

The Uxbridge COSMOS



Volume 16 No. 21

YOUR UNIVERSE

Thursday, May 28, 2020



Patrick Bryant Broker of Record

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IT'S FINALLY BEGUN - The long-delayed closure of Brock St. W. between Toronto and Bascom Sts. finally began early Monday morning. The closure is related to the Brock Street Culvert Project, and is in effect until September. Pedestrians will be able to access Brock St. W. during the closure, and residents are encouraged to continue to support those businesses that are operating during the closure and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Photo by Ted Barris

High COVID numbers concentrated at local LTCH

by Lisha Van Nieuwenhove

The Township of Uxbridge has almost doubled its number of COVID-19 cases in the past two weeks, and the majority of these are at a local long-term care home (LTCH). As of 3 p.m., Tuesday, ReachView Village had reported 58 of the 71 confirmed cases in Uxbridge. According to Durham Region's COVID-19 Data Tracker, of those 58, 40 cases are residents, 18 are staff. Ten residents have already passed away from the virus.

The quick rise in numbers is being partially attributed to the layout and physical limitations of the building, located at 130 Reach St. Originally opened in 1975, the building is constructed in a square pattern, and most of the rooms are designed to hold four residents at a time. It also has only one central dining room.

Larry Roberts, senior manager of corporate affairs for Revera, the company that owns ReachView Village, said that, although the team deals with outbreaks all the time, "it's

challenging when there's four [residents] to a room - trying to separate them is a challenge in itself. Plus, many of the people in our long-term care homes have cognitive issues like dementia and Alzheimer's, and they don't want to move, they don't want the change. We've had to decide that we would rather deal with the inconveniences and anxieties caused by this, rather than see people we care about get sick."

Roberts also said that ReachView is "is doing everything it can to care for residents while also doing enhanced cleaning and disinfecting to prevent the spread of the virus."

ReachView Village did not declare an outbreak of the coronavirus until April 15.

"Our teams are trained to deal with outbreaks but with COVID-19, because it spreads very quickly, and because people haven't any immunity, it's a very challenging thing."

Ward 3 councillor Bruce Garrod, who is the council representative on the Age-Friendly Committee, says that he has a long-term answer for the situation at ReachView, but he

doesn't know how to stop the outbreak of COVID-19.

"We simply need a new long-term care facility here in Uxbridge," said Garrod, "and we need it sooner than later. The physical layout of the building now - it's a real hindrance."

Garrod said that he has been communicating with ReachView on a regular basis, offering the township's assistance, if necessary.

According to Garrod, Revera has applied to the provincial government for permission to build a new long-term care facility in partnership with the new hospital that will be built in Uxbridge, but that, given the current situation with the novel coronavirus, that application is likely on the back burner for now.

Of the remaining 13 COVID-19 cases reported in Uxbridge, eight have been in home isolation and/or resolved, one has been hospitalized and four have died. For daily updates, visit durham.ca/covidcases

Online @ thecosmos.ca
Getting ready to go bald for the Food Bank
Five pillars to guide 're-entry'

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Council & Committee Meetings

Meeting Schedule for June, 2020

Monday, June 1, 10:00 a.m.

VIRTUAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, June 8, 10:00 a.m.

VIRTUAL COUNCIL MEETING

Monday, June 15, 10:00 a.m.

VIRTUAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, June 17, 7:00 p.m.

VIRTUAL COMMITTEE OF

ADJUSTMENT MEETING

Monday, June 22, 7:00 p.m.

VIRTUAL COUNCIL MEETING

Check the Calendar of Events at Uxbridge.ca for upcoming Virtual Advisory Committee meetings.

Public Participation

The Township of Uxbridge is committed to facilitating public participation, especially while its meetings are taking place electronically. You can now submit your questions and comments related to items on the agenda in real time during Council and Committee meetings. Check out our Public Comments feature through our website at Uxbridge.ca/agendas by selecting the meeting from the calendar and viewing the HTML agenda. If you have any questions about how to participate in our electronic Council and Committee meetings, please contact Josh Machesney, Deputy Clerk, at jmachesney@uxbridge.ca

Craving Fresh Air and Exercise?

