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Check out this week's New Hamburg Independent for our salute to **NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK AND SMALL BUSINESSES**



IMPACTING YOUR COMMUNITY

Richard Lautens / Metroland

Teachers unions in Waterloo Region say the provincial government's plan to vaccinate some - but not all - education workers will do little to ensure school safety.

TEACHERS' UNIONS SAY SCHOOLS WON'T BE SAFE UNTIL ALL STAFF VACCINATED

LAUREN SCOTT
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Teachers' unions in Waterloo region say the provincial govern-

ment's plan to vaccinate some — but not all — education workers will do little to ensure school safety and may lead to rifts among classroom staff.

Last week, Premier Doug Ford announced that special education staff across Ontario, and all education workers in select hot spot areas, are now eligible for the CO-

VID-19 vaccine to help keep higher-risk schools safe.

While prioritizing some staff is a

See 'TEACHERS', page 7

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BREAKING
NEWS AND
UP-TO-DATE
LOCAL
INFORMATION
ON COVID-19
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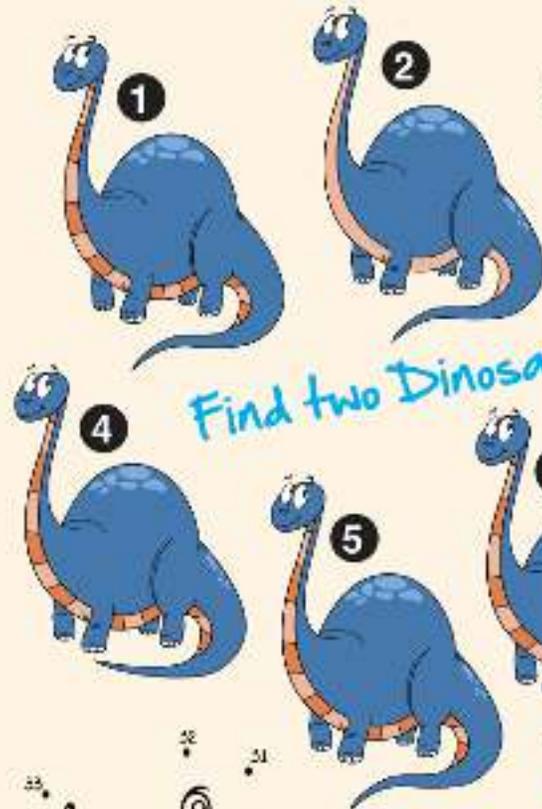
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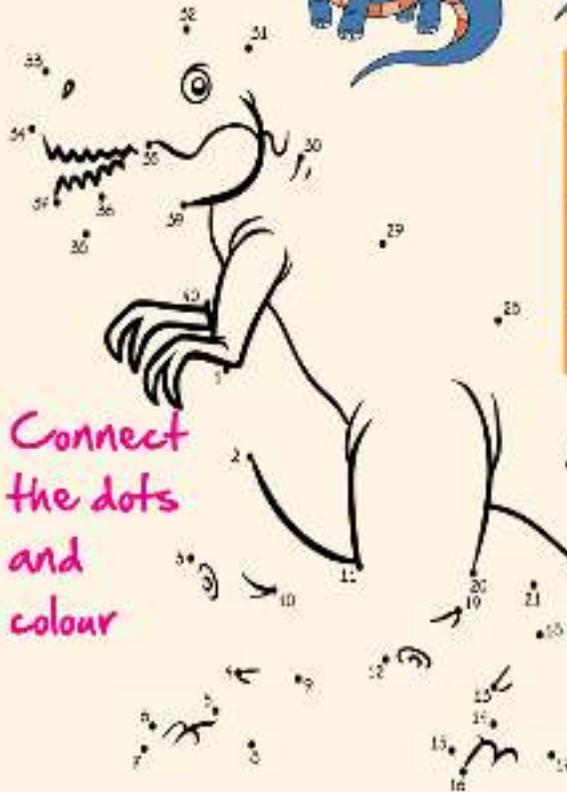
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Find two Dinosaurs



Connect the dots and colour

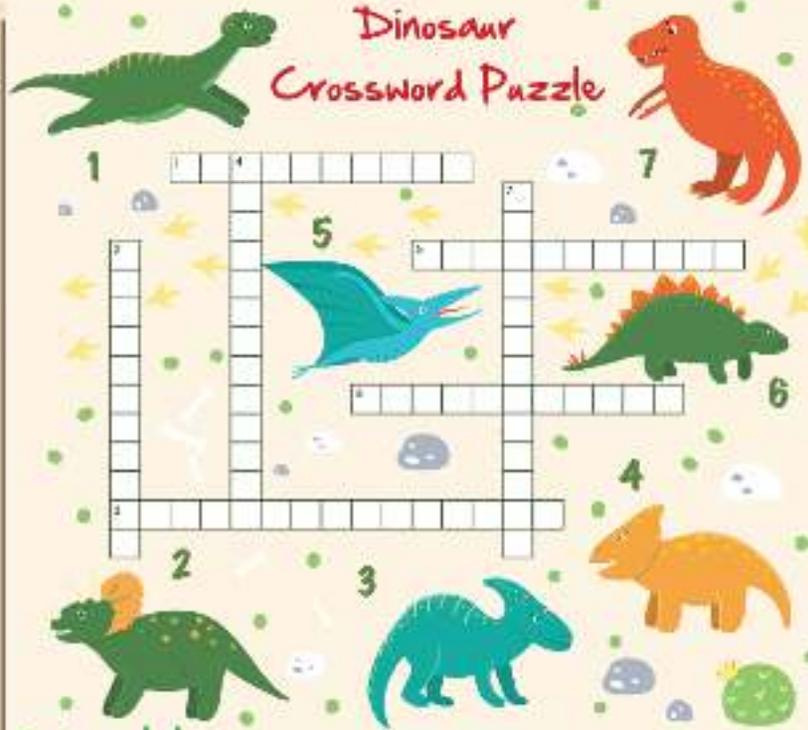
KID'S PUZZLES

Puzzles for children and the young at heart!



How Many?

1. How many green baby dinos are there?
2. How many baby dinos have shells on their head?
3. How many baby dinos are showing their tails?
4. How many baby dinos have horns?
5. How many baby dinos are looking to the right?
6. How many baby dinos have sharp claws?



