issued by the Town to close Queen Street, supporters and protesters clashed near the intersection, closing the street and impacting businesses. (Mike Balsom)

## Lord Mayor, council frustrated with lack of control over continuing protests

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

The Town is doing what it can to help the horse and carriage business, and to mitigate the impact of protesters on businesses and residents, says Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

She says she understands the frustration of those who would like to see some controls in place regarding the protesters, and councillors are also frustrated that they haven't been able to do more to help.

The Town has been looking at all of the possibilities, she adds, and is in the process of drafting an easement agreement that would provide a buffer zone around the horses and carriages when they're parked on King Street, outside the Prince of Wales Hotel.

There is also some work being done to connect cameras at the intersection of King

and Queen Streets, that will help the Niagara Regional Police monitor the activities at the corner where both the protesters and the supporters take up their positions.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor, sworn in Monday, has initiated attempts with the Crown Attorney's office to discuss the possibilities of charges being laid, Disero says, but that has been difficult to arrange, with offices closed during the pandemic.

"We're trying to get anyone we can to help," says Disero.

She did not attend Sunday's protest, and she wrote to all members of council asking them not to, she says, on the advice of the NRP and the Town's legal counsel.

She was told the rally was being organized in memory of Regan Russell, a 65-year-old animal rights activist, who was struck and killed by

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## Supporters, protesters take to the streets Sunday

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

Tensions between local carriage supporters and animal rights activists reached their highest level in the three-year conflict this Sunday afternoon on Queen Street.

About 80 carriage business supporters gathered in front of Parliament Oak School on King Street just after noon to prepare for the walk to the corner of King and Queen Streets. Signs and

T-shirts were distributed by one of the organizers of the counter-protest, Jennifer Jones-Butski of the group Locals for Carriages.

The group had come together in response to the promise that At War for Animals Niagara (AWFAN) was planning a rally in memory of Regan Russell, a 65-year-old animal rights activist, who was struck and killed by a tractor-trailer in June while protesting the treatment of pigs at a Burl-

ington slaughterhouse.

"It is and it isn't (a counter-protest), said Jones-Butski. "A lot of people have always wanted to counter-protest them but we decided instead to protest the Town and the Niagara Regional Police. We want them to make what's happening stop."

"We're okay if the protesters come down here and stand peacefully and protest," she continued. "That's their right. But it is not their right to harass, to intimidate

or to bully."

Jones-Butski was adamant that Sunday's group was organized by the community itself in support of Sentineal Carriages, and was not officially a Locals for Carriages event.

Referring to Bill 156, passed in June by the Ontario government entrenching the rights of animal owners, Laura Sentineal expressed her ongoing frustration with the conflict.

"Our charter and our

rights are all about striking a balance," lamented Sentineal. "This is a very unbalanced situation and we need to restore balance. I'm not saying they don't have a right to their opinions or expressing their opinions. But it can't continue in the same vein."

"This is about silently speaking for our town," she continued. "We all live here, we want to enjoy our town, and not feel afraid to come downtown, and not to be intimidated."

The ongoing battle has been taking a toll on Sentineal and her family. This past Wednesday she claims they received an anonymous phone call threatening to burn her barn down. "For the last year and a half, I've been thinking of these people not so much as activists, but terrorists," she said. "This just brought it to that level."

The carriage supporters peacefully marched down

Continued on page 4



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# Sentineals concerned for safety of horses

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

It's been a stressful few years for the Sentineal family and their business, but Laura Sentineal says they are remaining positive, going out with their head down and focussing on doing their job.

The ramped-up protest against the horse and carriage business, carried out Sunday, took over Simcoe Park and Queen Street for the afternoon, with supporters also taking to the streets.

Laura and Fred Sentineal, who operate Sentineal Carriages, were on-hand for the protest, with a plan to try to keep the demonstration peaceful, safe and respectful, she says.

Their T-shirts also helped to spread their message that the protesters are not the only ones with charter rights.

Their horses were kept at home, in the pasture, where they would be safe.

The safety of her family and the horses, whom the Sentineals consider part of the family, came under attack when Laura received a phone call last Wednesday from someone who wouldn't identify themselves but wanted to warn her about an online threat to burn down the Sentineal barn.

There was no indication

the threat is associated in any manner with At War For Animals Niagara (AWFAN).

Sentineal says she doesn't get involved in social media discussions, trying to stay out of the conflicts, but when she took some time to assimilate the anonymous threat, she decided she needed to post it on social media. Making it public, she thought, might also provide a level of safety.

protests are hurting downtown businesses, and creating a reputation that the town is a place to avoid. "We're feeling sick about what is happening to our whole town. It's not about us anymore. People are so fed up. People are afraid to go downtown. It's crazy," she says.

The horse-and-carriage protesters, representing AWFAN, have been taking over the main intersection in

support of the horse-drawn carriages, and have expressed their concern over what they see as increasingly aggressive tactics of the protesters.

Sentineal says her lawyer has told her a municipal by-law could be implemented to create a buffer around the area where drivers wait on King Street with the horses and carriages for pick-ups and drop-offs, and that the protesters could be assigned a location a distance away from the busy intersection. "It's defensible, and justifiable," she says. "There is lots (the Town) can do."

In July, Lord Mayor Betty Disero made a motion to look at creating a buffer, and some other measures to keep the protests peaceful, but there has been no public discussion since. They are looking into that buffer, and what else can be done by the municipality, Disero said Monday, admitting she and other councillors are also frustrated they can't do more.

During recent years of debate about taking some control of the protests, town representatives have said their hands are tied, with the right to peacefully protest enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

While the protesters aren't the only ones whose rights are protected, says Sentineal, she is guessing the Town doesn't want to get embroiled in a court case involving charter rights.

"Our lawyer explains it this way: every time a law is passed, or if someone is detained or arrested, our freedom is limited, for the greater good."

Whether it's speeding when driving, or wearing a mask during COVID, she says, laws are passed that curtail freedom, but in the case of protesters, the Town and Niagara Regional Police seem to be avoiding a court battle that would challenge those rights.

Responding to criticism from the local carriage supporters and asking for protocols from both sides, the NRP

“ We’re feeling sick about what is happening to our whole town. ”

Laura Sentineal

She and the horse-and-carriage supporters have been critical of the Niagara Regional Police, and their lack of action against protesters, but when she called the police about the threat, she was contacted by a detective, "and we had a really good conversation. They are taking it very seriously and they are helping us. They've really stepped up for us. It's been wonderful, and very much appreciated."

As stressful as the aggressive protests have become, her concern, Sentineal says, is on a broader scale. She knows the

town for three years now, with no end in sight. They are fighting what they call speciesism, or objectifying animals, by humans who use the animals for their own purposes, including pulling carriages. They don't agree with the property status of animals owned by humans, for any reason. Their goal is to put an end to the use of horse-drawn carriages.

With discussions about the protests moving behind closed doors during council meetings, it's difficult to know what councillors are thinking, although many have spoken out



Laura and Fred Sentineal kept their horses at home, for safety reasons, but said they would attend the protest to try to keep it peaceful and respectful. (Mike Balsom)

released a statement in July saying their job was to keep the peace, and maintain neutrality.

"There have been many reports, police calls for service, meetings, along with investigations resulting in cautions, and also officer discretion for both sides. We have reviewed the applicable case laws as they apply to peaceful assembly, and sought legal counsel from the office of the local Crown Attorney," said Insp. James McCaffery of the NRP, who has taken the lead on liaising with the Town, the horse-and-carriage owners, protesters, and the group he calls counter-protesters, although they object to that term, believing their role is one of support for the local horse-and-carriage business.

The Locals for Carriages group, Sentineal says, has been helpful in many ways. They've done some fundraising to help with legal costs, they've raised awareness of the issues, and they've helped educate people.

"They're not a protest group. They are supporters, and that comes in many forms."

It has included offers from members to sleep in the Sentineal barn, or be there during the day, to help protect the horses and her family.

"There has been so much

unsolicited support, offers to help in any way. That is the heart of what the group is really about," she says.

When the protests began, "we felt so alone, and very vulnerable, besieged by these people." Their supporters "have made us feel like we're not alone."

Members of the Locals for Carriages group have worked hard to convince the Sentineals their business is appreciated by the community, they've recognized publicly that the horses are loved and well-cared for, and they continue to help in any way they can, she says. "That's what this group has been all about."

Sentineal says she feels for the councillors who are trying to do what is best for the town.

"It's a brutal job, but I really really think for the sake of the town, something has to be done. You see the investment, you see the hard work of the people who have made this town what it is," she says. "I get that the Town and the residents don't want to go down a long road of legal costs."

But while the reputation of the town has for years been "beyond reproach, it's suffering now, and if something doesn't change, it will affect the brand people have worked so hard to create," she says.

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## Notice to Residents Regarding NOTL Hospital Letter

A letter sent via mail and titled "Please bring back the NOTL Hospital" has been circulating to residents within various areas of Town. The letter, inviting residents who wish to have a hospital in Niagara-on-the-Lake to contact Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Town Councillors, is signed by Angela Bell on behalf of the "Committee to Bring Back NOTL Hospital" and concerned citizens of NOTL.

While Town Staff and Council appreciate residents' joint efforts in this regard, the letter has created quite a bit of confusion for residents. It is important to note that the "Committee to Bring Back NOTL Hospital" is not a Committee of Council, and Staff were not aware of the contents of the circulating letter.

The Town has a Hospital Site Steering Committee which was established to provide recommendations to Council regarding the process for determining the future use of the former hospital land (176 Wellington Street). This Committee recently provided recommendations to Council for Staff to send out Requests for Expressions of Interest for the site.

Further public engagement is anticipated in the future, to ensure stakeholders in the community, along with members of Council, have their interests represented during the consultation process.

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# Disero suggests working with carriage supporters

Continued from page 1

a tractor-trailer in June while protesting the treatment of pigs at a Burlington slaughterhouse.

"Yesterday's issue was far bigger than being against the carriages," she says of Sunday's protest.

"It was an escalated fight between two polarized groups, using the tragic fatality of a woman to try to make a point. I don't believe it was appropriate for me or any member of council to be there. I don't believe we should be taking this poor woman's fatal accident on one side or another. I don't believe it's an issue NOTL councillors or residents should be commenting on. I can only say a fatal accident occurred, and

we send our condolences to the family and friends of Regan Russell."

The protesters, representatives of At War For Animals Niagara, campaign against "speciesism," or objectifying animals by humans who use the animals for their own purposes, including pulling carriages. They have promised they will continue their protests in town until the horse-drawn carriage business ceases operation.