Area trails remain open. Follow uxbridge.ca/en/news/walking-trails-open.aspx to plan your next excursion, and remember to maintain proper social distancing from other visitors.

Seniors Social Check-In Project

Are you a senior who would like to stay connected by receiving updates on Township and local resources and initiatives? Sign up for our Seniors Social Check-In Project by emailing hjarvis@uxbridge.ca or calling 905-852-9747. Our telephone check-ins are intended to be a source of information to help guide you through these next few weeks and months, while also giving you an opportunity to chat with someone new.



Uxbridge at a Glance

The Corporation of The Township of Uxbridge
51 Toronto Street South, P.O. Box 190
Uxbridge L9P 1T1
905-852-9181 info@uxbridge.ca



Updates - Reopenings/Closures

The following Township of Uxbridge facilities have re-opened – all other facilities remain closed. Physical distancing requirements remain in place, as do bans on groups of more than 5 people (not from the same household).

- The Fire Ban has been lifted – fire permits are available for sale at the Fire Hall, Monday through Friday between 8:30am – 4:30pm. Please note social distancing measures are in place and exact cash payment or cheques are preferred - no debit sales.

- The skate park, pump park and off-leash dog park are all open as of Tuesday, May 19.
- Soccer pitches and baseball diamonds have re-opened as greenspace that can be enjoyed by families or individuals. Team sports and games (formal or informal) are prohibited at this time.

Visit www.uxbridge.ca/en/news/select-township-facilities-reopen-for-use.aspx for updates.

Bids & Tenders

All current bid opportunities are posted to uxbridge.ca/tenders

- U20-06 - Propane Furnace - Zephyr Community Centre
- U20-17 - Selective Roadside Weed Spraying
- U20-18 - Rout and Seal

The Township continues to accept bids and tenders – all bids must be received by the Township, by the deadline stated. Bids may be delivered electronically or mailed to P.O. Box 190, 51 Toronto St. S., Uxbridge or left in our 'Red Barn' drop box located at 51 Toronto Street South. In person submission of bids and tenders are not being accepted at this time due to the Township office closure. Public tender openings will not be held until further notice.

Uxbridge Music Hall Board Advisory Meeting

May 29 at 9 am.

This meeting will be held virtually. Anyone wanting to take part can do so by pre-registering with Karen Ryl at kryl@uxbridge.ca by 4pm, May 28.

Local Resources to Assist - Do you need help, or can you help?

Visit

uxbridge.ca/en/news/resources-to-assist-businesses-and-residents.aspx

for links related to support provided by local organizations, various levels of government, and reliable health sources.



Thank You

This community appreciates the dedication and hard work of all those who: Clean and disinfect, keep our drinking water safe, keep our roads maintained, keep the electricity flowing, provide emergency help, keep us safe, ensure we have access to food, and are involved in health care. We are very grateful for all you are doing. Thank you, from all Township residents!

Notice of Road Closure

Brock St. W. will be closed for approx. 4 months between Toronto St. and Bascom St. beginning

May 25

Detours in place.

Parking and pedestrian access available

Please continue to support downtown businesses.



www.uxbridgeculvert.ca

Street Sweeping

Street sweeping has begun and will take 6 – 8 weeks to complete. Please try not to park on the streets during this time. Sand may be raked into the curb/gutter but please do not leave sand in piles or in pails, as these will not be picked up. Any areas that are missed due to parked cars will be redone after all sweeping is complete.