Dinosaur Crossword Puzzle

Dino Jokes:

- 1: What do you call a dinosaur with no eyes?
- 2: What do you call a sleeping dinosaur?
- 3: What dinosaur would Harry Potter be?
- 4: How can you best raise a baby dinosaur?
- 5: What do dinosaurs use on the floors of their kitchens?
- 6: What came after the dinosaur?
- 7: What does a triceratops sit on?
- 8: What game does the brontosaurus like to play with humans?
- 9: What do you call a paleontologist who sleeps all the time?
- 10: Why did the dinosaur cross the road?

Answers: Crossword Answers: 1. Dinosaur 2. Triceratops 3. Triceratops 4. Protoceratops 5. Protoceratops 6. Protoceratops 7. Tyrannosaurus Find two Dinosaurs Answers: 3 & 6. How Many Answers: 1: 1 (5) 2: 1 (5) 3: 4 (14) 4: 2 (5) 5: 1 (5) 6: 1 (5) Dino Jokes Answers: 1: Dinosaur 2: A dinosaur 3: The Dinosaur 4: With a crane 5: Pop-tiles 6: Its tail 7: Its inner bottom 8: Squash 9: Lazy bones 10: To eat the chickens on the other side.



PROUDLY SERVING THE FAMILIES OF WILMOT AND THEIR PETS SINCE 1994.



'VACCINATED' GEAR DECLARES COMMITMENT TO CURB COVID-19

ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT THE KITCHENER, WATERLOO, WILMOT, WOOLWICH AND WELLESLEY ONTARIO HEALTH TEAM

JOHANNA WEIDNER
jweidner@therecord.com

Vaccinated and proud? Now you can share your COVID-19 vaccination status with a new collection of wearable items, while also supporting local health care.

"We know there are strong emotions around the vaccine rollout, and we also believe that many are keen to show their support of Canada's vaccination

program and the science behind it," said Paul McIntyre Royston, president and chief executive officer of the Grand River Hospital foundation.

"The collection is a testament to our path to celebrate the beginning of the end of COVID-19."

The collection includes a wristband, mask, hat, buttons and sticker — all proudly proclaiming "VACCINATED." in all caps with a period and on

black for plenty of emphasis on what the website calls a "generational moment."

Don't feel left out if you haven't yet had a chance to get the vaccine. The masks and wristbands are reversible to broadcast the pledge: "I'll be vaccinated."

All proceeds from the merchandise will support the Kitchener, Waterloo, Wilmot, Woolwich & Wellesley Ontario Health Team or KW4 OHT, which is comprised of 38 health-care organizations around the region.

People can also buy a mask or wristband that will be given to a health-

care worker.

"These important funds will help resource the work to create a place where everyone is empowered and supported to achieve their optimal health and wellbeing," said Ingrid Pregel for the health team.

"We are so excited to join with all community partners to move this important work forward."

Vaccinated merchandise can be bought at www.illbevaccinated.ca.

"To proudly proclaim that you've taken (or will take) the step needed to end the scourge," the website says above a running tally of how many people have been fully vaccinated in Canada, Ontario and Waterloo Region.

"It started with washing hands, social distancing and masks — it ends with being vaccinated."



Grand River Hospital Foundation Photo
A collection of wearable merchandise allows people to share their COVID-19 vaccination status, while also supporting local health care.

OPINION

GIVE PLANT GROWING A TRY WITH SEED LIBRARY

IT'S A FUN, LOW-COST, ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY ACTIVITY SUITABLE FOR ALL, WRITES ELLEN BLEANEY

Do you start your own plants from seed? Why not give it a try this year, and add it to your list of pandemic skills! It's a fun, low-cost, environmentally friendly activity suitable for both adults and children.

If you're struggling to

find seeds or just want to try seed starting without investing too much money, the Region of Waterloo Library's seed library is a great option for novices and experts alike. Heirloom vegetable, herb and flower seeds are free to "borrow,"



ELLEN BLEANEY
Column

and patrons are asked to collect seeds from the garden at the end of the season to "return."

"Black thumbs can borrow without fear," says Jen Cyr, the library staff member who manages the seeds, in a news release, "because the seed library operates on an honour system. Sometimes gardens don't come together the way you planned! For instance, last year I was able to borrow and return green bean seeds easily, but cucumber seeds were a bit trickier."

Cyr cautions, though, that seeds are only available while supplies last. To get yours, complete the seed re-

quest form at www.rwlibrary.ca or call our Ask a Librarian service at 226-748-8030. Staff will be in touch to arrange curbside pickup.

When you're arranging your pickup, Cyr suggests putting a hold on a helpful book like 'Starting and Saving Seeds' by Julie Thompson-Adolf, or 'Heirloom Vegetable Gardening' by William Woys Weaver.

For those who prefer ebooks, the library has an ample selection, including 'Starting Seeds Indoors' by Ann Reilly, 'Saving Vegeta-

ble Seeds' by Fern Marshall Bradley, and 'Starting Seeds' by Barbara Ellis, all available on-demand through Hoopla.

"We have new books coming in all the time," says Cyr, and suggests that if you're not sure what to get, the Ask a Librarian staff are happy to help you find the right book for your needs. For more information, visit www.rwlibrary.ca.

Ellen Bleaney is library clerk at the Region of Waterloo Library.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS
for your hard work and dedication to supporting our community

TIM LOUIS

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**Your turn
is coming
soon.**



Ontario's COVID-19 vaccine plan is helping to stop the spread and save lives. Thousands of people across the province are getting vaccinated every day.

As vaccinations continue, we need to stay the course to protect those we love. Wear a mask. Wash your hands. Keep your distance.

Find out when, where and how to get vaccinated at ontario.ca/covidvaccineplan or call 1-888-999-6488 for assistance in more than 300 languages.

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NEWS

TAVISTOCK MAN GETS MONEY AND LAUGHS ON 'JEOPARDY!'

He didn't win the game, this time, but he did manage to deliver an amusing verbal sack of the quarterback.

Tavistock native Scott Shewfelt couldn't run his win streak on 'Jeopardy!' to three straight games last week, but he went with a bang and made headlines on the likes of CNN and ESPN.

Shewfelt entered the April 5 episode of the popular TV game show as the champion, having earned \$46,800 total during wins April 1 and 2.

'Final Jeopardy!' rolled around on April 5 and the game's leader, Brandon Deutsch, had run away with it — he had more than doubled the dollar totals of each of his opponents.