But on Sunday they said they were also there to "restore justice" to Regan Russell's name, protesting some comments they say were made by the Locals for Carriages group about her death.

Disero says although she knew the event was taking place, she thought the protesters were going to stand on the

sidewalk outside Simcoe Park, which they are allowed to do.

They did not have permission to use the park or the amphitheater, or to close off the street, and if they do that again, she says, they will need a permit, and will have to pay for police presence.

Jennifer Jones-Butski, organizer of the Locals for Carriages group, wrote to town council last week saying she was representing concerned residents of NOTL. Sunday's group, also concerned residents, she says, were there to protest the Town and the Niagara Regional Police, not the protesters.

"The lack of action on the part of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Niagara Regional Police has created an unjust and dangerous situation. If we are unable to inspire the necessary conversation and subsequent legislative changes, we are prepared to exhaust all legal means required to end the injustice described herein," the letter says, detailing alleged incidents of "harassment, terrified and traumatized workers, horrified and intimidated patrons, clashes with families and a peaceful street corner that is no longer safe."

The letter says the Town

and police "are both complicit in this injustice and therefore liable for the resulting damages incurred by countless businesses and individuals."

Disero says there have been ongoing discussions "about our right as a municipality to protect our businesses, residents and public safety," although some behind closed doors, with details that can't be reported to the public.

She spoke of frustration felt by members of council, residents, Locals for Carriages, the Sentineal family carriage owners, other businesses, "by everybody. I wish I had a magic wand. This isn't the

impression we want to give to the outside world."

Disero says as much as she supports the Locals for Carriages group, she wishes they would work with the Town, to fight a fight they can win.

With two sides fighting each other, as they did Sunday, she says, "nobody won anything. It just caused more pain for the family of Regan Russell, and made more people angry."

She believes there is "absolutely" a way to win, and it doesn't involve "unintentionally handing the protesters a stage and a microphone. That's not a fight you can win."



Mark Powell, husband of Regan Russell, speaks from the stage of the Simcoe Park amphitheatre, with his son Joshua behind him. (Mike Balsom)

# Willowbank asks for bylaw exemption to allow meadow

**Penny Coles  
The Local**

Willowbank has been charged for violating a bylaw for having a meadow of grass or weeds over 20 centimetres, and is asking council for an exemption to the bylaw.

Caitlin Wooll, the education coordinator of Willowbank's School of Restoration Arts, told councillors the Queenston estate meadow has existed for a decade, and has never received a notice of violation before. The meadow shouldn't fall under that bylaw, she says — it's a grassland habitat similar to other meadows, such as outside Fort George on the Commons.

There is a "clearly defined

path" from the gate on Queenston Street, on the east side of the estate, through the meadow to the front door of the building, with clear signage explaining about the meadow and asking people to stay on the path, she said.

Wooll believes there was one complaint about the length of the grass, which prompted the visit from a bylaw officer, she told councillors.

"As soon as we got the violation, I contacted Niagara Parks," she explained. An expert surveyed the meadow, finding 30 different plants, including milkweed, which the butterflies like, plants that attract birds, and two baby deer who nest in the meadow when their mother is out getting food. The expert

was confident, she says, that the meadow is significant.

Her stance, she says, is that the meadow is long-standing, beautiful, and "so necessary" for all the insects, animals and plants found there. It is very eco-

logically significant, and part of the cultural landscape, she said.

Coun. Gary Burroughs made a notice of motion that it be allowed to remain, that is expected to be discussed at next month's council meeting.



The meadow leading from the village up to the front entrance is significant, and should be permitted, councillors were told Monday. (Penny Coles)

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Issue Dates: Every Thursday Deadline: Mondays at noon

# 'Restoring justice to Regan's name' motivated protest

Continued from page 1

King Street and took up positions on the sidewalk on all four corners in front of the Prince of Wales Hotel. The area of the street usually occupied by the horses and carriages was instead populated by police cruisers, there to ensure the situation would stay under control. The Sentineals decided to keep the horses and carriages at home to ensure they remained out of harm's way.

In the meantime, a similar number of supporters of AWFAN and Pig Save Toronto, an organization to which Russell belonged, had been gathering at the Simcoe Park bandshell.

Co-organizer Jason King took to the stage there to lead the group in song and to encourage protesters to keep their cool if confronted by the carriage supporters. His encouragement was needed when local Peter Flynn made his way down the hill, shouting at the gathering through to "go home." Flynn and others continued to shout at the stage from the hill near the playground for about 20 minutes.

King made reference to a previous rally where Jones-Butski was seen holding a sign that suggested that



Horse-and-carriage supporters make their way from the former Parliament Oak School along King Street to Queen Street, where they took up positions on all four corners. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Regan Russell's death was actually a suicide. Much of this group's focus seemed to be on retaliating against that claim.

"We found that very offensive," said King. "And leading up to that display, Jennifer Jones-Butski had made several social media posts suggesting that Regan Russell was responsible for her own death, and therefore it's a suicide. So we decided to bring people here today to restore justice to Regan Russell's name."

"We obviously have publicly apologized," Jones-Butski

told The Local. "We didn't intend to cause any upset to the family. The signs were kind of a means of showing them what they do. We told them if they were going to call it a murder, we were going to call it suicide. We don't think it was a suicide, we think it was a tragic accident. But we were trying to show them how equally stupid it looks."

Russell's widowed husband Mark Powell, and her stepson Joshua were among the speakers on stage. Though their presence in NOTL was prompted by the

clash over the sign, and Powell has publicly denounced the statement of the Locals for Carriages about his wife's death, on Sunday, he focused mostly on the horses.

"Just because you've done something one way for a hundred years, that doesn't make it the right way," Powell said. "How it affects the commerce of Niagara-on-the-Lake is not our concern. It affects the horses. Since they can't speak for themselves, we will, and we will be loud."

Following a series of songs, poems and practice chants, the opposing group wound its way up the pathway from the bandshell to the corner, where they were immediately met by the carriage supporters. Forced to funnel off to the side, the group wound its way to the intersection, stopping traffic in all directions, then taking stationary posts on all four crosswalks.

Niagara Regional Police (NRP) mobilized cruisers that had been stationed into position one block up in each direction to reroute automobile traffic, while six other officers remained on site to maintain order.

NRP Insp. Jim McCaffery says the officers were there to keep the peace and ensure

public safety. The officers were approached by many carriage supporters who expressed their frustration with the disruption to the town at the hands of the animal activists.

Shannon Wiebe, owner of Queen Street business Wow Me Gadgets, was one of the people who approached the police.

"I was asking him how we can get this away from here so that I can get customers into my store," she told The Local. "You've got a group of people who aren't from this community, protesting something in our community, who are not taxpayers in our community, hurting businesses. While I support the carriages, what they (the protesters) are doing is harming our local residents and businesses."

Ginny Lovelace, a local resident who works in animal activism, was seen confronting animal rights activists in the intersection. She says she understands the need for organizations like AWFAN, but that the Sentineals' animals do not need them.

"These animals are cared for," said Lovelace. "They're protected, and if they stop working, they'll be put down. These horses are working animals. I don't think these

people understand that this is a breed and this is their job. I think their hearts are in the right place but I think they are ill-informed."

At one point, the animal rights activists marched from the corner down to the end of the Queen Street business district and back to the intersection, where they sat on the road to chant their slogans, before getting up and dispersing back to Simcoe Park, about 4 p.m.

McCaffery confirmed Monday that there had been one report of a possible assault taking place involving a carriage supporter who was in a wheelchair. The complaint is being investigated. Other than the disruption to traffic and businesses, and the noise level, overall it was a peaceful protest, he said.

"The way I look at it, there were no arrests, nobody was injured and there were no damages," McCaffery said. "To me, that's successfully keeping the peace."

Three years in and it seems the conflict between the two groups is not soon going to dissipate. "This was the largest (protest) and by far the most acrimonious," added McCaffery. "This problem is not going to be solved by the Niagara Regional Police. That's not our goal."



Jason King, one of the AWFAN protest leaders, takes up his position on Queen Street.



Locals Danny McCarthy and Pete Flynn don't like the message they're hearing from protesters in Simcoe Park.



Business owner Shannon Wiebe tells the police the protest is hurting local businesses, which suffered from the street closure Sunday.

# Local businesses, Shaw Festival receiving federal grants

## Shaw to begin small, outdoor performances

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

The federal government is investing almost \$900,000 in Niagara-on-the-Lake's tourism industry, supporting the Shaw Festival and about 50 small and medium-sized local businesses who are suffering during COVID.

The festival is receiving a grant of \$400,000 to stage outdoor theatre performances, and an investment of \$500,000 will allow for grants of up to \$20,000 for businesses. The grants will be administered through a committee of two town councillors, Eduardo Lafforgue, president of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, and a representative from the wine industry, said Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

The announcement was made during a virtual meeting

Tuesday afternoon by Melanie Joly, the minister of economic development, official languages and responsible for FedDev Ontario.

"It won't be onerous, it will be a fairly simple process to apply for it," said Disero. Because not all businesses will apply for \$20,000, which is to offset the costs of reopening and adapting to the pandemic," Disero said. "I see this expanded beyond \$20,000, within the realm of that \$500,000."

The project is expected to support 50 businesses and maintain about 100 jobs.

"Our tourism industry and the 1.8 million Canadians it employs have been hit hard by COVID-19, and we're here for them," said Joly. "This funding from FedDev Ontario will help Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Shaw Festival continue welcoming visitors, adapt

to the new reality and keep supporting the region's visitor economy. Our message to the Niagara's tourism sector and those whose livelihoods depend on it is clear: we've been here for you with immediate measures, we're here for you now as our economy reopens, and we'll get through this, together. We're working with you to support good, local jobs and help Niagara tourism come back strong."

Joly said with borders closed to tourists, people are being enticed to visit locally, and to do things differently. Tourism businesses in NOTL have been "hard hit" she said, and "we wanted to make sure businesses and their employees knew we were there for them."