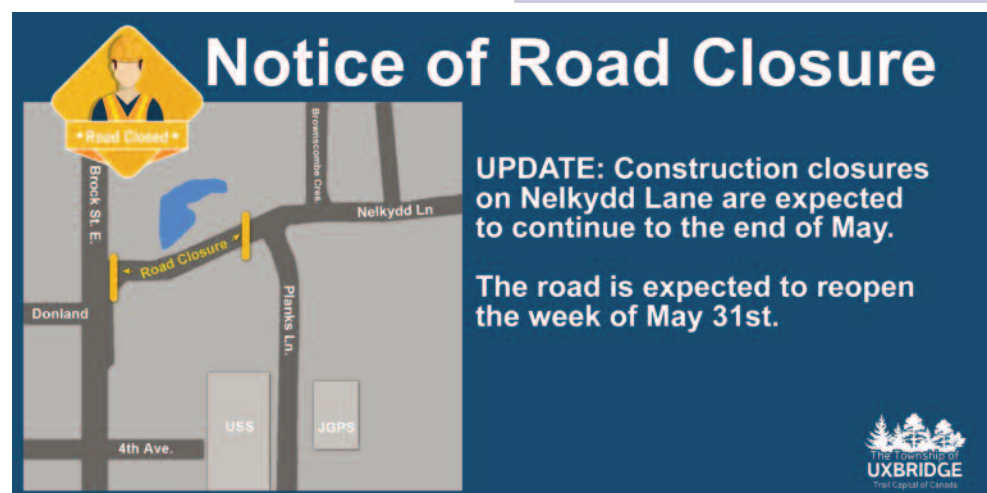
Below is the schedule for sweeping:

1. N/W corner of town - COMPLETED
2. S/W corner of town - COMPLETED
3. S/E corner of town - UNDERWAY
4. N/E corner of town
5. Rural subdivisions and hamlets
6. Town parking lots

(The town portion is divided into 4 areas with Brock & Main Streets as the centre point.)

Temporary Road Closure

- Victoria Street from Brock Street West to King Street West, on Sunday, May 31 from 7am – 3pm.



Notice of Road Closure

UPDATE: Construction closures on Nelkydd Lane are expected to continue to the end of May.

The road is expected to reopen the week of May 31st.



Township of Uxbridge documents are available in alternate formats upon request. Please fill out the Request for Alternate Formats Form at uxbridge.ca/accessibility

email: accessibility@uxbridge.ca
phone: 905-852-9181 ext.209

TOWN HALL

by Roger Varley
Notes from the May 25
Council Meeting

Downtown store decries lack of information: In a letter brought before council on Monday, the owner of The Lemonade Stand on lower Brock Street West complained about a lack of information to area businesses about the closure of the road for culvert construction.

Lee Hawn said she had a number of questions that had remained unanswered for her, including whether the sidewalk would be open and if it was, which portions? Hawn, noting that she had lost all confidence in the township's timelines regarding the culvert construction, also wanted to know how the township would ensure the road closure does not last longer than the planned four months. She said she needed answers so that she could inform her customers how they can access her store.

Hawn said disruptions caused by the culvert project, combined with the two-month COVID-19 shutdown, have made it "almost next to impossible for a healthy business to survive. This is a lot for a small business to consume on their own."

Councillor Willie Popp said Hawn's letter indicated the level of impact of the culvert and COVID-19 on businesses. He said the COVID-19 shutdown did provide an opportunity to close Brock St., but the planned closure was delayed because of structural problems at the Coffee Time building caused by the construction. He said the closure announcement, coming on the heels of stores being allowed to open on a limited basis, did "cut the legs from under businesses."

Popp offered there could be some days during the next four weeks when Brock would be temporarily reopened, and he urged residents to

shop on lower Brock and support the merchants.

"We're having a party: don't come": Uxbridge's Canada Day celebrations this year, if they occur at all, will be a much abbreviated version of the traditional festivities - and the township doesn't want you to attend.

In a report to council, recreation coordinator Hunter Jarvis said the Canada Day committee is recommending the celebration be limited to a fireworks show, with the pyrotechnics taking place at the Uxbridge Historical Centre, which overlooks most of the downtown area. Jarvis said the idea is for residents to watch the fireworks from their homes. People will be discouraged from parking in the vicinity of the Historical Centre.

She said the committee will not be seeking sponsorships or donations as they have in the past and asked council's approval to pay for the fireworks with the township's \$10,000 Canada Day budget.

On the regional level, Jarvis said a virtual, pre-recorded three-hour long Canada Day broadcast - *Canada Day the Durham Way* - will consist of local artists and talent along with messages from Regional Chair John Henry and the mayors of each municipality. The show will be broadcast on Durham Tourism's website, streamed on the local Rogers channel and on each municipality's respective websites.

Council voted to support Jarvis' recommendation.