The guest host of the show was Aaron Rodgers, quarterback of the Green



SCOTT SHEWFELT

Bay Packers.

Shewfelt couldn't win the game. He wagered \$0 on 'Final Jeopardy!' and instead of jotting down a potentially correct response to the clue, he went for humour.

"Who wanted to kick that field goal?" his screen read.

The question was in reference to a controversial decision by the Green

Bay Packers in a playoff loss earlier this year to kick a late field goal instead of attempting to go for a touchdown.

Rodgers took it in stride with a chuckle and a smile:

"That is a great question," he said. Moments later, Shewfelt's question and the quarterback's answer made headlines at many websites, both big and small.

Shewfelt, whose Instagram account lists him as being in Los Angeles these days, received some congrats on April 2 from Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School in Baden, his former high school.

"Shout out to grad Scott Shewfelt for the big win on Jeopardy! Scott grew up in Tavistock and we look forward to cheering him on as the current champ!" reads the tweet.

LOCAL SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFF SLATED TO GET VACCINES

Teaching and support staff that work directly with students with special education needs are now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in Waterloo region.

According to a joint press release from the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB), Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) and regional public health, eligible staff are being contacted directly with registration instructions.

The release states these workers are being prioritized because they are in close contact with highly-vulnerable students that, providing both complex education and personal care

services.

"We greatly appreciate the collaboration with Public Health in prioritizing the staff who work closely and provide care for our most vulnerable students, and we recognize the tremendous commitment of all of our staff to our students," said John Bryant, WRDSB's director of education.

During a news conference on Wednesday afternoon (April 7), Premier Doug Ford announced that special education staff across Ontario, and all education workers in hot spot areas like Toronto and Peel, to help keep higher-risk schools safe.

"Our front-line education workers are absolute champions. And while our experts tell us that schools remain a safe space for students and workers, we want to do everything we can to keep them the same way," Ford said.

According to the joint release Wednesday, Waterloo school boards continue to work with public health officials on a vaccination plan for all educational staff.

"We are grateful for our partnership with Region of Waterloo Public Health to help us prioritize vaccination for our most vulnerable staff," said WCDSB education director Loretta Notten.

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PROVINCE FINALLY TAKING SOME POSITIVE STEPS TO FIGHT PANDEMIC

There's so much to be frustrated about in Ontario's latest response to the pandemic, but in the spirit of Premier Doug Ford's appeal to avoid negativity let's first acknowledge a very positive step.

The province has finally recognized that it needs to direct a lot more of its vaccination efforts to the neighbourhoods that have been hardest hit by the third wave of COVID-19 and the virulent variants that are making it so dangerous.

It promises to go into so-called COVID hot spots, the mostly low-income areas where the disease is out of control, and vaccinate anyone over the age of 18 who will accept a shot, a big shift from the focus on giving out doses mostly by age.

The plan is to send mobile clinics to workplaces, highrise buildings, community centres, churches and mosques, and get vaccines to people in the hardest-hit areas.

So much for the positive. It's hard to keep that up for long because, as everyone but the government itself can see, the new state of emergency and stay-at-home order come not as a way of heading off a disaster that was predicted for weeks, but as a delayed reaction to a situation already spiralling out of control.

Last week, Ford and his chief medical officer, Dr. David Williams, tried to make the argument that only over Easter weekend did it become apparent that the number of new COVID cases.

The alarms were ringing for weeks as independent experts, the Ontario Hospital Association, and the province's own science advisers warned that the third wave and the COVID variants would lead to exactly the scenario we're in now — an exponential increase in new cases and record pressure on ICU beds. Nothing that's happening now comes as a surprise to anyone but the government itself.

But now, according to the government's version of events, everything has changed (it hasn't) and things that were unthinkable only days ago are now not only possible, but mandatory.

Teachers weren't a priority for vaccination, but now at least some of them are.

Teachers dealing with special needs kids and education workers in high-risk areas will now be eligible for shots, starting this week.

Big box stores were allowed to sell both essential and non-essential goods during the last lockdown because the government said it wasn't possible to differentiate. Now, it seems, that can be done after all; this time around those big stores will be allowed to sell only essential products like food and medicine.

It all feels like improvisation, because it is. It would be far better if the government was able to anticipate events that are highly anticipated by almost everyone else, and plan for them rather than simply react.

If it could, in the well-worn phrase, skate to where the puck is going to be.

But at least now it's moving in the right direction — mostly.

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■ LETTERS & COMMENTARY

CARBON TAX IS ACCEPTABLE IF USED TO CUT OTHER TAXES

I find it interesting that the Supreme Court has ruled in favour of a federal carbon tax even though it is a provincial area of responsibility — but they will not rule in favour of federally sponsored pipelines even though it is federal responsibility.

Don't get me wrong. I think a carbon tax is a good idea, as long as all the revenue generated is used to reduce other taxes.

TIMOTHY B. LAWRENCE,
BADEN

IT'S A MESS OUT THERE — LET'S DO BETTER

The amount of trash showing up on our roadsides, trails and water courses this spring is appalling.

Takeout food packaging, beverage containers, and assorted plastic bags appear in abundance. Dis-

carded face masks and antiseptic wipes have now been added to the mix.

All of us enjoy walking in a clean and natural environment. I pick up garbage on my walk almost every day, but it reappears like magic.

Surely, we all know better. How can we successfully tackle a major issue like climate change if we can't even discipline ourselves to carry our garbage to the nearest trash barrel, or take it home for disposal?

Please, let's all do a better job of keeping our outdoor spaces clean and beautiful.

KEITH GOLEM,
WATERLOO

REMOVE DOG POOP PROPERLY, OR DON'T HAVE A DOG

My partner and I were out in the neighbourhood park for a walk today, and also with bucket and grabber, picking up trash.

There is a lot of it at this

time of year and thank goodness the city has put out garbage cans, as it didn't take long to fill our bucket. Several times.

But aside from an abundance of soda straws and face masks, what is most disgusting is the number of dog poo bags hanging from trees and thrown into the brush. ?

I picked up a couple of dozen today.

Honestly! I certainly don't endorse not picking up after your dog, but putting that stuff into a non-biodegradable plastic bag and throwing it into the bushes is much worse.

Pick it up, take it home, throw it out! Or else get rid of the dog.

