



# TOP CHEFS' ASPARAGUS TIPS



Story on Page 8, 9

Across Niagara-on-the-Lake, chefs are firing up their creative juices and making culinary delights from the first asparagus crops of the season. RICHARD HARLEY PHOTO

## Vaccines contributing to sharp decline in COVID cases, says Niagara's top doctor

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Cases of COVID-19 are dropping more sharply than expected across Ontario, says Niagara's chief medical officer of health.

Dr. Mustafa Hirji said it's a "good news" story, with a steady drop in the reproduction number (the average number of people one person will infect) — despite large numbers of people ignoring lockdown rules.

On Tuesday, Hirji said hospitalizations and ICU numbers are also coming down — a positive indicator that things are on the right track to reopen, though there is still "a ways" to go.

He attributes the decline in cases to rising vaccination rates, particularly in COVID hot spots. As of Wednesday, the region had 882 active cases (down from 1,247 a week ago) and Niagara-on-the-Lake had 19 (down from 39).

"With a lot more vaccines over the last few weeks having been directed towards the hotspots where most of the infection is spreading, I think it's actually made a noticeable difference in the spread of infection."

In Niagara, about 60 per cent of adults have been vaccinated, with about 70 per cent scheduled to receive a vaccine.

Niagara's cases are not coming down as quickly as the provincial average,

however the numbers are falling. Hirji said he is optimistic cases will be down by mid-June, the date he has suggested would be the right time to end the stay-at-home order — if things continue on the current path.

Niagara hospitals continue to take patients from regions that are over capacity.

He said he thinks the province and region should have no trouble meeting Ontario's

Continued on Page 2



## Splash pad and parks open up to much relief

Stories on Page 12, 13



**Peninsula  
Flooring Ltd.**

13 Henegan Road  
Virgil Business Park

(905)-468-2135  
www.peninsulaflooring.ca

**OPEN**  
FOR CURBSIDE SERVICE  
Mon-Fri 9am - 3pm



WHEN YOU PHONE AHEAD







The Gate House's steamed Thwaites Farms asparagus salad with local Pingue prosciutto, poached egg, shaved parmesan cheese, Kozlik's crunchy mustard, aged balsamic vinegar.

# COOKING WITH ASPARAGUS

Photos by Richard Harley | Words by Jill Troyer

Asparagus is in season and it's not just Niagara-on-the-Lake residents heralding its arrival with joy.

With locations like Thwaites Farms on Lakeshore Road offering freshly harvested, farm-to-table asparagus direct to consumers, some of your favourite restaurants are cooking up special takeout dishes in honour of the green stalks.

The Lake Report spoke with a few local chefs about asparagus and they were resoundingly enthusiastic. Even with dining options limited to takeout for now, you'll find lots of asparagus items on local menus this month.

Here is what some of NOTL's top chefs are doing with this popular spring vegetable, both at home and in their restaurants:



David Watt  
The Garrison House

*"It's a sign of things to come, you get tired of braising things all winter! There was a lineup at Thwaites today, I was getting two cases. You don't have to do much to it. I like to just blanch it, in water as salty as seawater, then put it in an ice bath if you're not serving it right away. Add butter, salt and pepper, and eat it. It's great combined with other ingredients foraged in early spring, like morel mushrooms, fiddleheads and ramps. We'll be all things asparagus at the restaurant, you'll see it in our new daily takeout menus, for sure. I love it grilled, with a crisp Niagara Chardonnay, or even a dry Rosé."*



Poached Thwaites Farms asparagus with vodka smoked salmon, sauce gribiche, everything bagel crunch, cured egg yolk.



Jason Williams  
The Gate House

*"Asparagus is the first real thing available in the spring, so I like to incorporate it into as many dishes as possible. It's so good in a salad with prosciutto, grilled with butter sauce or hollandaise, or just blanched and buttered. Another favourite is chilled local asparagus with fior di latte mozzarella, brown butter crumbs and sherry vinaigrette. The way my mom used to do it at home was in an aluminum pan with butter on the edge of the barbecue, so it cooked right in the butter. We always get our asparagus from Thwaites Farm. It's unbelievable how much great asparagus they grow. Asparagus and wine can be a tricky match, but I'd say something greener, like a Sauvignon Blanc or Riesling."*



Pan roasted sea scallops with Thwaites Farms asparagus, breakfast radish, chive blossom and spring leek veloute.