Disero said the funding will help to reduce the impacts of COVID-19, "and in some cases, serve as a life preserv-

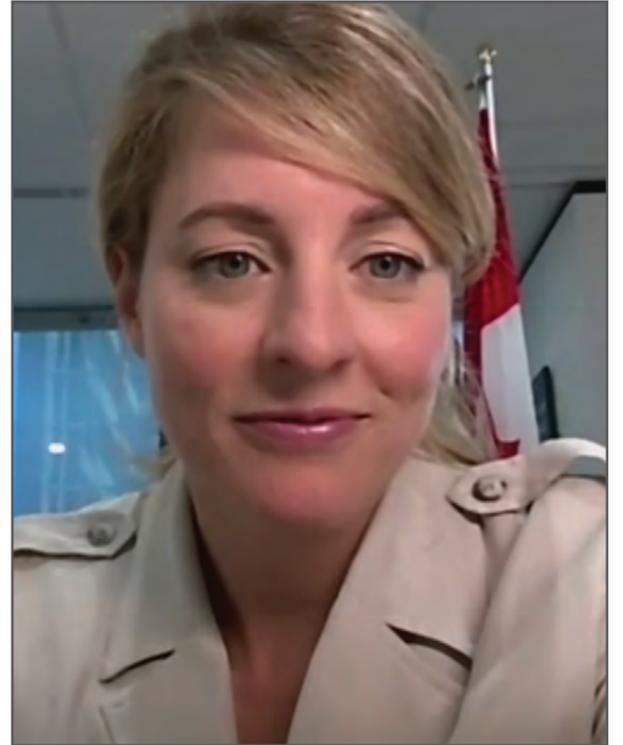
er for many local businesses, especially heading into the shoulder season. Thanks to this opportunity, and continued support from the Province, working together, we are confident that Niagara-on-the-Lake will recover stronger than ever."

Thanking the minister for the funding, Disero said she is looking forward to being able to see an outdoor Shaw performance with Joly, and sitting down with her afterward at one of the town's patios.

"I'm looking forward to that, too," Joly said.

Tim Jennings, executive director of the Shaw Festival, was also delighted with the announcement of funding.

"On behalf of the Shaw Festival, our artists, craftspeople, technicians, volunteers, board and admin workers, we are thrilled to be able to partner



Melanie Joly, the minister of economic development, official languages and responsible for FedDev Ontario, made the grant announcement at a virtual meeting Tuesday afternoon. (Screenshot)

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# Quartetto Gelato, Joe Pillitteri filmed live, online Sunday

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

Oboist Colin Maier of Quartetto Gelato is positive he and his group have played Music Niagara every year of the festival's existence.

He assures The Local in a telephone conversation from his Hamilton-area home, though, that no one has ever seen a show quite like this Sunday's online event.

Popular local comedian Joe Pillitteri joins the quartet for a session of music and hilarity sure to have you laughing in the comfort of your own home. The program was recorded by Niagara College's broadcasting department at Chateau des Charmes Winery in front of a group of about 16 Music Niagara sponsors.

Humour is nothing new to a Quartetto Gelato concert. Those who have seen them in previous Music Niagara engagements would know that besides a repertoire of classical works teamed with tangos, gypsy, klezmer, jazz and folk songs from around the globe, they always engage their audiences with humour and dance during their performances.

But with Pillitteri along for the ride, the humour element is kicked up a couple of notches.

He sees his role in the show as a bit like Doc Severinson talking to Johnny Carson on the Tonight Show. "Between songs we would kind of banter back and forth," says Pillitteri. "The end result was to try to get the audience to understand a bit about the music they were performing, but it was fun, too."

Pillitteri loved the experience, which was also totally new to him. "Their natural ability to mix it up with the audience, and their music selection reflected that as well. I seriously teared up twice during their performance, and then laughed hard at the lyrics to some of their other songs."

Maier echoes Pillitteri's enthusiasm, and loved work-

ing with him.

"He was so fun," Maier says. "We had this idea, never meeting in person beforehand, we felt the best way was to treat it like a late night show with Jimmy Fallon or something like that. We told him a bit about what we were doing, and he kind of riffed off that. He was really, really easy to work with, very funny."

Both Pillitteri and Maier appreciated the ability to finally perform in front of a live audience, albeit a very small one, after all this time under pandemic restrictions.

"I was a bit worried about the small audience," explains Pillitteri. "If you tell a joke that falls flat to 200 people, someone will still laugh, so there's energy there you can still feel

off. When you tell a joke that falls flat to 16 people, that's a tough crowd for comics. If it's not funny, then it really sounds

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# EDITORIAL

## What can be done to stop the craziness? And who will do it?

To all those who love the Sentineal family, and their horses, you will understand the feeling of just wanting to wrap them in a cocoon that will protect them and their business from anyone meaning them harm.

Because really, as much as we want to help them and keep them safe, it doesn't seem as if those who might have it in their power to do so, are going to.

We all understand about rights, including the right to have strong opinions and voice them publicly. That's what our country is all about, it's one of the reasons we're so grateful to be Canadians.

However, when we witness what occurred this weekend in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and what has been occurring to a

somewhat lesser degree for the last three years, it feels like this craziness has to stop, that there has to be something that can be done to at least bring it down to a tolerable level.

We look to those in charge, in this case, the police and the municipality, to do that, and instead, they're letting us down. They've really done nothing, not even managed to keep order.

They throw up their hands and cite charter rights.

We understand protesters are permitted to stand on a street corner to protest. They can choose to be vegan, they can believe it's wrong for restaurants to serve meat, or to love a family pet, or to train dogs to aid the police or provide horses for them to ride,

wrong to teach dogs how to keep autistic children safe or help a blind person navigate through life.

And those who love the Sentineals and their beautiful horses of course have every right to be on the same street corner and say they don't agree, that the protesters are wrong, that they have no right to try to close down one business, never mind many businesses, or even a whole town.

So where does it end? When views clash, when people get angry, nobody's minds are changed. People just get more deeply entrenched in their beliefs, more convinced that they're right. They're not going to just give up and quietly go away. So do the same people just take to their space at the busiest

intersection in NOTL week after week until there is nobody left on Queen Street to notice the signs, or hear the words of protests?

If these angry clashes can't be stopped, surely they can be controlled. The police say their duty is to

be fair and keep the peace. They were present at Sunday's protest, but they need to do more than show up on one day.

We don't have the answers. We do know both the police and the municipal leaders talk about

solutions. What are they? When are we going to see them? Or is the solution to do nothing, to see how long it takes to accomplish the destruction of a town?

**Penny Coles**  
The Local



## Auchterlonie on Astrology

**Bill Auchterlonie**  
Special to The Local

Again, a teaser for this week, with the full version on Facebook at The NOTL Local and at notllocal.com.

Wednesday, Sept. 2: By far and away, this is the busiest day of the week with the full Moon in Pisces part of it at 1:21 a.m. This Full Moon

sees the Sun in discriminating Virgo and the Moon in imaginative Pisces. Uranus, Mars, Mercury and Venus all have important roles to play. Your best advice comes through both your intense feelings, and your clever ideas. Get them working on the same page. And it was on Sept. 2, 1902 that Georges Melies' film *A Trip to the*

*Moon* was first seen in Paris. Martin Scorsese has an historic film, based on Melies' 1902 work, playing now on Netflix. It is called *Hugo*, and is a treat to watch.

And That's Auchterlonie on Astrology for this week. Check out the full version on The Local's Facebook page or on my website [www.auchterlonieonastrology.ca](http://www.auchterlonieonastrology.ca).

## Enjoying Queen Street



Cyclists make the most of the good weather and enjoy the scenery along Queen Street. (Fred Mercnik)



## Views from the couch

**Donald Combe**  
Special to The Local

Set at the end of the First World War, *The Grand* (1997) is another upstairs-downstairs drama that unfolds in eighteen episodes. The action takes place in the Grand Hotel, Manchester, but this time

there is a third element, the hotel guests. The characters, never stereotyped, have intriguingly genuine, flawed lives. Although centred on the family of the hotel owners, we are privileged to share in the complex actions of many varied characters. All the players are "real" and easy to identify with.

*Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to movies. His Facebook reviews have become popular with his friends and followers, and he has graciously agreed to share his opinions through "short and sweet" exclusives for The Local.*



## Letters! We want letters!

If you have a letter to the editor you'd like to see published, please send it to [penny@notllocal.com](mailto:penny@notllocal.com). Please try to keep it to about 350 words. Sorry, but we won't publish anonymous letters. The deadline is Monday at noon.

## The Niagara-on-the-Lake

# LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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The opinions expressed in submitted commentary, and letters to the editor, are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of The NOTL Local.

# COMMENT

## COVID and climate change: some similarities and differences



Owen Bjorgan  
Special to The Local

The most obvious and profound phenomenon climate and COVID share is how universal they are. Everyone and every creature on the face of the globe is along for the ride. Like humans, some species of animals who live in a bubble may not grasp the enormity of climate change or COVID, because neither are at their back door.

Both climate change and COVID are vectors of time. Both situations will evolve and grow with every sunset and sunrise, and we are left with the challenge to respond. Because they are both such massive and forward moving items, they don't discriminate.

Climate change's most regrettable effects are already hitting areas of the world with a more sensitive impact profile. These are regions where people live in high population densities and are exposed to volatile environments, often in poverty. Having said that, the same way COVID infected some of our world leaders, climate change's ripple effects can slowly creep up on the most affluent and protected areas of the world, too. It could be anywhere, but the arrival date of the challenge never gets set in stone.

That makes this pandemic and climate change economically costly. Wow, that feels like an understatement right now

more than ever. Both of these external pressures have beckoned some serious financial reshuffling, all over the world, in every country. Perhaps at a scale we've never understood or seen before.

Climate change couldn't have possibly smacked our economy the way COVID just did overnight, though. The main difference shows how one economic harm is human induced, while the other will be to 'blame' for climate change, probably when the effects start to irreversibly take hold.

It appears that when it's the classic dichotomy of economy versus environment, we ponder, bicker, and act slowly. When we were faced with the new hot conversation of economy versus human life, we really kicked into high gear.

Now, we have a triangle between economy, human life, and the environment. As a species at a global level of functioning, we seem to pick two of them at our best capacity. The category we neglect to align our interests with is the one that will sneak up the worst in the long run. COVID came fast, while climate change is relatively a sleeper, whose time is just waking up. Is our house ready? Or is it already on fire?

With the pandemic's arrival, we responded to a threat. The world took the steps it felt was most appropriate. Governments rolled out a lot of money and guidelines. Absolutely everyone had to take a step of some sorts. But herein lies another difference between the two — some countries aren't taking any steps

at all with regards to climate change, because unlike COVID, it hasn't been as immediately alarming yet.

Some prominent world leaders claim climate change isn't real or serious, and they are often in the same league of folks who also didn't handle the pandemic's arrival wisely.

Both climate change and the pandemic are biologically costly to our human health, and therefore, our health system. COVID can potentially inundate hospitals with patients, as the virus is the reason they are admitted. However, with climate change, a much bigger and fully encompassing health crisis is happening. Air, water, and soil quality all around the world are generally trending downwards. This sets the universal stage for higher likelihood of weaker immune systems or greater proneness to pollutants. We can simply expect more people to get more sick as our surrounding environment's quality and services deteriorate.