Culvert and closures costing the town

by Roger Varley

On Monday, the long-awaited closure of Brock Street West took place with the erection of concrete barriers and steel fencing to prevent traffic travelling east from Toronto St. or west from Bascom St.

The closure was supposed to happen much earlier this year but was delayed, in part because of damage to the Coffee Time due to the culvert construction. During a teleconference last Friday, Mayor Dave Barton said the problems at Coffee Time forced project engineers to take a different look at how they continued with the project. He said engineers were cautious about going further south with the project because they didn't want to cause more damage on the north side of the street, or see any damage to buildings on the south side of the street.

"Coffee Time changed the way work is being done," he said.

The street closure is slated to last four months. Public Works director Ben Kester said it was prudent to announce a four-month closure in case construction crew run into any water problems. He said the first two weeks of the closure will be used to prepare the site for the work.

Kester said digging up Brock St. will not impact Bell lines or gas lines running under the road but residents in the area might experience some power outages or water cut offs during the construction.

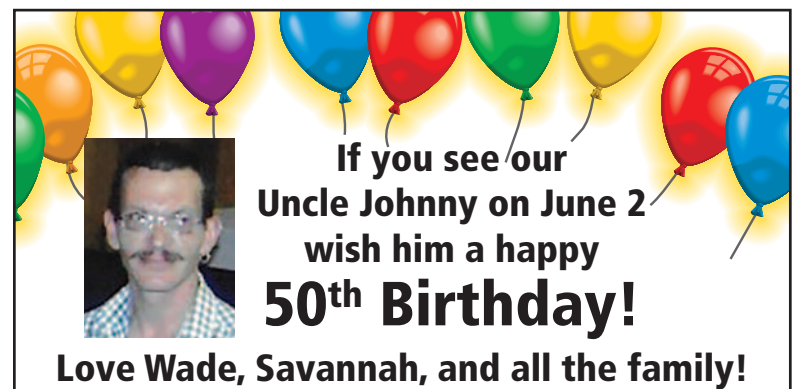
Brock St. is closed just east of the Roxy Theatres to allow cars to drop off people and turn around. At the other end, the street is closed just west of

Bascom St. There is pedestrian access to stores on lower Brock St.

Kester said the project is expected to be completed in late autumn, with cleanup work and work that can't be completed in cold weather scheduled for the spring. He said the municipal parking lot under which much of the culvert lies will remain much as it was before construction started, although Barton said council will be looking at changes once the work is completed.

Barton said the cost of the project still sits at \$24.3 million. Of the original \$10 million quote - (which Councillor Bruce Garrod, chair of the finance committee, said Tuesday "was

never a real number") - the federal, provincial, regional and township governments all agreed to pay \$2.5 million each. However, since that time, the cost of the project has ballooned, yet neither the federal nor provincial governments have increased their share of the costs. Garrod said the region has increased its share to a total of \$5.25 million, leaving Uxbridge to cover the remaining \$14.05 million. Garrod said this would be covered by various debentures, the eventual sale of the old fire hall on Bascom St. and the Coffee Time/Circle K property, money already designated for the project, reserves and the tax base.



**If you see our
Uncle Johnny on June 2
wish him a happy
50th Birthday!**
Love Wade, Savannah, and all the family!

**As businesses
and retail stores
start to reopen...**



Protect yourself and others.



Stay home if you're sick.



Keep 2 metres (6 feet) between yourself and others when out in the community.



If 2 metres (6 feet) can't be maintained, consider using a non-medical face mask.



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durham.ca/novelcoronavirus
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Our two cents

Sunbaked and stupid

We really don't know if what we want to write about is worth writing about. We think it is, so we'll give it a try, and start with three words: Trinity Bellwoods Park.

You rolled your eyes, there, we know it. And you're of either two camps - you're calling every single person who crowded into that park in Toronto on Saturday a Covidiot, or you're wishing you had been down there with them.