John Vetere  
Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery

*"Asparagus is a celebration of spring, a signal the season has changed, and it's only around a short time, so it's special. We have an asparagus patch here at Ravine, it pops up every year. You can use it in so many dishes. I love to keep it simple, grilled with a soft-boiled egg, or an egg-based custard, with a little truffle oil, and let the asparagus flavour shine through. We will definitely be incorporating it into dishes on our takeout menu."*



Charred Ontario asparagus, golden heart potato dressed with a fresh dill and mustard vinaigrette, soft cooked egg, sliced radish and sheep milk feta.



Ryan Crawford  
Ruffino's Pasta Bar & Grill

*"Asparagus represents spring, it's the first real spring vegetable. It's so sweet, it just tastes so good! We grow asparagus on our farm, we have purple asparagus as well as green asparagus. At the restaurant, we grill it on our wood fire, with a little olive oil. I like to keep it as simple and natural as possible, and let the ingredient speak for itself. We're adding it to our menu as a vegetable side, and an asparagus carbonara. Also white asparagus risotto when that's in season. It's going to be on our dinner table at home tonight, just grilled. People say Sauvignon Blanc is the best wine to pair with asparagus, and it's good, but really most Niagara whites are beautiful with asparagus, with their crisp acidity."*



Asparagus risotto with foraged morel mushrooms.



Chris Moses  
OLIV

*"I love asparagus. Of course, at this time of year we purchase it locally, in fact I'm on my way out now to pick some up. We use it in our Lobster & Asparagus Fettuccine, which is our top seller pasta dish. I also like to cook it just in the oven, with a little olive oil, salt and pepper. The trick is not to overcook it. Never boil asparagus."*



Grilled lobster asparagus with fig balsamic and Italian herb olive oil.



Joe Marchese  
Twisted Vine

*"The first thing is asparagus soup, but there are so many ways to enjoy asparagus. We make asparagus frittata, roasted asparagus pizza. It's great in vegetable lasagna and we'll serve it as the side vegetable to our mains. My mother was a chef and she liked it in an omelette with leeks, some red peppers for colour. At home, I just grill it with a little olive oil, salt and pepper. You want to get the full taste of the asparagus. As for wine, I suggest something white, light and citrusy. A Niagara off dry Riesling would be a good choice."*



Spring asparagus primo vera with garlic olive oil sauce.

Purveyors of Fine Cheeses and Charcuteries  
**CHEESE SECRETS**  
38 Market Street, NOTL, ON  
905-468-2555  
cheesesecretsniagara@gmail.com

Something new is coming to town ...  
PicNIC by Cheese Secrets at 38 Queen St.!

Don't forget we're at the St. Catharines farmers' market every Saturday from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.!