These two big topics also create human migration and displacement events. We've seen it in the news, those heart-breaking images of people in refugee camps, marching down roads with their limited belongings. The remarkable but dark truth is that this situation could come to fruition as a consequence of a serious storm, a predicted 50-year rise in sea level, or a sociopolitical conflict.

Three entirely different events, which can all cause the same result.

There is no doubt that COVID has exposed conflicts all over the world this year. It has done so indirectly, but we're aware of historical patterns where conflicts can grow to a bursting point, and then human displacement can occur.

I feel like the bursting point for climate change's uncontrollable effects are getting ready to do just that — burst. The science is in, and it tells us that once some natural systems tip over a certain threshold of stress, they can exponentially disappear and harm other areas around them on the way out.

The physical removal and manipulation of our natural landscapes are easier to see on the eye. When sea levels creep up on communities in the ocean and unusual floods wash

through their own records (like what is currently happening at the Three Gorges Dam in China), we see climate change's moments of growth. It's visible. One of the players we face is fast, and disturbingly personal. The other player is slow and

unassuming, at least giving us the grace of time to prepare for the battle.

Considering that time is the most valuable currency and can't be paid back, we should use it wisely, while it's on our side.



This photo is excellent imagery of how we interact with nature, and how such interactions have contributed to COVID and climate change. (Owen Bjorgan)

## LETTERS

### Residents concerned about tax rebate

*Editor's note: Ron Simkus was just one of many residents who responded to the issue of a tax rebate for business owners, as brought to the attention of many by resident Bruce Gitelman of Residents for Sustainable Tourism. Council was expected to debate the tax rebate at the continuation of the council meeting Tuesday evening, after The Local went to press.*

As a resident and taxpayer of Niagara-on-the-Lake, I am writing to express my concerns regarding the motion before council titled Commercial Tax Rebate.

- The motion is laser-focussed on the Heritage District tourism related businesses of NOTL and does not include the overall context that the COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating impacts on all businesses municipally, regionally, nationally and globally.
- With more job losses and multi-billion dollar bankruptcies yet to surface in our province, why are we jumping to allocate 'life support' subsidies to an isolated group of businesses when we don't yet fully comprehend the scale of mitigation measures we may have to invoke for everyone next year and for

years to follow?

- I have to sympathize with local businesses that exist on the boundaries of the Heritage District who feel disadvantaged by geography from receiving aid for their enterprises as well. Why are they expendable but not the Heritage District?
- The motion states 'COVID-19 has decimated the tourism industry, and is unlikely to return to previous historic levels for several years.' Will the businesses receiving this tax rebate radically alter their business plan to exit their dependence on tourism or will tax relief be required every year till the free-spending visitors return (if ever)?
- The motion directs staff to use funds from increased parking rates to cover the rebates, as if there is a windfall. Hasn't anybody noticed that on weekends, entire streets designated for parking revenue are completely vacant? The visitors currently coming to our town are innovative and aggressively locate alternate 'free parking' because they're basically too cheap or too broke to pay.
- The motion looks to staff to reach out to the Niagara

Region and get their buy-in to waive the Region's 'lion's share' of the tax rebate. Why would the Region do that?

- Earlier this year, I expressed my concern about the \$10 million line of credit facility the Town negotiated with RBC. The justification for obtaining this credit facility was to cover the cash call from the Niagara Region if NOTL failed to collect the aggregate property taxes that come due. In this case, unless the Region generously volunteers to participate in the tax rebate, we will be deliberately forced to use the credit facility to pay the Region the money they're owed and residents will eat the LOC debt.
- The benevolence extended through this motion will inevitably revert back to me, a residential taxpayer, to fund. Is Council really prepared to significantly raise my residential taxes to support the commercial side?
- According to town staff and the Niagara Region, there is no way to cut budgets further as an offset, so I feel, as a residential taxpayer, I'm being slowly trapped between a rock and a hard place.

Ron Simkus  
NOTL

## LETTERS

### Dog-walker makes disturbing discovery

This past Saturday I took my dog for a walk at the Commons as we often do. We decided to have a walk around the former Officers Quarters building in the fenced enclosure in the Commons. As we walked around the building and came to the porch on the side of the building, I noticed a wire contraption on the porch. Curiously I looked at it and to my horror discovered a dead and desiccated animal, probably a rat, in the cage. The poor

animal obviously suffered, probably for a couple of weeks, before it died of hunger and lack of water. How some disgusting, cruel person could use the "live trap" to torture this animal to death is beyond my comprehension! There is no excuse for this criminal act! I fully realize that rats are not desirable animals and sometimes they have to be eliminated. Surely not in this horrific cruel way? I am not sure who is responsible, but I do know that

no nature's creature deserves this!

Eve Renton  
NOTL

*Parks Canada's Sarah Simpson responded to this concern: "I called our asset manager immediately to investigate. The trap was not placed there by Parks Canada. It appears it was dumped there. Our maintenance crew will remove the trap and safely dispose of the animal. Thank you for alerting us to the situation."*



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# Community mourns passing of Dennis Dick



Shirley and Dennis Dick had been married 38 years. The house will be very different without his big, booming voice, says Shirley. (Photo supplied)

## Penny Coles The Local

Dennis Dick, born and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake, served his community in many ways, including spending 23 years as a town councillor.

From 1991, when he was first elected, and for the next two decades, Dennis helped shape the future of the town. As Jim Collard, his friend and colleague on council, recalls, "he was always saying, during council discussions, 'what's your vision? What do you want this town to look like in 20 or 30 years?' That was always most important to him. He loved this town, loved doing what folks elected him and asked him to do."

Dennis died Friday, Aug. 21, at the age of 67, a year to the day after being diagnosed with an aggressive and rare form of lymphoma.

Despite the time he spent around the council table, he was never a politician, his former colleagues say. He was a man who loved his town, and wanted to do his best by it.

Those who served with him describe him as a listener.

He would sit through discussions, swivelling in his council chair, fingertips steepled, and say little. But when he did speak, in his big, booming voice, he was decisive, brief and to the point, saying what he had to say with conviction.

Collard, who says he has lost a friend of 30 years, recalls time spent together watching the Super Bowl, holidaying together in Florida, and enjoying an annual lobsterfest with friends and family that went back more than 25 years.

Collard describes Dennis as a man who fiercely loved his family, and was grateful to have

his adult children close by, where he would see them once or twice a week for family dinners.

"Dennis was so proud of his kids. He was able to see Jake (his son) get married, although he was not well at the time.

That was a blessing."

Dennis and his wife Shirley, married 38 years, have two adult children, Denise Horne, who is the heritage planner for the Town of NOTL, and Jake, who works in the Town's operations department. Dennis was happy to see them both doing well, and enjoyed spending time with them and their spouses.

When he, Dennis and Dave Lepp, a fellow long-time former councillor of NOTL and friend, got together, they would sometimes have to "agree to disagree" on issues to do with the town, Collard says. "We did that with love in our hearts. It was never about winning or losing, it was always about doing what was right for the town."

However, the last battle Dennis fought was very much about winning, says Collard, who had the flag at his bed and breakfast lowered to half staff in memory of his friend.

"Every treatment the doctors could offer, Dennis would say, 'let's do it.' He felt he had so much more to live for. Unfortunately he didn't get to do it," says Collard.

"He was like a brother to me. I'm going to miss him."

Dennis's wife Shirley says although he really battled through his cancer, including undergoing a stem cell transplant, "he never let it defeat his spirit. If anyone asked him how he was, it was always, 'everything's good.' He had such a positive attitude. He so much wanted to live longer, to see his grandkids grow up,

and he had so many things he wanted to do. He was working right up until the day before he went into the hospital."

He kept "tremendously busy," serving on several boards and committees, with his business, and seeing his kids and granddaughter.

"That was his joy," says Shirley.

“ He tried not to let his illness slow him down. He was always pushing ahead. ”

Shirley Dick

He loved to go fishing and hunting with Jake and his son-in-law Colin, but what many people didn't know about Dennis was that he also liked to bake with Denise, especially traditional Mennonite dishes, says Shirley. "They would bond over that," she adds.

There were many celebrations involving extended family, "and Dennis was always looking forward to them. He tried not to let his illness slow him down. He was always pushing ahead. That's the way he lived his life."

"It's going to be so different for us, not having his big, booming voice around."

She says she's grateful for the wonderful support they received, especially from their faith community.

Members of Bethany Mennonite Church, everywhere they went, they would run into people who would wish him well and say they were praying for him. "He was so encour-

aged by that. It meant a lot to him."

Finn Madsen worked with Dennis over the course of many years on the Harmony Residents Group. Madsen says Dennis represented the group, which promoted the establishment of a park on the Parks Canada Lakeshore Road property, at Niagara Peninsula

will be sorely missed."

Dave Lepp, a former long-time councillor with Dennis, was also a friend from childhood. Their parents were friends, so they spent a lot of time together, right through high school, and later as colleagues.

They went to the same high school (Niagara District Secondary School), the same church, and had a lot of the same perspectives and values, he says.

When it came to politics, "I'm not sure we agreed on most things, but we respected each other's decisions."

He recalls Dennis as someone "who was always there for the betterment of the community, and not concerned only about certain areas. He found serving on council an opportunity to learn about the community. He was a fair and equitable man, never wishy-washy in his opinions, and never afraid to make a decision. He wasn't a politician who wanted to be heard, he wanted to listen, and then he wanted to get on with it."

Lepp lists several town committees Dennis was on, including the committee of adjustment, the irrigation committee, and the agricultural

committee, on which he continued to serve when he was no longer on council.

He was on the board of Radiant Care (Pleasant Manor and Tabor Manor), and was a long-standing member of the Virgil Business Association, always active at the annual Virgil Stampede and devoted to the continuing development of the Virgil Sports Park.

In the last year, the two took to walking together, in the winter on the track at the community centre, which Dennis was proud to have been a part of helping to become a reality, and in the better weather, outside, enjoying the beautiful views the town has to offer, says Lepp. Dennis was determined to do what he could to keep as strong and healthy as possible, as a way to fight his illness. While they walked, they would chat, usually about day-to-day stuff, Lepp says.

Most of all, he adds, "Dennis really enjoyed being a grandpa. He really loved his granddaughter so much. She was very dear to him."

"I've lost a close friend," says Lepp. "You only get so many of those in a lifetime, and Dennis was one of them."



The Town Hall flag is at half staff, and the sign in front also pays tribute to Dennis Dick. (Photo supplied)

# O'Connor sworn in virtually, with no fanfare

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Sandra O'Connor took her place as the eighth member of council this week, after being sworn in at the beginning of Monday's meeting.