After some reflection, we at the *Cosmos* have decided we are in the Covidiot camp. Since the middle of March, we have been in lockdown, told to stay at least six metres away from other people, and wash our hands until they're bleeding, all because of a nasty little virus that scientists and other experts don't know a heck of a lot about, except that it can be carried around by the most unsuspecting of us, and hit anyone at any age, rather severely. Regardless of how you think this has all been handled, or what conspiracy theory you may subscribe to, the fact remains that there is virus out there that can make people very, very sick, or kill them. It's bad enough to take away professional sports, for god's sake.

So what, in the name of all that is good and right in the world, would possess any person with half a brain to take a wander by a crowded park on a sunny day, picnic basket in hand, and say to him or herself: "Gee, everyone seems to like it in there, looks nice, think I'll join them," and cop a squat on the grass shoulder to shoulder with other people DURING A WORLDWIDE PANDEMIC?

Was it crowd mentality that just picked up and carried everyone away? Was it the sunshine - it made people's brains go soft? Was it an organized stand against what government and health officials have been telling us about since December of last year? Just what was it? Please, someone explain, because we're darned if we know.

Canada is the second largest country in the world, and Ontario one of its largest provinces. We know it's not always easy to leave the city, especially when public transit is a concern during the pandemic. But damn, people, there *is* room to spread out! Now we all get to be insulted and treated like children while city officials draw big circles on the grass so people remember to physically distance themselves - welcome to kindergarten, class.

The more people do stupid things like that, the longer we are going to be in this mess. It won't kill any of us to just stick to the rules awhile longer. It *will* kill us if we insist on breaking them, all for the sake of a suntan.

Don't be a Covidiot. And show some respect for the rest of us.

When one of these disappears, A LOT disappears.

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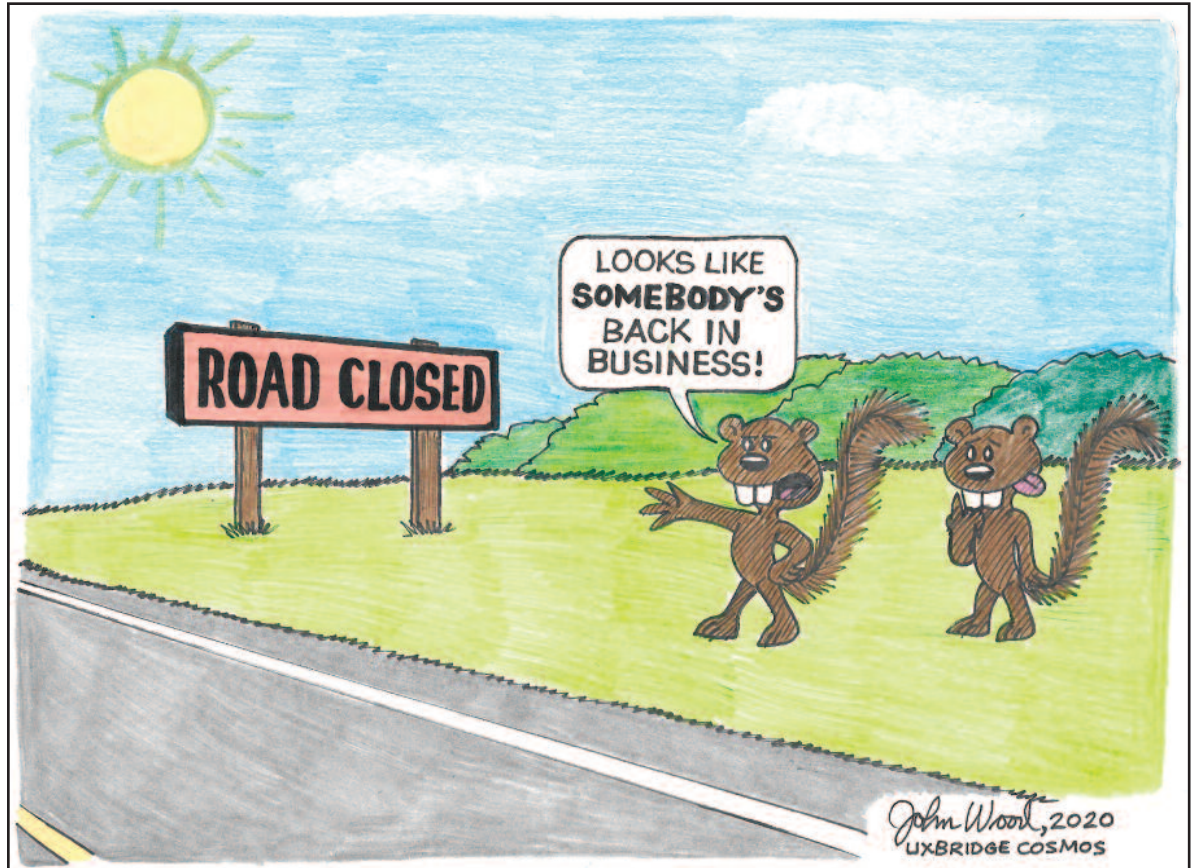
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Letters to the Editor