JONATHAN MALTON,
KITCHENER



SCAN THE CODE for letters and columns.

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'TEACHERS AND EDUCATION WORKERS DON'T FEEL LIKE SCHOOLS ARE SAFE — BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT'

Continued from page 1

"positive step forward," the changes ultimately don't go far enough, says Greg Weiler, president of the Waterloo region chapter of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO).

"We still feel strongly that it should not be limited just to special education teachers, but all education workers that are in person right now because they are all exposed to the same environment," Weiler said, adding that teachers, educational assistants, early childhood educators and others often work with vulnerable students alongside special education staff.

"It just makes sense to us that if we want to keep the schools open and safe that we would prioritize vaccinating all the people that are required to be in person right now."

Ford has continually claimed that schools are safe despite reports of positive tests and closures. Holy Rosary Catholic Elementary in Waterloo was closed on April 6 due to uncovered staff absences. The school will remain closed until at least April 19, following the spring break.

"It's not happening in the schools, it's hap-

pening when there's community spread in hot areas," Ford said on April 6.

"Schools in this province have demonstrated an incredible level of resilience," said Education Minister Stephen Lecce.

ETFO Waterloo vice-president Jeff Pelich, who has a son in Grade 7 and a partner who is also a teacher, says the union has been "disgusted" with Lecce's handling of the situation.

"The responsibility for the biggest challenges and failures faced in schools today ... rests solely on the shoulders of this government," Pelich said.

On April 7, Ford announced changes to the vaccine distribution plan.

"While our experts tell us that schools remain a safe space for students and workers, we want to do everything we can to keep them the same way."

For Patrick Etmanski, Waterloo region president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), the suggestion that Ontario schools are safe is downright "insulting" to the province's education workers.

"Teachers and education workers don't feel like schools are safe — because they're

not," he said.

Etmanski says while immunizing special education workers is a "good first step," it has the potential to create a rift among colleagues.

"I'm really worried it's going to set teachers against teachers," he said. "We all work in the same place, we all work with the same kids, but yet the government is setting one group ahead of another group."

Lecce's spokesperson Caitlin Clark told the Independent last week that the King-Vaughan MPP has continually called for education and child-care workers to be prioritized sooner in the rollout.

"For every staff member out there, no matter where you are, we want to make sure you're safe as soon as we get the vaccine," Lecce said.

The first Ontario hot spots to see all education staff vaccinated are Toronto and Peel, the minister confirmed. Following that, workers in Halton, Hamilton, York, Durham and Ottawa will become eligible, as supply allows.

So far, Waterloo region is not included.

Meanwhile, families are stuck in a baffling limbo as they head into the April break.

"Our community is stuck between want-



Cathie Coward/Hamilton Spectator file photo
Last week, Premier Doug Ford announced special education staff across Ontario, and all education workers in select hot spot areas, are now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

ing to send our children to school and wanting to keep them safe," said Cambridge NDP candidate Marjorie Knight.

With schools closed this week, the unions are urging the province to allocate a shot to every education worker.

"If (Ford) wants to really put his money where his mouth is, then let's get all of the workers in schools vaccinated and let's do it now," said Etmanski.

"What are we waiting for?"

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: We wanted to touch base with educators after the province announced that special education workers and staff in hot spots would be able to get vaccinated.

Home is not safe for everyone

Domestic violence has risen 30% across Canada since the beginning of the pandemic

For confidential support from Wilmot Family Resource Centre please call: 519 662-2731 or visit our website at <https://wilmotfamilyresourcecentre.com/>



Wilmot Family Resource Centre

For support from Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region please call: 519-742-5894, 519-653-2422 or talk to us anonymously online at wswr.org

Women's Crisis Services
OF WATERLOO REGION





Older adults have and continue to contribute to our community in so many ways. They are valued, productive and engaged members of our community.

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- volunteer more than any other age group to improve the lives of community members of all ages
- provide countless caregiving and childcare hours to their family members and others they love, care about and support
- make more charitable contributions per capita than any other age group
- shop locally, support the arts, pay their taxes
- share their strength, knowledge and experiences to instill hope

Our community celebrates and thanks older adults for all they do. We'll be together again soon.

TOP 3 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE AGEISM IN OUR COMMUNITY:

1. Examine our own biases. Listen to what you say to yourself and others and be mindful against comments. Saying "I don't have as much energy as I used to, I must be getting old" to your children or "I am having a senior's moment" plant the seeds that aging is a time of deterioration. Of course, this is not true and it contributes to negative stereotypes.
2. Look for opportunities to foster positive interactions between older adults and youth. Intergenerational activities help to prevent ageism by providing opportunities for older adults and younger people to learn about each other, build healthy relationships and foster sharing, understanding and mutual respect.
3. Commit to educating yourself about aging. Everyone is unique. Making general assumptions and statements about aging reinforces stereotypes. Older adults vary in their age, health and cognitive status, education and economic status, living arrangements, family structures, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and lifestyle choices. Everyone deserves quality of life. Let's all think about adding life to years, not just years to life.

Stay Safe *Lead the Way!*



Waterloo Wellington
Older Adult Strategy

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OPINION

IF YOU THINK MASKS 'DON'T WORK,' THEY DO - HERE'S WHY

FACE MASKS ARE NOT A PANACEA, BUT THEY DO SERVE A PURPOSE, VERONICA APPIA WRITES



VERONICA APPIA
Column

In pre-pandemic days, if you were at a supermarket and you had to sneeze, what would you do?

Would you sneeze all over the produce or on the person in front of you at the checkout line?

My guess is, probably not.

You'd likely sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve. It's what we did. It's what we taught our children to do.

And why? Because we understood that failure to do so would allow the germs from our cough or sneeze to travel farther, land on people and things, and possibly infect them. Plus, it would just be plain rude.

So why then, can people who easily accept that a sleeve or tissue can buffer a sneeze, think a mask "doesn't work" to reduce the spread of viral particles?

It is one thing to not want to wear a mask; I think most of us are sick and tired of them.

It is also reasonable to question a specific mask's efficacy, as they are all different.

But I have heard far too many people speaking about how masks "don't work," or taking to social

media to start a controversial debate on the matter, and to say that as fact is just incorrect.

Face masks are not a panacea, but they do serve a purpose.

While wearing them will not solve the pandemic, or stop all transmission, experts say they play a critical role in slowing the spread — if used correctly.