There was little fanfare, and some confusion about the vir-

tual event.

Anyone watching the livestream could see town clerk Peter Todd and O'Connor in the council chamber, the rest of the room empty.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero was hoping she and council would see and hear the virtual swearing-in, asking Todd at

one point, "are we going to be able to see you?"

The ceremony was quick, with few words. Councillors were not sure if it had been completed, having been unable to see or hear it, when O'Connor left the chamber to join the virtual meeting from the adjoining committee room.

"We'll just take it for granted that it was done, and it was done appropriately," said Disero, "so welcome, Sandra, to council."

The first order of business after the swearing-in, somewhat ironically, O'Connor agreed, was to listen to two appeals of the Town's tree bylaw.

As a member of the NOTL Conservancy, O'Connor had lobbied for a tree bylaw, attending the public meetings, and in both cases heard Monday, she voted in favour of allowing trees to be removed, after town staff had refused to allow permits.

"I've been a tree bylaw supporter for many years," she said, adding she didn't have any input on the details.

Both cases enforced O'Connor's belief that the tree bylaw should allow for some "specifically defined" discretion on the part of town staff, she said.

She says she found her first council meeting — a marathon of seven hours — mentally challenging, but also exciting, and one she had prepared for.

"I think what surprised me most is how many important issues council has to deal with," she said after the meet-



Sandra O'Connor is sworn in as the eighth councillor, replacing Stuart McCormack, who resigned from the position. O'Connor came ninth in the 2018 municipal election. (Town photo)

ing, which included a lengthy closed session.

"Council is working very hard on behalf of residents. What I found is that with a number of issues there is so much to balance, between the Town and the residents, but also sometimes between two different citizens' rights," said O'Connor.

"I've always wanted to serve the community. Trying to make

the best decision is challenging, but I also find it exhilarating."

She planned to make a motion to "tweak" the tree bylaw Monday night, which is a good bylaw but not perfect, she said. However the meeting was called at 11 p.m., so she was hoping to make her motion when council reconvened Tuesday, too late for The Local to update before press time.



Sandra O'Connor says she found her first council meeting challenging, and exhilarating. (Town photo)



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# Town hopes for on-demand transit system by November

## Service to replace existing fixed-route system

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

With recent funding from upper levels of government to spend on transit, the Town is hoping to hop on board a regional, on-demand, shared ridership pilot project launched earlier this month.

The Region decided to move forward on the project by providing service to west Niagara municipalities only, but the Town plans to ask the Region to amend its agreement with a private company to include NOTL in its “turnkey” service, to replace the current fixed-route model NOTL now offers, or did before the arrival of COVID.

The NOTL Transit shuttle service, which was operating on a month-to-month contract until the end of the year, was stopped in April due to COVID, and Lord Mayor Betty Disero says this model, which allows residents of Glendale, Virgil and the Old Town to be picked up at an intersection near their home for \$3, is a much better deal for locals.

It’s better for the resident who lives off the fixed route

of the current service, and has to walk a distance to get the shuttle, she says. “My friend, who lives almost at Lakeshore on Garrison Village Drive, will no longer have to walk all the way to Niagara Stone Road,” says Disero. “I think it’s fabulous.”

another look in the future at extending the service to include St. Davids and Queenston, and also consider including accessing inter-municipal transit.

When Gary Zalepa presented council with this model of transit last fall, he considered it an exciting

Wainfleet and Pelham, but no mention of NOTL.

Interim CAO Sheldon Randall, who was part of the original discussions with regional staff, says there was no will at that time to bring the pilot project to the east side of the Region, but thanked the upper level of government for now considering the inclusion of NOTL.

With a request from the Town, the agreement could be changed and the NOTL service in effect by November, says Randall.

All municipalities have faced challenges with transit during the pandemic, with ridership dropping off and revenue collapsing, and this “is a great project,” says Zalepa. “I’m hearing good things

about it. It could fill gaps in town and get people linked with regional transit, and to appointments around town. I would encourage the Town to do what it can. On-demand is the future of transportation.”

Across Ontario, the federal/provincial funding announced recently was broken down with an allocation for each municipality, with a separate amount for transit.

Based on population, NOTL is to receive a total of \$562,009, with \$36,009 of that for transit.

The remaining \$526,000 will cover the shortfall in parking revenue, and some of the added expenses caused by the pandemic, says town treasurer Kyle Freeborn. The grant is not enough to cover all those costs, with more to come between now and the

end of the year, he says, but there is a stage two of funding expected to come. He has no guarantees or details about how much or how it will be allocated. It is expected to be allocated according to need, not by population, he says.

“I’m crossing my fingers,” says Disero, about the on-demand system. “It will give people back their legs. Because of COVID, those who relied on transit have had their wings clipped. This would give them an opportunity to go out and see friends and family.”

The Region is partnering with a private company called Via, which provides public mobility solutions internationally, one of which is to offer transportation in rural communities, where fixed shuttle routes aren’t accessible to many residents.

“On-demand is the future of transportation.”

Gary Zalepa

“I think this is a great pilot project we’re going to enter into,” says Randall, thanking the Region for entering into negotiation for a great project for NOTL.

It’s not curb to curb, but it is intersection to intersection, he said.

In west Niagara, the service also allows for riders to access inter-municipal regional transit for \$6, but the Town’s report did not recommend that option.

Councillors agreed to have

opportunity for Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The regional councillor described an on-demand shuttle service as an attractive solution for residents not living on a current transit route, and a positive reaction from councillors ended in a request to staff to work with the Region on an implementation plan to bring back to council.

The one-year pilot project got underway in west Niagara recently, including Grimsby, Lincoln, West Lincoln,



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# Outdoor theatre will bring visitors

Continued from page 5

with FedDev Ontario to be able to support the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Region of Niagara and Tourism NOTL in encouraging a resurgence of safe, outdoor gatherings through a series of musical performance opportunities and a few other surprises. The Shaw will use these funds to provide free and low-cost outdoor performance activities, and purchase equipment to ensure the safest possible experience for everyone."

Before COVID hit, local

businesses "were aligned for a record year," said NOTL Chamber of Commerce president Eduardo Lafforgue. Once the crisis hit, "we were hoping for a quick return to the pre-season frenzy, but a few weeks later the picture changed drastically. The collective challenges COVID-19 has presented Niagara-on-the-Lake, are enormous and complex."

Tourism is a crucial part of our local economy, he said, and by "being inclusive and working together, we can reimagine a brighter future under the new normalcy." As the town welcomes back visi-

tors to our community there is something added to their luggage: trust. "We are all tourists once in a while, and we have always taken for granted that we will arrive back home in the same condition as we left. The last month I proudly witnessed all the hours of preparations and changes our tourism industry invested to ensure visitors feel welcomed and safe in this new tourism environment." Local businesses "are genuinely committed to providing the warmest and most positive experience possible," Lafforgue said. "Visitors and residents will see smiling

faces behind the ubiquitous masks, and feel the eagerness to serve with joy and resolve. Great hoteliers, restaurateurs, retailers, musicians and actors, women and men who possess the intrinsic quality to put their guests first, run our tourism industry making their experiences a priority."

Lafforgue told The Local he is delighted to see grants for NOTL businesses, which will help maintain about 100 jobs. The support for the Shaw Festival is key to bringing visitors back to NOTL, he added. "It's really really fantastic news. We are thrilled with this."



Tim Jennings of the Shaw Festival is thrilled to be able to offer outdoor performances, thanks to a federal grant. (Screenshot)

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# Royal Oak safely welcoming students with expanded space

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

Final touches are being put on the old Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital building, as tenant Royal Oak Community School prepares for its biggest September ever.

When classes begin Sept. 8, Head of School Julia Cain Murray will be opening the doors to 52 students from Kindergarten to Grade 8. At twice the number of pupils enrolled last year, it is the largest student body ever for the local private, not-for-profit school.

And there will be multiple doors that are thrown open, as for the first time in their three years in the building, Royal Oak will be expanding physically to use the south and east wings. Along with the north wing they had already been using, that will enable them to create separate cohorts for their primary, junior and intermediate students, with separate washroom facilities as well.

Murray expresses gratitude toward their landlord, the town of NOTL, for making it possible to keep the grade levels separate. "With the cohorting of wings, our separate entrances that we can use, along with our very detailed policies and protocols, it seems we have the best possible plan in place to mitigate risks as well as we can."

Murray is sure that the small class sizes, which have historically been capped at 15, along with extra safety measures taken to ensure there is no spread of the novel coronavirus within the school, is at least partially responsible for the boost in enrolment.

"We have always believed that our class cap of 15 is truly the optimum size for learning," she says. "I'm grateful as well that it aligns with what has been deemed the most safe cohort size with regards to COVID."



Head of School Julia Cain Murray is on the front steps of Royal Oak's new entrance, waiting to welcome students. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Royal Oak is also running a parallel virtual school this year where all the in-class lessons will be available in each class's Google Classroom. That means that if or when any child is required to stay home (due to potential exposure to COVID, travel, or general family health risks), they can continue to learn through the virtual programming.

On the day of The Local's visit to Royal Oak, dedicated parent Jason van Veghel-Wood was there helping to sand, paint and generally get the building ready to welcome students. He was happy to demonstrate the layout of various rooms.

"The way that they set it up (the Grades 6-7-8 room) is in pods," he explains. "Every student will be separated by six feet, and where

they can't be separated by six feet, they've got this plexiglass, and they will be wearing visors for added protection."

The parental involvement of van Veghel-Wood and others is key to the functioning of the school, says Murray. "It is such a close-knit community. Jason has built desks by hand since the beginning of June, when I started to come in and say I could envision this being really different. I've had a COVID task force of about eight parents, who have been on every email with me and are part of all the decision-making. Parents are the stakeholders of the school. I've had parents be part of our re-entry plan formation all along the way."

At press time, Murray was still meeting with families interested in learning

more about making the switch to the private school for their children.

Marylee Arnold and her family recently moved to NOTL. She toured the

school this week to consider enrolling her girls Gemma and Fiona in Grade 1 and JK respectively.

"We were looking at private schools just for the level of education," she says. "Throughout COVID, I just thought private schools have smaller classroom sizes. I just want my children to be safe, and I want them looked after, so at a private school, obviously they're going to be looked after a little bit more."

The increased enrolment at Royal Oak has also brought back experienced teacher Laureen Dennis, who was on sabbatical the previous year. She is excited to meet her Grades 1-2 students in her bright new classroom.