Roger [Varley, 'Am I Wrong?'], you do a splendid job of promoting the shops on upper Brock St., but do you not think to go east of Toronto St.?

All the businesses are open (except Mondo Hair Salon, for now) and all accessible from Main St. or Bascom St. There are two clothing shops, a bakery, a butcher, a small vegetable market, a shop for cell phones, audio, travel and a bit further east, a florist. Also a choice of eating places.

So come on, shoppers, support local business. All you need is right here in downtown Uxbridge.

Margery Cowley
Uxbridge

We all value a good time with family and friends. I am baffled, though, given the current times, how some of my neighbours had house parties this weekend which obviously included individuals who were not from the host household. It was also clear that the practice of social distancing was n't being adhered to in any way.

During these times of social isolation, the restrictions are there for a reason. Please, if not for your own protection, don't mix and mingle in this way, potentially causing harm for others.

Thank you.

Mark Kinghan
Uxbridge

Re: 'Am I Wrong?', May 21 edition

Sadly Roger, you are not wrong.

I wish I could deny the facts laid out before me, but my mind has been questioning this process since the beginning of this pandemic.

There is little transparency from all forms of government and health officials regarding authentic facts on this virus and how 'the plan' unfolds and 'goes forward.'

Mayor Dave Barton and pals treat the residents of Uxbridge like chil-

dren when they hold back essential information because he, Mr. Barton, cannot trust us to act appropriately or responsibly. He has no right to do that.

This attitude seems to trickle down from the federal government and health authorities, right into the provinces and municipalities. It shows great weakness on their part. It reveals their fear.

'We are all in this together' falls on deaf ears when essential health and government restrictions are not announced or described in detail, and shared to a grown-up adult population with choices to make of their own.

I hear people are now referred to as 'citizens': therefore, the citizens of Uxbridge request the Township of Uxbridge keep the flow of information pellucid on every account. It is the basis of democracy, and the tie that binds a community.

Yes, knowledge is power, Roger, and Uxbridge deserves to be informed and respected as citizens living during this COVID-19 experience. Because when this passes, there will be judgements made in the hearts of the community on how their government and institutions treated the people of Uxbridge at a very vulnerable time.

Thank you frontline workers, before and always.

Theresa Pilniuk
Uxbridge

Living in Uxbridge is a pleasure for several reasons; one of those is being close enough to Toronto to be able to quickly get to major entertainment venues or the airport, yet being far enough away that the pace of life is slower, people are friendly and the air is fresh. Stress is a rare feeling here.

However, there is a growing feeling of stress among the people lately. The COVID-19 virus has us all wary, and

many people monitor the Durham Region statistics to gauge how serious the situation is.

In general, life seems fairly normal and we can be excused for thinking that we are outside of the mainstream of the spread, but those who check the numbers are getting alarmed.

Uxbridge (Township) has the second highest infection rate in the region. The highest is Pickering with a cases per 100,000 of 461 [as of Mon., May 25]. Our rate is 254/100M, followed by Ajax at 253/100M. This contrasts with Scugog Township, which Uxbridge is basically equal to in most respects, and has a rate of 58/100M. The Canadian average is about 198/100M.

Why are our numbers so high? Is the population here that much sicker? Has the Regional Health Department made a bad error on the statistics? Whatever the case, many people in Uxbridge are stressed by the seeming seriousness of the situation here, and that is bad for our mental health.

