



TLR

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more members of the NOTL community

Canada

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COVID Tracker

NOTL active cases: 146

Region active cases: 3,585

Region deaths: 470

Region total cases: 30,594

Region resolved cases: 26,539

**Jan. 26 data per Niagara Region Public Health.*

Public health warns that "Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, limited availability of testing, and changes to case and contact management practices, case counts shown below are an underestimate of the true number of individuals in Niagara with COVID-19. Data should be interpreted with caution."

POSITIVE
POWER+

Contributed by Patty Garriock

"Define success on your own terms, achieve it by your own rules, and build a life you're proud to live." - Anne Sweeney

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Call 905.359.2270 or send an email to editor@niagaranow.com

Sly as a fox

NOTL photographer Janice White captured this photo of a fox romping around near the Commons during a snowy walk.

Calling all NOTL photographers: send us some of your interesting, evocative, quirky images of life around town and we'll consider them for this space on our editorial page. Email images (1 MB or more) to editor@niagaranow.com.



Editorial

Close maskless school now

Richard Harley
Editor-In-Chief

It is shocking to learn of an unregulated, private "alternative learning" pod school operating in our community, flying in the face of COVID protocols.

As we reported in great detail this week, the school, called the Niagara Alternative Learning Alliance, located in the old Virgil public school, is hosting as many as 50 unmasked students who are not physically distanced.

Add to that as many as 15 unmasked volunteers and parents, most of whom don't seem to have any formal teaching credentials.

And the school says it has no vaccination policy in effect and, under the guise of privacy, won't comment on it.

It's frightening, and one is left to assume the majority of students and parent volunteers are likely not vaccinated, given the focus of the school's owners, which seems to mainly be a protest against safety, rationality and public health measures.

We question how this unregulated group could be legally allowed to operate given the provincial rules and pandemic protocols in effect. Both Niagara's public health department and the Ministry of Educa-

tion could not provide firm answers to numerous questions from The Lake Report on whether the school is contravening COVID laws — pending further investigation.

The co-owner, Lori Davidson, proudly states there is no regulation required to start a learning pod — not something you typically hear legitimate educators boasting about. Pods are not illegal, but society has special rules during a pandemic.

Davidson also made some unscientific statements such as touting pumpkin seeds as an alternative to ivermectin (a controversial remedy) and claiming masks do more harm than good to children.

We understand everyone's frustration with two years of COVID and ongoing public health measures. But they work and save lives.

The situation with this learning pod raises serious questions about whether parents and volunteers who deny sound science should be allowed to teach children in a learning setting.

In our view, they absolutely should not. At home is one thing, but being an educator is a sacred responsibility and should be reserved for those who can understand basic data.

This pod group is an

insult to the teachers who take years of schooling to be able to properly teach a sound curriculum.

And it's a public health hazard.

We wonder if landlord Lloyd Redekopp will take steps to remove this school from his building — a place that's familiar with anti-maskers and conspiracy theorists, as a former tenant operated maskless art classes in the school.

We also wonder where public health officials and the town's bylaw officers have been during all of this as it appears they only started to take the issue seriously after inquiries by The Lake Report.

Public health has passed the buck and said the town is responsible for enforcing mandated COVID restrictions. We hope to see swift and firm action against this school if it is found to be violating the law.

How is it safe, fair or legal, when legitimate schools have to abide by the province's rules?

Unmasked people, possibly unvaccinated, gathering in a building and potentially spreading COVID present a risk to everyone.

They increase their chances of becoming infected and passing it on through community spread outside the school.

Because the vaccine (like all vaccines) is

not 100 per cent effective, these actions put NOTL's largely senior population at risk (e.g. A "pod" school parent gets it, goes to the store, gives it to Mrs. Jones, who falls seriously ill and maybe even dies).

And not just that, but what if one of these parents or students unnecessarily develops severe symptoms and needs an ICU bed? Then that's a bed that's no longer available for another Niagara resident, who followed the rules, but might require it.

Viruses also mutate more easily in the unvaccinated, who remain contagious longer. More reasons why public health measures need to be followed.

The town has been touting COVID safety since March 2020 and it is time for Lord Mayor Betty Disero to make a strong statement in the interest of public health and in keeping with the town's position regarding COVID safety.

It's time for public health to shut this place down.

It's time for those students to be subject to a proper, safe learning environment with legitimate, trained educators.

And it's time to stop unscientific rhetoric from being spread in our community.

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