"It used to be our assembly room, where the whole school would kind of meet every morning," she explains. "They've just done a fantastic job making it such a beautiful space. I am excited, too, seeing all the things they've implemented, all the safety measures. I have no reservations. As long as we keep doing all the safety precautions that we've put in place, we're going to have a great year."

Of course, as Royal Oak is a private school, students do not attend for free. The

cost for each student is \$9,650 per year, but Murray is quick to point out that cost should never exclude a family from sending their children there.

"We're a non-profit charitable organization," Murray explains. "Over 50 per cent of our students are on a financial scholarship or bursary. That accessibility is extremely important, and it's one of the reasons this school came into being. And diversity is important to us as well. We want Royal Oak to truly represent the community."

To that end, Royal Oak is launching the Artists' Family Scholarship to help support the large community of artists who live in NOTL. The scholarship will provide funding to cover application fees (to the school, as well as to Apple Financial, the third party company used to access bursary qualifications), as well as a commitment to ensure tuition costs are covered should an artist's family financial situation change.

With just over a week until the first day of school, some of the grade levels still have room to grow toward that cap of 15 students. That record enrolment number may not yet have reached its peak.



The combined Grade 6-7-8 classroom leaves lots of room for physical distancing, and also has plexiglass separating students.



The school has a new reception area as part of its expanded space.



All the student spaces at Royal Oak allow for physical distancing of up to 15 students per class.

# Parks Canada celebrates Monarch Butterfly Day with tour

**Mike Balsom  
Special to The Local**

Armed with laminated information sheets and her uncle's magnifying glass, Natalia Srigley turned over milkweed leaves in a field at the Commons until she discovered a Monarch butterfly egg. The St. Catharines girl jumped up and down in delight.

Natalia, her younger sister Emily and her father Nathan, along with another eight relatives and friends in their social bubble, participated in the first ever Parks Canada National Flight of the Monarch Day Tour Saturday. The walk through the historic Niagara-on-the-Lake Commons was part of a nation-wide drive to have Canada recognize the iconic Monarch butterfly on Aug. 22 each year.

Public Outreach Education Officers Joel Forget and Veronica McKelvey were the enthusiastic tour guides. Some of that enthusiasm could have derived from the tour being the first event that they were able to conduct all summer from their post at Fort George.

"We're really happy to be able to run an event on our sites right now," says Forget, "so we can continue to educate the public and to continue our mandate at Parks Canada."

A total of 34 participants

took part in the just-over-one-hour tour in two shifts Saturday morning. It began at the Agora building, where a War of 1812 reenactor delivered a greeting before turning things over to Forget and McKelvey.

McKelvey stressed the importance of awareness of species at risk, pointing out that in 2013, the Monarch butterfly population dropped almost 95 per cent. Much of the immersive experience involved the two leaders educating the participants on ways that they could aid in the continued growth of the population of the species in future years.

After reminding everyone to stay physically distanced, which to McKelvey means at least 18 Monarchs apart, the walk toward the Commons began.

At the first stop, one tour-taker was the first to spot a Monarch fluttering past the gathering. Here, under a shady tree on a beautiful morning, McKelvey and Forget led the participants through an interactive discussion of the lifecycle and eating habits of the insect. The children had a lot of questions and comments when the guides revealed their caterpillar and chrysalis models.

Unique to the site of the NOTL tour is its proximity to history. Along the way the reenactor who accompanied



Parks Canada education officer Joel Forget, special events coordinator Peter Martin and education officer Veronica McKelvey greet the tour group and Forget explains the itinerary for the immersive experience. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

the group weaved in some colourful history of the historic sites, such as the site of the old Indian Council House.

The enthusiasm of the children who were present was obvious. But the parents, and the one couple who participated without accompanying children, seemed just as enthralled.

Also part of the discussion along the way, was the migration habits of the Monarch butterfly. Late August was chosen for the date to recognize the species as it is

about now that the insects begin to make their way down to Mexico to sit out the winter.

Currently, Monarchs are classified as a Special Concern under the Ontario Endangered Species Act and the New Brunswick Species at Risk Act. In Mexico and the United States, they are also listed as "under special protection," and are under review for listing under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Forget tells The Local that events such as the tour were taking place across Canada, at the behest of the Toronto Regional Conservation Area (TRCA), who received a contribution agreement from Environment and Climate Change Canada to propagate species at risk awareness.

"It's really focused on the Monarch, and they really wanted to put their mark on

Aug. 22 so that it is a nationally-recognized day where we are really pushing not only awareness, but also the collection of citizen science data for research purposes," Forget says. The egg found by Srigley will be part of the data collected.

Paraphrasing the movie *Field of Dreams*, Forget says "if you grow milkweed, they will come. In Canada, one of our main focuses is to ensure that we are protecting the ecosystems that allow the Monarch at all its stages of life to thrive."

He encourages local residents to grow milkweed on their properties. "People did think it was a weed, and in the late '80s there was some move to eradicate milkweed as it was on the noxious plants list. But that was just misinformation. It's about changing the behaviours,

and changing the narrative around the plant so that people reintroduce it into their gardens."

The last stop on the tour was a field just across the pathway behind the Memorial Park soccer nets, where milkweed was bountiful. This is where Srigley discovered the Monarch egg. Upon returning to the Agora building, the group was treated to a musket demonstration to see them off.

Though he's not positive it will be a tour, Forget does promise there will be some kind of event in NOTL next Aug. 22 to continue to push for the national day of recognition for the insect. He also encourages local residents to get involved by visiting [missionmonarch.ca](http://missionmonarch.ca) for information and resources to participate in the collection of Monarch data.



Veronica McKelvey gives some of the children on the tour a closer look at young caterpillars on a milkweed leaf.



Using lifelike models, Veronica McKelvey explains to participants how to find caterpillars underneath milkweed leaves.

# Quartetto Gelato ‘plays it like it’s their last time’

Continued from page 5

unfunny. But they were awesome, totally gracious. They (the audience members) were ready to be out and enjoying themselves too.”

“I’ve been making a living almost exclusively off of live performances, and that ended abruptly,” chimes in Maier. “We had to remember how to play in front of peo-

ple. It was therapeutic. You hear the cliché to ‘play it like it’s your last time,’ and I don’t really know when the next time (in front of an audience) is going to be. The Niagara show may be the last live show for a long time. That’s the way we approached it, to just leave it all out there.”

Many who have seen the quartet in past Music Niagara engagements may not recognize the latest line-up of the

group. At 11 years, Maier is the longest-standing member of the current incarnation of Quartetto Gelato. He says newer members Kirk Starkey, Charles Cozens and Konstantin Popovic combine to bring a fresh, new musical element to the group’s repertoire.

“Our cello player (Starkey) has arranged a beautiful classic for the quartet, our accordion player (Cozens) is a world-class composer and

arranger so he’s brought in some new stuff, our violin player (Popovic) was born in the former Yugoslavia, so we use a Serbian gypsy tune to end the show. It’s what Gelato has always done, what can you bring that no one else does, or what’s your secret talent or skill. More of the different flavours of Gelato that people will hear, but still within the same vibe.”

Pillitteri enjoyed the

event so much he hopes he has another chance to work with the quartet some time in the future. It was the local comic’s first engagement with Music Niagara, and he is also looking forward to the possibility of further involvement with the organization.

For Maier and Quartetto Gelato, it’s pretty much a given they will be back in NOTL. “I love that it is right here in our backyard,” he

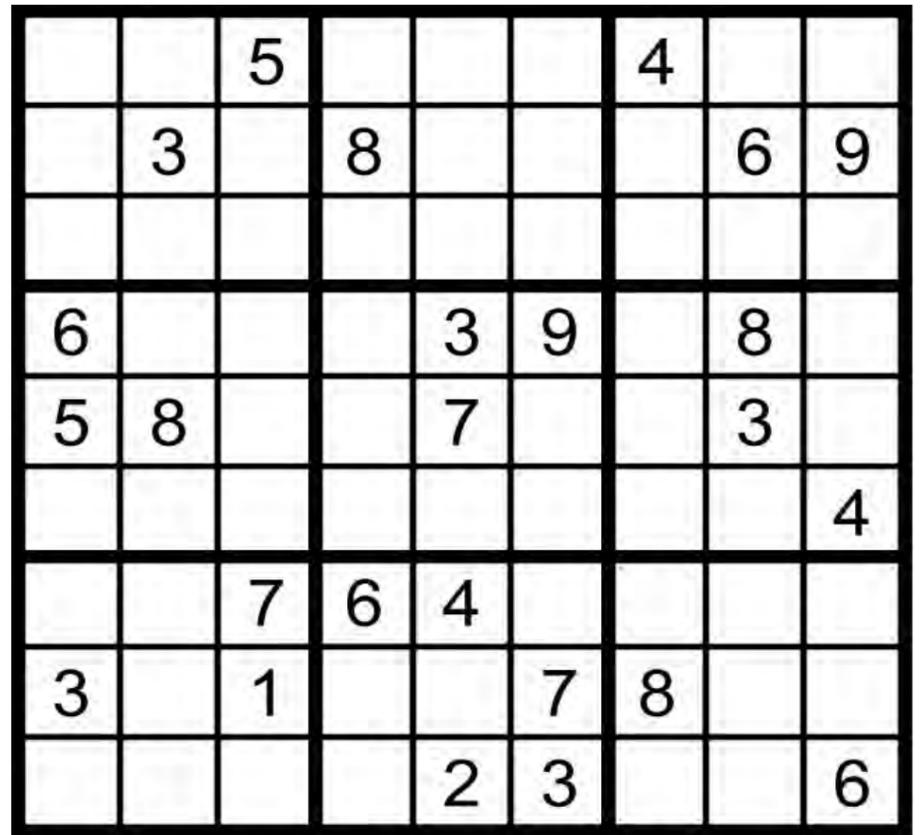
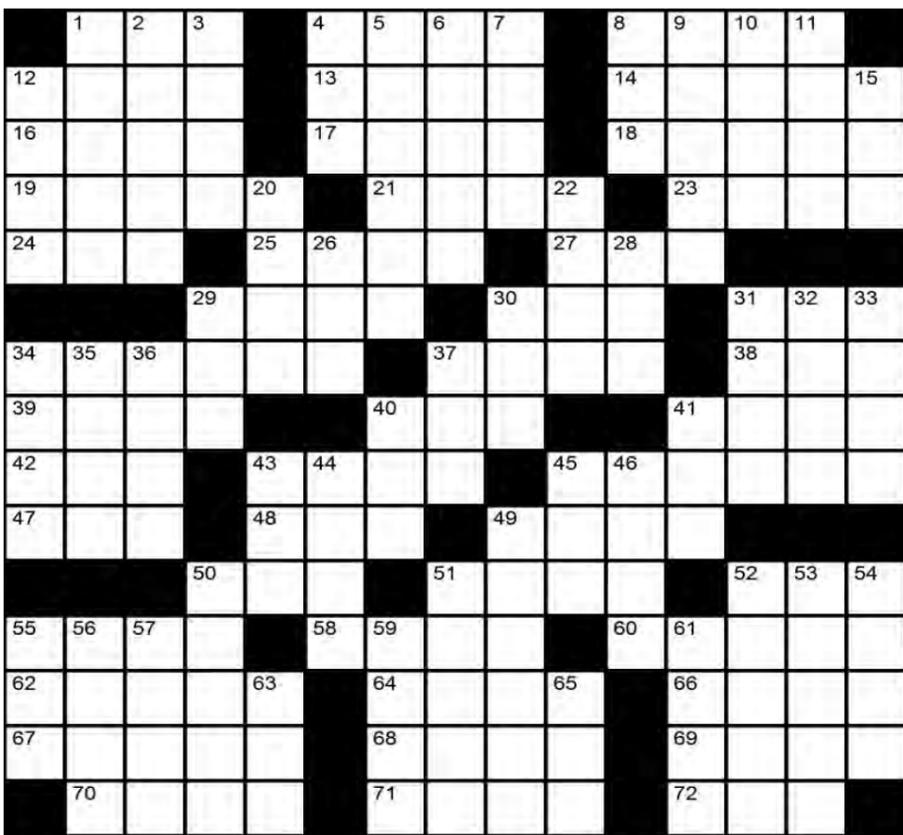
says. “It feels like family every time. I’m honoured that out of all the people that have had gigs with (musical director) Atis (Bankas) at the festival, they chose us to play this year. We’re very fortunate.”