I believe people can handle, and indeed deserve, a straightforward representation of any such situation without the smoke and mirrors that are supposedly protecting us. Please someone, give us peace.

David Jones
Uxbridge

You have probably heard the Trinity United Church Bell being rung Saturdays at 6 p.m. This is in recognition of all the people in Canada who are working on our behalf to defeat this awful COVID-19 virus. We at Trinity ring the bell 21 times, similar to the 21 Gun Salute used by our military for special occasions. The Uxbridge Library Chimes also can be heard each Saturday evening at 6 p.m.

Bob Kirvan
Uxbridge



Am I Wrong?

column by Roger Varley

See you in court

"Death belongs to life as birth does. The walk is in the raising of the foot as in the laying of it down." Rabindranath Tagore

A less poetic of saying the same thing as quoted above is that the only certainty of life is death. And it seems that thousands, or even hundreds of thousands, of people in North America, have adopted that fatalistic viewpoint in their handling of COVID-19. A few weeks ago, I wrote a column decrying American stupidity in that nation's approach to the pandemic and listed several examples of crowds flocking to beaches and parks, taking part in mass protests, attending church services, etc. But it now appears the U.S. does not have exclusive rights to stupidity: we have our very own idiots right here on our doorstep.

In case you missed it, hundreds of people crammed into Toronto's Trinity Bellwoods Park last Saturday to enjoy the warm, sunny weather and to disregard the constant reminders that we need to continue to practice social distancing for some period of time if this virus is ever going to be defeated.

Even someone who doesn't avidly follow the news must know the following facts: a person can be infected with COVID-19 and go a week before showing any symptoms (if they ever show any symptoms); said person can transmit the disease to others during this time; the easiest way to infect someone - or become infected - is to be in close contact. For many, as in those we call our front-line and essential workers, they have little choice but to come into close contact with others, but they at least take precautions by wearing protective gear. But as for those who just couldn't wait to plonk their bums down on some grass with hundreds of others in a public park, what's with them? Do they all have a death wish?

How many of those who went to Trinity Bellwoods became infected while enjoying the sun? Perhaps we'll never know, but it would be a safe bet than some of them contracted the virus. And if that's the case, it proves that some who attended the park were already infected. And those who were infected and those who became infected are all a danger to anyone they come into contact with. And that includes their own fam-

ilies.

What kind of stupidity does it take to expose one's loved ones to a deadly virus simply because one became tired of isolation? That's akin to going into shark-infested waters because you haven't had a swim in a while. Even worse, it's the same as pushing your kid into those same shark-infested waters.

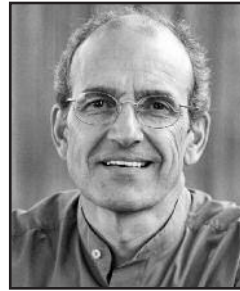
Looking at it from a local angle, did any of those Trinity Bellwoods party-goers later find their way to Uxbridge and perhaps shop at Zehrs or Canadian Tire? If they did, they likely endangered people who have been following the guidelines set out by our health experts.

So that brings us to a most difficult question: should those who knowingly break the guidelines, and in so doing expose others to possible infection, be charged with a criminal offence? I most certainly do not want to contract this disease. At my age, it likely would be a death sentence. So if I come down with COVID-19 because of someone else's blatant disregard of health guidelines, shouldn't I expect that person to be held responsible by the courts? And before you jump all over me with cries of civil rights and freedom, ask yourself if your response would be the same if some buffoon infected your child or parent because they didn't want to follow the rules.

I, for one, will continue wearing my mask every time I come into contact with other people or enter a store and I am willing to do so for however many weeks or months it will take. Actually, I have found myself going even further: when going through the drive-through for a cup of coffee, for example, I keep a "social distance" between my vehicle and the one ahead of me. And I wear my mask going through the drive-through.

I could say I'm doing it to protect you and your family, but my reason is far more selfish: I want to protect myself. It seems to me we need more of that kind of selfishness, rather than the selfishness of people who demand to be allowed to congregate, consequences be damned. For those people, I'd like to hear: "See you in court."

Tell me, am I wrong?