This makes logical sense.

When speaking to Toronto infectious disease epidemiologist Colin Furness late last year about what we learned throughout the course of 2020, one of the highlights was the discovery of how effective masks are in reducing the spread of aerosols, though medical experts were initially skeptical about this at the start of the pandemic.

"What really surprised me is that it almost doesn't matter so much what the mask is made out of, in other words, anything that actually buffers or baffles your exhalation that directs droplets downward and reduces the velocity with which they come out of your mouth, that's having a big positive impact," Furness said.

"And we know this because superspreader events all have one thing in common: no masks. There are no superspreader events where everyone is wearing a mask."

Now, not all masks are created equal. This is why health agencies such as Health Canada have specific recommendations on the types of masks that should be worn and how they should be used.

We know we should be washing our cloth masks, not reusing disposable masks and making sure

the mask fits tightly around our mouth and nose. This makes a difference regarding the mask wearer's health and the mask's effectiveness.

We also know that some mask alternatives are not as effective as others.

A study published in the science journal Nature last fall found that surgical masks and KN95 respirators "substantially reduce the number of particles emitted from breathing, talking, and coughing," and that cloth and paper masks likely "provide some reductions in emitted expiratory particles, in particular the larger particles."

The study found that surgical masks reduced outward particle emission rates by 90 per cent and KN95 masks by 74 per cent.

For a homemade mask to be effective, Health Canada recommends it be made of multiple breathable layers, including "at least two layers of a tightly-woven fabric, such as cotton, and a third middle layer of filter-type fabric, such as non-woven polypropylene."

So, what does all this tell us? It's safe to say the masks recommended by national health agencies, if worn properly, "work" to reduce the spread.

And when COVID variant B.1.1.7 is spreading across the province, case counts are high and we have just entered into another provincial lockdown, now is not the time to give up on this tool.

If you think otherwise, maybe you just don't want to be told what to do.

Veronica Appia is a reporter with Torstar Corporation Community Brands, covering COVID-19 news across Ontario.

VOLUNTEERS

Supporting National Volunteer Week - April 18-24, 2021

Where to find volunteer opportunities

Every year, Volunteer Canada dedicates a week in April to celebrating volunteers and encouraging more Canadians to get involved in their communities. This year, National Volunteer Week takes place from April 18 to 24, and the theme is The value of one. The power of many. If you want to volunteer, here's where you can find opportunities in your area.

Volunteer centres

The primary purpose of a volunteer centre is to promote volunteerism in the community by encouraging people to donate their time and providing them with the resources they need to get involved. Volunteer centres also help local organizations improve the way they recruit, manage and retain volunteers. Additionally, these centres play an important role in raising awareness about the community's needs and the importance of volunteer service.

If you want to give back, a volunteer centre can provide you with an up-to-date list of the

opportunities in your area. Alternatively, some centres may ask you to fill out a form so they can contact you with opportunities based on your skills and availability.

To find a volunteer centre near you, consult Volunteer Canada's online directory at volunteer.ca.

Online

Another simple way to find volunteer opportunities in a particular province, region or city is to use Volunteer Canada's pan-Canadian volunteer matching platform. This resource allows you to choose from more than 75,000 volunteer opportunities and narrow your search based on your location, interests and skills. You can even find opportunities to volunteer virtually.

Finally, remember you can always reach out directly to local organizations, or speak with friends, neighbours and colleagues who might know of a good cause that could use your help. (NT)

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VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer Action Centre Wants to Thank the Volunteers National Volunteer Week is April 18th to the 24th

The Volunteer Action Centre of Waterloo Region has experienced the highs and lows of the pandemic alongside its community. There are daily phone calls from people who want to volunteer but many volunteer programs are on hold or closed permanently. Jane Hennig, Executive Director of the Volunteer Action Centre shares "We hear from volunteers missing their programs, and clients missing those same programs and the volunteers that have become such a large part of their organizations community. Most of all, we hear from volunteer managers that are overwhelmed with the role of supporting the pandemic or the task of redesigning volunteer roles to provide community support in new ways".

Volunteerism in Waterloo Region is active, and volunteers are providing their skills and expertise in new ways to support their community. In this past year, we have seen the people of Waterloo Region step up time and time again. They are involved in food delivery, housing and shelters, animal care and a variety of mental health support. They are working shifts at the vaccine clinics and are helping to maintain community programming wherever it is safe and permissible to do so. More and more volunteers are contributing informally by helping neighbours during this time. Hennig, who has been with the Volunteer Action Centre for 20 years, is clearly impressed with the contribution of volunteers in the community. "People are willing to

National Volunteer Week is a specific week set aside each year to recognize the significant contributions that volunteers make, in or around the community, province, and nation. The passion and skills of volunteers enhance the ability of organizations and their staff teams to deliver valuable programs to the community that would not be possible if it were dependant solely on paid positions. 2021 is the 20th Anniversary of the International Year of the

the Volunteer (IYV). In 2001 the United Nations chose to profile the importance of volunteerism. That year changed public awareness and respect for volunteers

around the world. Volunteer Canada in partnership with over 200 volunteer centres across Canada, has chosen to mark the IYV anniversary by reinvigorating and updating the theme, "The Value of One, the Power of Many". The goal, to share the story of the VALUE and impact that one volunteer can make, and the POWER provided by the millions of individuals and groups that volunteer to really make a difference and create change in Waterloo Region and throughout Canada.

step up, even when they are aware of the associated risks. I am constantly in awe of volunteers and their commitment to the broader community".

April 18th to 24th is National Volunteer Week.

Value of one. Power of Many.

**Thank you
volunteers!**



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VOLUNTEERS

National Volunteer Week Stories from Volunteer Action Centre Waterloo Region

1. A Story of Solidarity By Serap Tezgel

It was a warm day in July 2020. My neighbourhood was quiet. Few people were walking on the street. The traffic on Victoria Road was also less than usual. I was sitting by myself in my garden. Due to Covid-19, no one was outside. We had been staying at home since Canada's first Covid-19 death in March. I was in a panic for the first two months and was constantly looking at the news, trying to understand what the virus was and What were its effects. However, as the weather got warmer, I started to spend more time in the garden. I started to wonder about my neighbours and how they were dealing with this situation? Did they need any help?