You can watch the premiere of Music and Laughter, filmed live at Chateau des Charmes, this Sunday, Aug. 30 at 4 p.m. on Music Niagara’s Watch Livepage of their website, musicniagara.org.



Quartetto Gelato and Joe Pillitteri were filmed at Chateau des Charmes Winery recently for a Music and Laughter performance, to be shown on music festival’s website Sunday. (Photo supplied)

## CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU



- Across:**
- 1 Sizable
  - 4 First Lady before Mamie
  - 8 Speedy
  - 12 Flintstone pet
  - 13 Large international show
  - 14 “I am just --- boy, though my story’s seldom told ...” (Simon and Garfunkel, “The Boxer”)
  - 16 North of Tex.
  - 17 Take --- Train (Duke Ellington song)
  - 18 Upper story
  - 19 Totters
  - 21 European mountain system
  - 23 “Copacabana” showgirl
  - 24 Tucson time
  - 25 Barrier
  - 27 Holler
  - 29 Sheet of glass
  - 30 Computer interconnection system
  - 31 Higher degree
  - 34 Marzipan base
  - 37 Tomb Raider --- Croft
  - 38 Not ordained
  - 39 Undiluted
  - 40 Big Blue
  - 41 This place
  - 42 Sawbuck
  - 43 Chemical pollutants banned in 1975
  - 45 Leftovers
  - 47 Space viewed from below
  - 48 Play on words
  - 49 Computer brains
  - 50 Some foreign Government heads
  - 51 Tree with a partridge at Christmas
  - 52 Adult female pig
  - 55 Interlock
  - 58 --- Silvers or Collins
  - 60 Singer/songwriter --- Mars
  - 62 Thespian
  - 64 Line about which rotation occurs
  - 66 M --- mouse
  - 67 Formerly the Gold Coast
  - 68 Model and actress --- Suvari
  - 69 Liquor measure
  - 70 Adhere to
  - 71 Toboggan
  - 72 A T M ID
  - 15 --- Building, now the Comcast Building, N Y C
  - 20 Graceful waterbird
  - 22 Lasting mark
  - 26 Logical operator
  - 28 Viral genetic material
  - 29 Mary Jane
  - 30 Flee
  - 31 Court statement
  - 32 Heavenly instrument
  - 33 Fabric colors
  - 34 Hill dwellers
  - 35 Emblem of Wales
  - 36 Large number
  - 37 2,000 to a ton
  - 40 Arabic “son of”
  - 41 Slugger’s stat.
  - 43 Common measure of pollutants
  - 44 Turning point
  - 45 Health club
  - 46 Edge of a street
  - 49 Singer --- Dion
  - 50 Ring
  - 51 Screen dot
  - 52 Osaka fish dish
  - 53 Aromatic bulbous vegetable
  - 54 Habit
  - 55 Journal
  - 56 Reverberation
  - 57 Dagger thrust
  - 59 Overactors
  - 61 Coarse file
  - 63 Flat fish
  - 65 Down
- Down:**
- 1 E.g. Schwinn
  - 2 Arm of the sea
  - 3 Target
  - 4 Gamble
  - 5 Breathe out
  - 6 Incantation
  - 7 Cleaner
  - 8 Aviation safety grp.
  - 9 Fittingly
  - 10 “Licence to Kill” Bond girl Talisa ---
  - 11 Labor strenuously
  - 12 Campus housing

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OBITUARY



**DICK, DENNIS** — It is with deepest sadness that we announce the passing of Dennis Dick on August 21, 2020, exactly one year to the day that he was diagnosed with mantle cell lymphoma. Dennis was the beloved husband of Shirley (Warkentin) Dick, and father of Jake and Angelica (Hill) Dick, and Denise and Colin Horne, and grandfather of his precious little “Emmy May” Emberley Horne. Dennis

is also survived by his mother, Christina (Berg) Dick, brothers and sister Bob (Annie), Anne (Brian) Litke, and Bill Dick, and sisters- and brother-in-law, Marlene (Doug) Caldwell, Janet Warkentin, and Henry (Rhonda) Warkentin, and many nieces and nephews. Predeceased by his father Jacob Dick and parents in law, Abe and Betty Warkentin. Dennis grew up on the family farm on Line 3 in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He was a graduate of NDSS and University of Guelph. As a young man, Dennis worked for many local businesses and farming operations including Bert Hopes, Hardy Homes, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Roads Department, as a Massey Ferguson sales representative for Creek Road Motors, and farm manager for Chateau des Charmes winery, before opening his own excavation company, D & B Construction. He was a partner in the family farm, Chestnut Tree Farms, for many years. In the past few years, he shifted his focus to septic inspections, and also worked seasonally for Millers, doing snow removal on the QEW, where he worked long night shifts and was always happy to train new drivers.

Dennis had a passion for giving back to his community. He was a volunteer fireman for the Virgil Fire Department for 15 years, before tossing his hat into the political ring, and running for Town Council in 1991. He served as Alderman/Councillor for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for a total of 23 years. As part of these duties, he was pleased to serve on various Boards and Committees including the Library Board, Chamber of Commerce, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. He served several terms on the Town's Committee of Adjustment and was still actively involved on the Agricultural Committee and the Harmony Residents Group and Niagara-on-the-Lake Santa Claus Parade Committee. Dennis was an active volunteer with the Chamber of Commerce for the Candlelight Stroll and Icewine Festivals. Dennis was always a passionate advocate for the “beautiful Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake”. Dennis also served on the Board of the Vineland UM Home for many years, and was currently on the Board of Radiant Care (Pleasant Manor and Tabor Manor). He had also served on the Board of OASIS (Ontario Association of Septic Services) for many years. Dennis was an active member of Bethany Mennonite church, currently serving on the Board there, as well as on the Property Committee. Dennis had a rich bass voice, and enjoyed singing in the church choir for many years, and most recently with the Niagara Community Male Chorus. A recent highlight for Dennis was participating in a mission trip with Wells of Hope to Guatemala with a team from Bethany Mennonite Church.

Dennis loved fishing and hunting, preparing family meals, spending time with his family at the cottage or at home, and was always up for a game of euchre on a Friday night. Dennis loved being with his friends and family, the more the merrier! He could light up a room with his smile and great sense of humour. Dennis was an active man all his life, always on the go, and although the cancer slowed him down physically, he never allowed it to defeat his spirit. Over the past year, he was very much encouraged by the expressions of support and prayer from so many in this wonderful community; a community for which he cared very deeply. He will be remembered for his steadfast faith, his courage, and his ability to push on through even the most difficult challenges with a positive attitude and unfailing sense of humour.

Visitations will be held at Bethany Mennonite Church, located at 572 East and West Line, on the corner of East and West Line and Four Mile Creek Road on Thursday August 27, from 2-4 p.m., and 6-8 p.m., and on Friday, August 28, from 6-8 p.m. You are also invited to share your memories and condolences on Tallman Funeral Homes website. If desired, memorial donations to Bethany Mennonite Church, Radiant Care Pleasant Manor or Mennonite Central Committee would be appreciated. Due to the current situation with COVID-19, the Interment and Celebration of Life services will be private services. Arrangements are being made to provide online access to view the Celebration of Life Service on Monday, August 31. For updates on the time and arrangement of this service, please refer to the Tallman Funeral Homes website tallmanfuneralhomes.ca or Bethany Mennonite Church website www.bethanymennonite.ca

OBITUARY



**HELENE (FOTH) NICKEL** passed away peacefully on Sunday, August 23, 2020, in her 100th year. She was predeceased by her husband, Karl Sr. (May 16, 2004). She is lovingly remembered by her seven children: Richard (Linda), Karl Jr. (Laurene), Gustav (Janice), Willi (Debbie), Kurt (Kim), Martha Epp (Udo), and Walter (Suzanne). Also survived by 13 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral arrangements entrusted to Tallman Funeral Homes.



**FEDORKOW, WILLIAM LOUIS** — Apr 16, 1926 to Aug 24, 2020 Bill passed away peacefully after a brief illness at his home in Queenston Place, Niagara Falls.

Bill will be remembered as a caring and greatly loved husband to Rosanne, father to son Guy and daughter Lou, and brother to Walter, Joe, Mary, Olga and Jenny. Born in Manitoba, Bill's family moved to Niagara, where Bill grew up on the family farm. After completing his formal education at Guelph Agriculture College in Ontario and learning the science of Agronomy, he successfully obtained the status of a Certified Professional Agrologist. Bill went on to a lifelong career at Canadian Cannery (Nabisco / Kraft Foods) in St. Davids, where he worked with hundreds of growers in Niagara and beyond to ensure a steady supply of fruit for canning operations. Respected by his colleagues, Bill always maintained a reputation for fair dealing. Ever the craftsman, builder, gardener, worker in wood, Bill maintained active participation in the local community, whose agrarian history he knew so well, and was well-loved by family and his many friends.