The Barris Beat

column by Ted Barris

Limits of invincibility

A boy who'd become a man by joining the Royal Canadian Air Force and graduating as an air gunner (second highest marks in his class), marched to the harbourfront in Halifax on a fall day in 1942. Albert Wallace boarded the ocean liner *Queen Elizabeth* – transformed by the war into a troopship – and prepared for the transatlantic crossing to Britain to join the Allied air war effort over Europe. He figured the *Queen E* couldn't be hit by U-boat torpedoes. She was a lucky ship.

"I know luck," he wrote in his diary that day, Oct. 27, 1942. "I'll never forget the close call I had trying to stop my CCM (bike) by jamming my foot against the front tire. I ended up flying ass-over-teakettle over the handlebars onto the streetcar tracks (in Toronto)."

The notion that youth enjoys a sense of invincibility was just as common in RCAF officer Albert Wallace's time as today. This week, I read my copy of *Survival: My Father's War as Air Force Gunner and POW* by Wallace's daughter, Barbara Trendos. Incorporating Wallace's diary entries and letters home, Barbara's book retraces her father's path during the war, when everybody was supposed to step up and do his part despite the odds of wartime mortality. Coincidentally, this week, a lot of young people in Toronto expressed a related fearlessness by gathering in parks, not physical distancing and ignoring the threat of potentially acquiring or spreading the coronavirus. That's one form of perceived invincibility.

Pilot Officer Al Wallace's Second World War experience was clearly another. My long-time friend and RCAF veteran Albert Wallace died this week at Sunnybrook Hospital – not from COVID-19 – in his 100th year.

Miraculously, Al defied the odds again and again during the war. As he trained at the bombing and gunnery school near Jarvis, Ont., indeed on his 22nd birthday – Sept. 9, 1942 – a crash at the training base killed a pilot and two of Al's fellow students. Throughout the rest of that year, P/O Wallace prepared for service in Bomber Command, and the operational flights that would put him in the thick of the air war over Nazi-occupied Europe night after night. In one of his pre-bombing sessions, Wallace received instruction in the use of an escape kit – containing Dutch currency, a compass, jack-knife, Horlicks tablets (milk powder mix) and a cloth map of Europe – should his bomber be shot down. "Hope I never need it," he wrote afterwards.

He would need it. Despite the success rate of

his RCAF 419 Moose Squadron – flying the most sorties with the fewest losses among its bomber crews – on May 12/13, 1943, during his 15th bombing mission, Al's Halifax bomber encountered heavy anti-aircraft flak over Germany. This sparked fires in its fuel tanks and his pilot, W/O Glen "Mac" McMillan, gave the order to abandon the aircraft. Though not a praying man, Al said a prayer just as the slipstream pulled him through his escape hatch in the bomber into the night air. He pulled the D-ring of his parachute; it blossomed as he watched his bomber, now a ball of fire, crash to Earth. McMillan and the wireless operator died in the crash helping the others to survive, including Al Wallace, who ended up in Stalag Luft III, the German POW camp famous for the Great Escape. Despite threats of reprisals for attempting to escape, Wallace joined the escape committee and operated as a penguin, carrying tunnel dirt in pouches to the camp theatre.

"Was told to load up and go see *Arsenic and Old Lace* at the theatre," he wrote. "Sat in seat 13 in the back row. ... During the show, a trapdoor quietly opened under my feet. That was my clue to let go my load." P/O could have put his name in the draw for those to escape through Tunnel Harry on March 24, 1944. He chose not to. He sensed that youthful invincibility would not get him across Germany as an escapee. Instead, in the final months of the war, he and thousands of other POWs endured a forced winter march westward through blizzards and cold; he was released just before VE Day, 75 years ago this month, to return to Canada, marry, raise a family and live a full 100 years of life.

As the world spins madly through a global pandemic, and some of us either choose to walk close to others in sheer defiance of law and common sense, I think of centenarian Albert Wallace, who learned how to face wartime menace that was potentially fatal. He beat the odds of combat survivability with some luck, yes, but also by recognizing his own limitations and mortality. He went on to a century of service to his family, his community and his country. His is a lesson in acquired wisdom, not blind invincibility, something we could all use a bit more of these days.

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