Finally, on a warm day in July, I decided to knock on my neighbour's doors. I rang the doorbell of about ten houses that day. A few of the doors did not open. But I met with those who did, from a two-meter distance. Some conversations were long, some short. We talked about what my neighbours missed and needed on these difficult days. An elderly neighbour, who lived alone, complained about not being able to clean her house. I offered to help, and she accepted! We arranged a day, and I showed up. Another neighbour said she missed eating out at the restaurant.

I offered to set up a dining table for her in my garden. I prepared a vegetarian dinner on the balcony. Conversation and food have helped us establish a friendship.

Value - My other neighbours were very happy that I had knocked on their door and asked how they were doing. Whenever we meet on the road now, we stop and chat. This epidemic made me meet my neighbours. Now, I have two good friends in my neighbourhood.

2. Story for Gazmend Preteni By Heidi Elliott

Gazmend enthusiastically joined Community Support Connections last June during the beginning of the pandemic to volunteer with our Meals on Wheels program. New to Canada with his family (wife and 3 daughters) he was determined to help any way he could during this critical time for the most vulnerable in our community. Gazmend previously worked for the UN Doctors without Borders in community policing and is vocal to everyone he meets about his volunteering role. He exemplifies how one person can make an impact on so many.

Power - His role with Community Support Connections didn't stop there. Gazmend very strongly believes that businesses should support local organizations, so he

has been very vocal in getting businesses to support us. Gazmend has been successful in getting door prizes from Waterloo Brewing to support our Volunteer appreciation events. Recently, Ms. Michalofsky, a teacher from Williamsburg Public School had her 'Mindful Me' class write/draw inspirational cards that went out to our Meals on Wheels clients! We are so grateful for all Gazmend's efforts!

3. Story for Kathy By Kevin Noseworthy

Kathy created a Facebook filter that people can impose in the background of their selfie photos to bring awareness to volunteerism and thank our volunteers for their efforts during National Volunteer Week.

Power - By sharing these instructions and setting up the Facebook filter with our volunteers, participants, clients and patients we can create a huge buzz during National Volunteer Week. The hope is to have everyone update their Facebook profile photo with this National Volunteer Week background filter where they can choose what Langs site they want in the background along with the pink and blue colour schemes that represent National Volunteer Week).



Thank you

to our many volunteers who continue to open their hearts and their hands in serving our community!



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But, just because our travel deals have been put on hold, our team is dedicated to providing YOU, our amazing subscribers, with inspiring and informative blog content during this time! If you haven't done so yet, please sign up for our weekly newsletter so we can keep you up to date!



NEWS

WILMOT NAMING A STREET AFTER LATE LOCAL BUSINESSPERSON VERNON ERB

LAUREN SCOTT
laurenscott@torstar.ca

Four streets will soon bear the names of influential local residents in the Wilmot Employment Lands, located between Hamilton Road and Nafziger Road, just outside New Hamburg.

The street names, which were unanimously approved by council at a meeting on March 22, will be Howie Meeker Boulevard, Vernon Erb Drive, Hahn Brass Way and Kay Hall Place.

"Erb Transport has been a fixture across the highways of North America," said Wilmot's director of development services Harold O'Krafka during the meeting, adding that the company has been "a very generous benefactor"



Brenda L. Murray photo

Vernon Erb, the founder of Erb Transport, died last week.

to local organizations over the years.

Coun. Barry Fisher said he had known Vernon Erb for many years, remembering him as a "community-minded man." Erb died on May 20, 2020 after a battle with leukemia.

The Independent will be highlighting each Wilmot figure in a series of interac-

tive games. Last week, readers were quizzed on NHL great Howie Meeker. This week, it's business hall-of-famer Vernon Erb's turn.



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The Big Picture



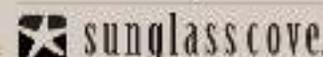
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A year of COVID-19 has changed everything for small businesses

March 17 marked the one-year anniversary of the first COVID-19 related business closures in Ontario (bars, restaurants and theatres), with thousands of other businesses deemed non-essential the following week on March 24.

To say that a lot has changed for small businesses in that time would be an understatement. Business owners have had to navigate entirely new forms of social interaction, pivot to online sales, takeout or remote work arrangements, and under-

stand and apply new rules and regulations at break-neck speeds.

The effects of the pandemic will linger for long after COVID-19 itself. Here are three key ways in which the reality for small businesses will be different going forward:

Crippling debt means uncertain recovery

Many small businesses, especially in customer-facing sectors, have seen dramatic drops in sales since the start of the pandemic due to ongoing government-mandated lockdowns. Currently, only 27 per cent of Ontario businesses are making normal sales and many have turned to loans, credit cards or even their retirement savings to stay afloat. The average Ontario business now finds itself more than \$207,000 in debt and many owners are worried about ever being able to repay it. Paying off that debt over the next few years will stunt businesses' ability to grow, invest in their employees or new technologies, and expand. Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) is asking federal and provincial governments to find

ways to reduce small business debt as part of their recovery plans.

One in five at risk of permanent closure

Mounting debt and the uncertainty of when they will be able to return to profitability has pushed many business owners to wonder if they should pull the plug before things got worse. CFIB estimates that Ontario could lose as many as 20 per cent of businesses before the end of the pandemic, on top of the ones that have already closed. This puts more than 873,000 jobs in jeopardy. It's important for the Ontario government to have a clear view towards helping businesses replace subsidies with sales by creating safe ways for them to reopen and reassuring Ontarians that it's safe to shop local.

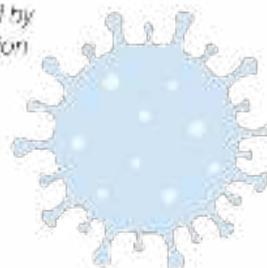
Embracing eCommerce

A third of all small businesses are now selling online, an increase of approximately 152,000 new entrants to the digital sphere since the start of the pandemic. A majority say they will continue to use eCom-

merce and digital marketing even after the pandemic, giving consumers vastly more options when they shop online. However, many new entrants report they are still struggling to generate sales online—it's hard to compete against the big guys, like Amazon and Walmart, on a small business's marketing budget. Consumers can help by sharing their favourite local business on social media using #SmallBusinessEveryDay.

Small businesses make our communities resilient and vibrant; they bring a unique character to their neighbourhoods, create local jobs, and happily sponsor our kids' sports teams. Now it's our turn to give back and support them so they can make it to the other side.