Bill's family wish to express their sincere appreciation to the staff and residents of Queenston Place for the care and fellowship they all provided to him during his residence there for the past nine years.

A private family interment will take place, followed by a remembrance of Bill's life at a later date. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made now to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Historical Society. Donations may be made through Morse & Son Funeral Home, www.morseandson.com.

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**Across:** 1 Big, 4 Bess, 8 Fast, 12 Dino, 13 Expo, 14 A poor, 16 Okla, 17 The A, 18 Attic, 19 Feels, 21 Alps, 23 Lola, 24 M S T, 25 Wall, 27 Cry, 29 Pane, 30 L A N, 31 Ph D, 34 Almond, 37 Lara, 38 Lay, 39 Neat, 40 I B M, 41 Here, 42 Ten, 43 PC BS, 45 Scraps, 47 Sky, 48 Pun, 49 C P Us, 50 PMs, 51 Pear, 52 Sow, 55 Mesh, 58 Phil, 60 Bruno, 62 Actor, 64 Axis, 66 As in, 67 Ghana, 68 Mena, 69 Shot, 70 Obey, 71 Sled, 72 P I N.

**Down:** 1 Bikes, 2 Inlet, 3 Goal, 4 Bet, 5 Exhale, 6 Spell, 7 Soap, 8 F A A, 9 Aptly, 10 Soto, 11 Toll, 12 Dorm, 15 R C A, 20 Swan, 22 Scar, 26 AND, 28 FN A, 29 Pot, 30 Lam, 31 Plea, 32 Harp, 33 Dyes, 34 Ants, 35 Leek, 36 Many, 37 Lbs, 40 Ibn, 41 Hrs, 43 P m, 44 Cusp, 45 Spa, 46 Curt, 49 Celine, 50 Phone, 51 Pixel, 52 Sust, 53 Onion, 54 Wort, 55 Mag, 56 Echo, 57 Stab, 59 Hams, 61 Rasp, 63 Ray, 65 Sad.

Sudoku solution from August 20, 2020

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

## LOCAL HAPPENINGS



**THE LION BURGER RETURNS**  
Every Friday in August  
We will sell Lion Burger Combos (burger, fries & bottle of water) for \$10  
Time is 4 p.m. until 7 p.m.  
St. Davids Lions Park Pavilion

DRIVE THRU • CONTACTLESS • CREDIT AND DEBIT PREFERRED FOR PAYMENT

## NOTL HISTORICAL MUSEUM ONLINE LECTURE

August 27 @ 4 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum online lecture with Scott Finlay – Ten Things That Will Save Your Life in the Trenches. All presentations start at 4 p.m. and require registration through Zoom. Email: [aklassen@nhsm.ca](mailto:aklassen@nhsm.ca) for the registration link.

## TD NIAGARA JAZZ FESTIVAL

August 28 @ 7 - 8 p.m.  
Brian Dickinson

Events livestreamed at [niagarajazzfestival.com](http://niagarajazzfestival.com)

## FIRST ONTARIO PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

#NiagaraPerforms

Friday, August 28 @ dusk  
Best In Show (outdoor film)

Saturday, August 29 @ 5-6 p.m. and 7-8 p.m.  
The Figure Four (outdoor concert)

View free online concerts and events via PAC's Facebook and YouTube channels

[www.FirstOntarioPAC.ca](http://www.FirstOntarioPAC.ca)

## COVID-19 DIARIES

August 29 @ 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

For those of you who like to write and journal, the Niagara Historical Museum is looking for your insight. You can participate in the recording of our history today. In 50 or 100 years, we may just have an exhibition on the COVID-19 Pandemic and your journals will help us tell the stories of how Niagara-on-the-Lake made it through. Please visit: [www.nhsm.ca](http://www.nhsm.ca) for details or call 289-719-1918 to record your audio diary.

## S.T.E.A.M. STORYTIME! SCIENCE – TECHNOLOGY – ENGINEERING – ART – MATH

September 2 @ 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Join us for virtual Story Time with .... a Twist! Kasia will be live-streaming S.T.E.A.M. Storytime – a weekly NOTL Public Library favourite from our Facebook page. Can't make it? No problem! We will be uploading the video to our YouTube channel so you can watch at your leisure. Join Kasia each week for a S.T.E.A.M. based storytime. All Are Welcome! Hosted by Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library <https://notlpubliclibrary.org>.

## PLACE YOUR COMING EVENT COMMUNITY SOCIAL HERE

With or without a border, colour graphics optional.

Include your Logo! Prices starting at \$20.

Deadline: Monday 3 p.m. Call Karen 905-641-5335 or email: [classified@notllocal.com](mailto:classified@notllocal.com)

# Museum walking tour shares town history

Kim Wade  
Special to The Local

There is always a feeling you get from being in a physical place where something significant happened.

We can read about history in books, participate on line chats or presentations but there is something distinct about being in the actual site where an event took place, where you can soak up the atmosphere. We long to feel the history of a place, imagine what it was like in times long past and connect to the stories of those who came before us.

Lately many of us have been so isolated, cooped up in our own homes, centred on our own lives and the present pandemic that we haven't given the past much thought. Yet, at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, the past is their present. On a gorgeous Sunday afternoon, three people gathered at the gazebo by the mouth of the Niagara River to soak up the history in our own back yard.

Shawna Butts, assistant curator and educational programmer from the museum began the tour at the gazebo for a specific reason. "We like to start our tours off at the gazebo because it allows us to place NOTL a bit more in historical context than if we start at the museum on Castlereagh Street. That's because the Niagara River and the fort across the way, which is Fort Niagara, is very important to the founding of our community."

As the small group gazed over at Fort Niagara and the impressive French Castle, Butts recounted the history of the fort going back to when the French built it to use as a strategic outpost in order to control the mouth of the Niagara River. After the Seven Years' War, the British took control of the fort. However, on this side of the river, the territory was still under French control.

She explained that since the fort was captured by Col. John Butler and Butler's Rangers, it remained under British control during the American Revolution. At this time, the fort began to be overwhelmed with refugees. Eventually, the Butler's Rangers came to this side of the river to start planting food to feed the people at the fort. This is when we get our first settlers, from 1779 to 1780. The Amer-

ican Revolutionary War ended in 1783, and the British had to give up the fort to the Americans.

Butts points out, "That is the American side of the river. A lot of tourists first don't realize that, and they look out and say, 'Oh! That's Fort George!'" No, she tells them, that is the American side with Fort Niagara. Fort George is up the way.

By 1791, the colony was split into Upper and Lower Canada. This area, previously known as Butlersburg, was renamed Newark by Governor John Graves Simcoe, and became the capital of Upper Canada. It remained the capital until 1796, when it moved across the lake to York (Toronto) because of our proximity to the U.S. Butts reminds us that, "we are within cannon-fire, currently where we are standing." The proximity of Fort Niagara also serves as a reminder of how close we are to the Americans, and how our histories or so interconnected.

Queens Royal Park was also the site of a lavish hotel built in 1868. This first-class hotel was complete with lawn bowling and tennis courts, and a guest list that included the Prince of Wales, who became King George V. The hotel was demolished in 1930, and the town bought the property and built the park.

Butts adds a story about the gazebo itself, that was built as part of a set for the 1983, Stephen King movie, *The Dead Zone*. Over the years since the movie, she continues with a sparkle in her eye, the gazebo has been the stage for many romantic scenes, such as wedding photos, rather than the stage of a grisly murder as depicted in the movie.

She also points to the beach below the gazebo as the site where the famous lake-crossing swims that start from the Queens Royal Park beach and end at Marilyn Bell Park in Toronto. This year the swims were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Butts concludes this part of the tour by reiterating why the vantage point from the gazebo helps to set the scene for the tour. "It really brings the history of NOTL as to why our community is here today, and really shows you the proximity to the United States. Especially when we talk about the War of 1812, and you can really see how close we are and the effects of it"



Shawna Butts talks about the history of Fort Niagara, with walking tour participant Deanna Calder. (Photos by Kim Wade)



Deanna Calder and Shawna Butts enter the historic St. Mark's Cemetery.

The tour route from the gazebo was altered due to COVID-19, and the need to physical distance and avoid larger crowds in the process. Each tour is different, depending on who is your guide for the walk, but each guide includes certain stops, one being a walk through St. Mark's Anglican Church cemetery.

As the tour walks through the small wooden gate to the rear of the cemetery, Butts explains it is the oldest burial ground in town. The Anglican church was the only one established in 1792, so all the burials at that time were at St. Mark's. The church bells toll as she recounts the story of Elizabeth Kerr, the daughter of Sir William Johnson and Molly Brant, who died in NOTL in 1794, and is buried in the oldest grave in the cemetery.

Like standing at the gazebo, being in St. Mark's cemetery itself, is a remarkable experience. Listening to Butts tell the stories of the people buried here and describe life in the past, coupled with feeling the cool breeze under the canopy of trees, smelling the flowers and vegetation in the air, and seeing the graves, makes history feel more alive. Kerr's story is in the museum's forthcoming book about the Women of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Butts leads the group throughout the town, down King Street to the

Masonic Lodge, over to Prideaux Street to the Promenade House and up Regent Street to the Voices of Freedom Park, down Johnson Street, and ending up back at the museum.

Unfortunately, this tour was Butts' first and last historical walking tour of the season; her first because she stepped in to cover the tour in absence of the usual volunteers, and last because the museum is cancelling the tours for September due to lack of interest. She assures the group the tours will return next year. However, the museum does have other upcoming events.

On Monday, Aug. 31, along with Executive Catering Niagara, the public is invited to support the NOTL Museum while enjoying the beauty of the Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery. The \$55 ticket includes a three-course meal, plus a \$20 tax receipt for a donation to the museum.

The museum invites ticket holders to come enjoy a lunch or dinner picnic under the beautiful tent overlooking the vineyard, with live music and great company. Tables seat up to six, so you can put together a group within your bubble and enjoy a pleasant experience. The menu is posted on the museum website at [nhsm.ca](http://nhsm.ca), along with information for ticket purchases or by calling 905-468-3912 or [contact@nhsm.ca](mailto:contact@nhsm.ca).

## LOCAL WORSHIP

CORNERSTONE  
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sunday, August 30th

Speaker:  
Kevin Bayne  
Message:  
Psalm 133 - The Unity of Community

Please be advised that with the current state of COVID-19, your safety is of utmost importance to us. We will now be live streaming our service at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays. There will be no in-person church service.

[www.ccchurch.ca](http://www.ccchurch.ca)

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