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JANUARY 14, 2021

Bracebridge **EXAMINER**

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REAL ESTATE IN MUSKOKA

INSIDE THIS WEEKS EDITION



OPEN LETTER ON THE CRISIS IN LONG-TERM CARE

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH,
IMMEDIATE MEASURABLE
ACTION IS REQUIRED TO
SAVE THE LIVES OF OUR
VULNERABLE SENIORS
AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

PAUL RIVETT & JORDAN BITOVE

The neglect, underfunding and overcrowding of Ontario's long-term-care facilities under the watch of numerous governments over many decades has been tragic.

Sadly, the situation has only worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic, which struck residents living in these facilities the hardest, resulting in thousands of needless deaths.

We are asking that you take a few minutes out of your day to help

See SITUATION, page 10



Mary Beth Hartill/Metroland

Elizabeth Ricard-Palmer, owner of Fine Thymes Bistro and Bakery, is one of many Bracebridge restaurateurs who were visited by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit on Jan. 11, 2020.

WATER OUTAGE ANOTHER BLOW

BRACEBRIDGE RESTAURANTS FORCED TO CLOSE /P2

BEHIND THE CRIMES

Solved and
Unsolved
Cases in
Ontario



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revisit the crimes
that dominated
headlines in our
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RESTAURANTS ORDERED CLOSED AFTER WATER MAIN BREAK

BOIL WATER ADVISORY IMPACTS ALL BRACEBRIDGE RESIDENTS ON MUNICIPAL WATER

MARY BETH HARTILL
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Bracebridge restaurateurs have endured constant setbacks because of the pandemic and lockdown. Then a water main break on Saturday meant they also had to contend with a boil water advisory, forcing them to close.

A large water main located on Wharf Road adjacent to the Muskoka River experienced a major failure late Saturday evening, Jan. 9, causing a loss of pressure across the entire water distribution system in Bracebridge.

"Crews responded immediately and worked through the night to locate and isolate the break, which was challenging due to its location and darkness," stated a District of Muskoka press release.

This break was the catalyst for a boil water advisory for all Bracebridge residents on the municipal water system.

Mayor Graydon Smith is concerned for local businesses already impacted by the ramifications of COVID-19.

"We've got a situation where all the restaurants are closed, which is absolutely devastating to business that have already been devastated," said Smith. "Which is one of the



Mary Beth Hartill/Metroland

Construction crews repair a water main break on Wharf Road in Bracebridge. The break caused a boil water advisory for residents on the municipal water system.

reasons that, at every meeting, I've been pushing for how fast we can get the testing done but still, obviously, adhere to all the safety protocols that need to be adhered to."

Tyson Bigio of Main St. Delicatessen said he was disappointed when he heard his restaurant would have to be closed until further notice, but recognized safety is the priority.

"The representative from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Dave Young, came in and he was very apologetic, very patient, very understanding,"

said Bigio. "At this point, we're kind of just waiting with bated breath in terms of when this will be lifted."

During a Jan. 11 interview, Bigio stated it would likely result in at least two full days of lost business.

"It's not like we were told that tomorrow we can open again, we're unsure," he said. "As a business owner, it's very difficult to schedule employees to come in tentatively."

Elizabeth Ricard-Palmer, owner of Fine Thymes, was also paid a visit by the health unit. She was able to sell the remainder of her

pre-prepared food but nothing else.

"I feel like I've got both hands tied behind my back here, to be frank," she said.

It's been a tough go for Ricard-Palmer who is glad she established the frozen food business before COVID-19 hit. It's that business that has carried her through. Even during the summer, when they were able to open a patio, she saw a small fraction of her normal business.

"Let's put it this way, my credit is stretched to the limit," she said.

Beyond the strain on lo-

cal businesses, there are also potential impacts if a fire were to occur within the town.

"Our firefighters are used to fighting lots of rural fires and they know how to do this without a water system at hand but, nevertheless, these are all considerations and things that we are needing to think about and are thinking about them," said Smith. "There's recognition that there's some real impacts that go beyond people not being able to brush their teeth or making their coffee. There are

significant impacts on businesses already hurting and there are significant impacts on places that are larger congregate settings and health care settings."

Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare was quick to respond with emergency protocols at South Muskoka Memorial Hospital, according to Allyson Snelling, corporate communications officer which included closing the Bracebridge location to essential visitation, except in exceptional circumstances for palliative patients and redirection emergent/urgent services impacted by the water interruption to the Huntsville hospital.

According to District of Muskoka communications officer Molly Ross, measures were taken to ensure, "there are no impacts to resident care at the Pines Long-Term Care facility."

Smith said water main breaks aren't unique or unexpected events, however, this particular break was "in a particularly vulnerable spot and that's why it's caused such a traumatic outcome."

"Obviously we can't have this happen again," he said, stating it needs to be ensured those highly critical points in the system are in the best shape possible."

With files from Sarah Law and Pamela Steel

STORY BEHIND THE STORY — We broke this story on Sunday morning and have been following it since, concerned about the impacts of the water outage to residents and local businesses.

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