Article provided by Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB). Learn more at the CFIB website cfib-fci.ca.



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1 in 6 businesses at risk of closing

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71,000–222,000 businesses are still at risk of closing due to COVID-19, in addition to the 58,000 businesses that already closed.

Source: CFIB, *Canadian businesses and jobs at risk due to COVID-19*, January 2021.



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Grants for tourism and hospitality sectors

The Ontario government is providing an estimated \$100 million for a new one-time Ontario Tourism and Hospitality Small Business Support Grant and \$100 million for a new one-time recovery program.

This investment was recently announced as part of the 2021 Provincial Budget, and will support the province's tourism industry as it recovers from the impacts of COVID-19. Total support from the Ontario government for the tourism, culture, sports, recreation, and heritage industries since the start of the pandemic now totals \$625 million.

Prior to the pandemic, tourism generated more than \$36 billion in economic activity and supported approximately 400,000 jobs in Ontario, accord-



ing government figures. As a direct result of the pandemic, the tourism sector has lost more than \$18 billion in revenue alone and more than 200,000

jobs, states the Province.

The Ontario Tourism and Hospitality Small Business Support Grant will provide an estimated \$100 million in one-

time payments of \$10,000 to \$20,000 to eligible small businesses including hotels, motels, travel agencies, amusement and water parks, hunting and fishing camps, and recreational and vacation camps including children's overnight summer camps. Businesses must demonstrate they have experienced a minimum 20 per cent revenue decline and have less than 100 employees to qualify. Any small businesses that received the Ontario Small Business Support Grant will not be eligible for this new grant.

The Ontario Tourism Recovery Program will support established and proven tourism businesses that have been hit hardest by COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.



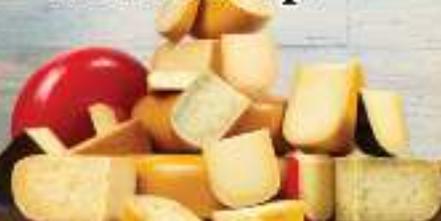
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Extend and fix Ontario's grant programs to help save small businesses



—Opinion—

By Julie Kwiecinski, CFIB's Director of Provincial Affairs, Ontario

As the pandemic crags on, more small businesses have shuttered their doors forever. After months without in-store sales

and now a third province-wide lockdown, our main streets are looking more like the sets of old westerns rather than the vibrant communities we knew them to be.

How can Ontario's small businesses be expected to survive, when some have been closed by government order for more than 80 per cent of the pandemic and were just shut down again by government? How do they survive when their average COVID-19 debt is about \$205,000 and when only 27 per cent are at their usual revenues for this time of year?

Just being allowed to stay open or to reopen

after the latest lockdown won't make up for lost sales, especially as people are encouraged to stay home. Add in low consumer confidence and changed shopping habits after people have been buying everything for months in-person at Costco and Walmart, and online at Amazon – and what you get is the recipe for a lengthy and drawn-out recovery.

Small businesses need the government that closed them to help them navigate the long road to the other side of COVID-19. The Ontario government must financially support small businesses. In a recent CFIB survey, 75 per cent of small business owners said that government programs are crucial to their survival in 2021.

We appreciate the provincial government's budget move to automatically double funding to small businesses that have already received the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. For example, if you were approved for \$20,000 in the first round of funding, you will receive another \$20,000 without having to reapply.

While this grant program is providing much-

needed support to many businesses, it ended on April 7 without helping the thousands of hard-hit small businesses that were excluded, such as construction businesses, dry cleaners, caterers, restaurant supply chain, breweries, health professionals, print shops, and some multiple businesses with the same owner, just to name a few.

On top of a continued provincial grant that is more widely accessible, it makes sense to have more personal protective equipment (PPE) funding as businesses prepare to reopen to in-store customers after the third lockdown. Ontario's one-time PPE grant of only \$1,000 wasn't nearly enough. When open, some gyms spend \$2,000 a month alone on PPE.

Sadly, the budget offers no new money for the PPE grant, which ended on March 31. Instead of closing this grant when PPE is needed most, the government should expand eligibility and increase the amount available.

Telling business owners they can use the Small Business Support Grant to pay for any-

thing they choose – including PPE – is not an acceptable reason for shutting down the PPE grant, when all of those dollars have already been allocated to mounting debt and other COVID-related financial challenges.

The Ontario government committed to doing whatever it takes to help small businesses weather the economic effects of lockdowns. Now that the provincial government has chosen to lock down small businesses for a third time, they must turn these words into further actions by extending and improving the Small Business Support Grant and PPE grant.

The government had other options, like widespread rapid testing, renewed contact tracing, and improved and expedited vaccine rollouts. They chose instead to repeat a failed policy, expecting a different outcome.

Thirty per cent of Ontario's small business owners are worried about closing for good. No one wants to see our main streets turn into old western ghost towns.

—Article provided by CFIB (cfib-fei.ca)



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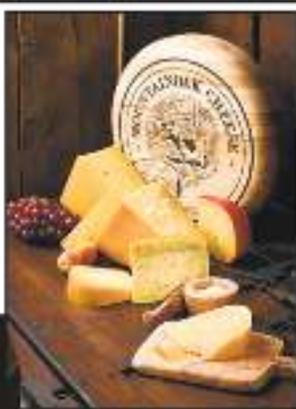
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Economy divorced from traditional wedding industry revenue



Opinion
By Ryan Malough, CFIB's Director of Provincial Affairs for Ontario

With a year of COVID in the books, there's been a lot of focus on the business sectors that have taken the biggest hits. The retailers that were

locked down over the holiday season, restaurants that have been limited to take-out options only, the tourism industry as everyone was forced to stay at home. All of these sectors need help, to be sure, but there's one sector that's gone unnoticed for too long with no relief or end to the pandemic pain in sight: the wedding industry.

While the Ontario budget's doubling of the Small Business Support Grant will be a significant help to many smaller businesses,

there has yet to be any program that recognizes the unique and devastating situation on the wedding industry finds itself in. Many operators have been fully closed for almost all of the pandemic, and even with government support programs, overhead is still putting these businesses at a significant loss.

The reality is that these businesses cannot even begin to recover until we can find a way to bring people together again under a single roof.

Even as the province works through the colour-coded framework, wedding venues are largely left out. Until we can find a way to do that in groups of more than 50 – the indoor limit even in the Green Zone – the industry cannot even begin to recover, and that has major, and far-reaching, consequences.

In the red zone, where venues are limited to 10 people, many business owners feel it's not worth the cost of opening their doors.



The Doctor's House, a wedding venue in Kleinburg, Ontario, illustrated the issue well recently, noting that they went from 307 events in 2019, to just eight in 2020.

That loss of business is enormous – representing millions of dollars across thousands of businesses – and ripples out like a tsunami across the wedding industry.

Everything from caterers, decorators, florists, bridal stores, dress shops, tailors, rental stores, photographers, musicians, DJs, entertainment companies, salons and barbers, to printing houses, travel agents, transportation companies and hotels and motels – just to name a few – lose out on significant revenues.

One salon owner told us that even losing the four small wedding parties they had booked in 2020 cost them thousands of dollars alone, on top of all of the business they lost to myriad government restrictions and lockdowns



over the course of the year. What's worse, a lot of venues had to reschedule events to 2021. While this means it still happens, it also blocks off new business opportunities while the cost of food, labour and the other things that go into prices also creep

up with inflation. More than a year into lockdown we are still using blunt, sweeping lockdowns to try to curtail the spread of COVID, with limited results. There needs to be a new approach if the industry is going to survive. Improved contact tracing, precision shutdowns and more creative use of readily available rapid testing are all key to bringing people back together.

Things are starting to pick up for small businesses, and as more individuals are vaccinated, there's good reason for optimism. But as we approach May and June, we need a change in thinking if we're going to salvage the 2021 wedding season and save the industry.

Article provided by Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB). Learn more at the CFIB website cfib-fcei.ca.



Navigating the pandemic

Small Business Every Day

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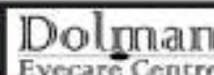
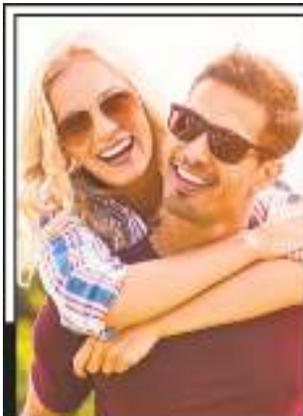
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CFIB SPECIAL FEATURE SMALL BUSINESS DEBT



73%

Took on Debt

*Businesses that took on debt due to COVID-19.

76%

Will take more than a year to repay*

\$170,000

Average Debt Per Business

(Median is \$60,000)

TOTAL COVID-19 Small Business Debt in Canada

\$135 Billion

Sectors with highest average debt

\$329,000



\$242,000

Arts, recreation & information

\$213,000

Hospitality



Sectors with most businesses in debt

91%



\$170,000

National average

73%

87%

Social services

87%

Arts, recreation & information

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NEWS

REGION PHARMACISTS SWAMPED WITH CALLS

'WE CAPPED OFF OUR WAIT LIST AT 300 PEOPLE FOR NOW. WITHIN FIVE TO SIX HOURS WE WERE DONE OUR WAIT LIST'

TERRY PENDER
tpender@therecord.com

Saltish Mistry had 300 messages waiting for him from people anxious to get the COVID-19 vaccine when he arrived at work on a recent Saturday morning.

Mistry is a pharmacist and owner of the Pharmasave at 50 Westmount Rd. North in Waterloo, which was among 19 pharmacies in Waterloo Region the province added to its vaccine distribution network on April 1.

The pharmacy was swamped with calls without notice and scrambled to set up appointments.

"It would have been nice to have that pre-emptive warning: 'We are announcing it, get ready for the phone calls,'" said Mistry.

"We are all using our own scheduling software to get patients scheduled in," said Mistry. "It has been overwhelming."

On April 1 the province added three pharmacies in Cambridge, one in Elmira, 10 in Kitchener and five in Waterloo to its vaccination program. Anyone 55 and older can register. When the list was made public the phones started ringing at the pharmacies. Mistry was getting 50 calls an hour.

"We capped off our wait list at 300 people for now," he said. "Within five to six hours we were done our wait list."

As Tuesday morning, April 6, his pharmacy was to vaccinate 30 to 40 people a day and ramp up from there as more doses arrive. While the scheduling soft-

ware varies among pharmacies, they must use the Ontario COVAX system to help the province track how many doses are given, and the lot numbers for the vaccines used. It took three days of training to install and learn the province's reporting and tracking software.

When the pharmacy receives more vaccines, it will open up the wait list and more people can register, he said. Mistry has never seen anything like it as his pharmacy logged 3,400 phone calls from people anxious to get the vaccine.

"We want to make everyone happy, and we wish we could have added everybody, it's just unfortunate we are getting 200 doses, but you know what? It's a starting point," said Mistry.

Once the pharmacy had administered 120 vaccines the ministry of health would automatically ship another 100 doses.

"But that is also dependent on availability," said Mistry. "The stock we received in the pharmacy was from the U.S. that Canada got last week."

The situation is fluid and changing quickly, he said.

There is no uniform approach to getting a vaccine.

Some people have used the provincial portal, only to be told a vaccine was available if they could make it to the Downsview area of Toronto in an hour. Others have registered on the Region of Waterloo's public health unit, which had to cancel some clinics because of a lack of vac-

cines. And now pharmacies are using different software for registering and scheduling — some are straight forward, others not.

"We are very, very busy," said pharmacist Ramzy Shaker, who owns the Frederick Mall Pharmacy in Kitchener, recently. "Our phone has not stopped."

Cambridge Mayor Kathryn McGarry saw the list of pharmacies on April 1, and registered for a vaccine at the Shoppers Drug Mart on Dundas Street. She found the online registration at Shoppers straight forward. She was vaccinated Monday the following week, and shed more than one tear of relief.

"I was one of the first few in there," said McGarry. "When I finally got through all of the questions, and actually had the vaccine, I was a little tearful. I was really excited to have it done, and certainly relieved."

McGarry's husband was vaccinated 10 days ago. Their 17-year-old son has not attended high school since last December, fearing he might bring the virus home.

"We have had kind of a miserable year to date, and this was good news," said McGarry.

Waterloo Region is one of the largest municipalities in Ontario, she said, and this region has not received its fair share of vaccines, forcing it to cancel some mass clinics.

"I think the equity has been missing in vaccine distribution," said McGarry.



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