 REYNOLDSREGIER.COM  
MICHELLE REYNOLDS BROKER 905-468-4214  
STEFAN REGIER SALES REPRESENTATIVE 



GAMES 



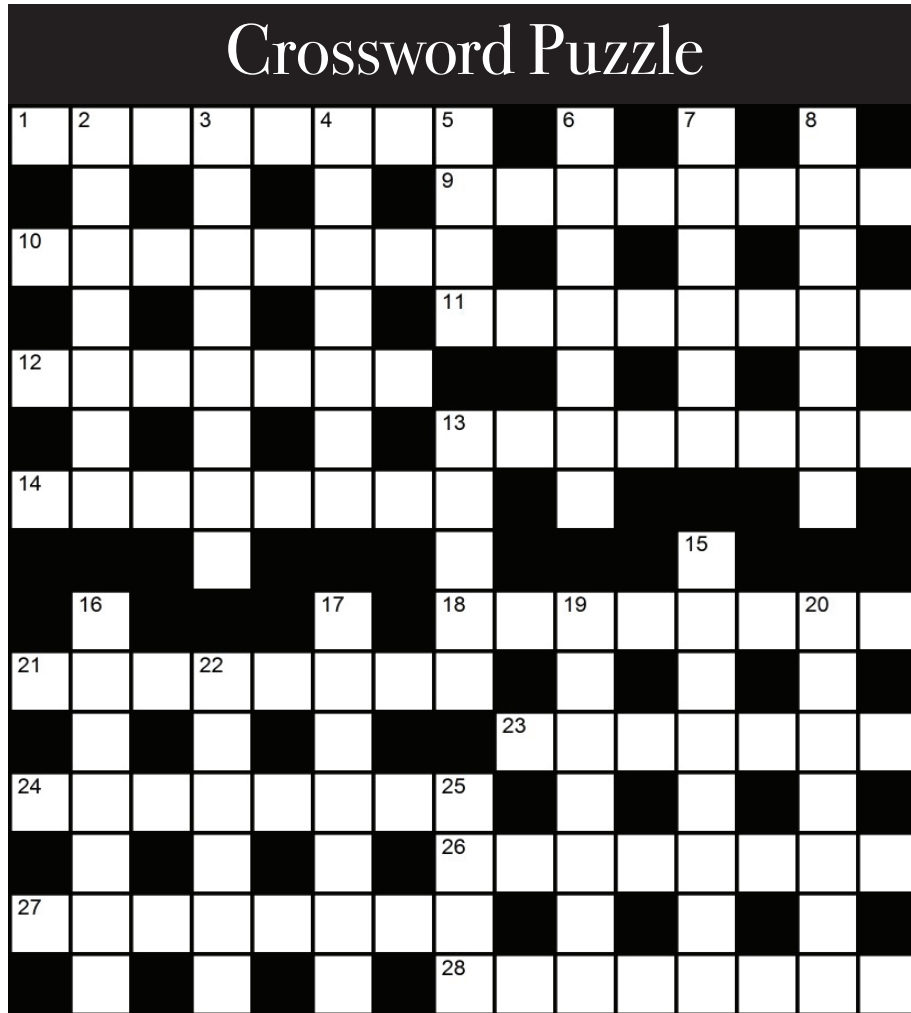
*Have some fun*

**Across**

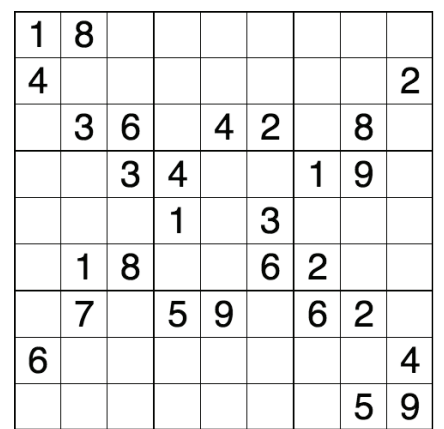
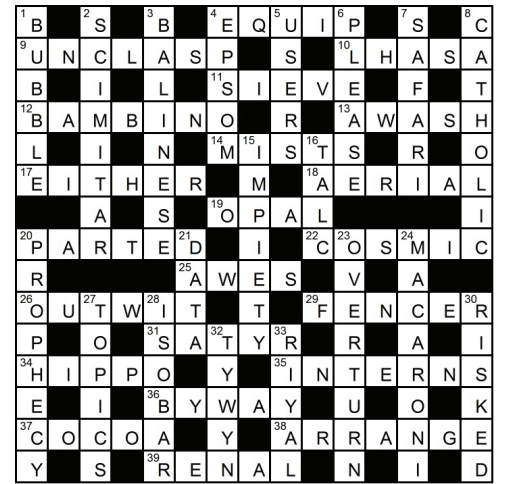
- 1. German liqueur (8)
- 9. Burden excessively (8)
- 10. Self-important (8)
- 11. Travelling case for clothes (8)
- 12. Refrain voluntarily (7)
- 13. Gambling game (4,4)
- 14. Private feud (8)
- 18. Acts (8)
- 21. Bald (8)
- 23. Black magic (7)
- 24. I o W town (8)
- 26. Staple of Mediterranean cooking (5,3)
- 27. Goodbye (8)
- 28. Charismatic (8)

**Down**

- 2. Responsive to drugs (7)
- 3. Midday (8)
- 4. Musician who could play the Moonlight Sonata (7)
- 5. Drunkards (4)
- 6. Musical performance (7)
- 7. Tranquil (6)
- 8. Cushion for kneeling (7)
- 13. Poches with a torch (5)
- 15. Substantial (8)
- 16. West Atlantic island country (7)
- 17. Decreased (7)
- 19. Covering for a building (7)
- 20. Cocktail (7)
- 22. Battered (6)
- 25. Small island (4)



Last issue's answers



# Dialling down the heat: NOTL firefighter retires after 38 years

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Queenston firefighter Ken Hernder says leaving the fire station doesn't mean his time with the firefighting community is over.

The Virgil resident (Greater Virgil Area, as he says) is retiring from firefighting after 38 years serving the Niagara-on-the-Lake community.

He officially turned off his pager on New Year's Eve when the clock struck midnight.

"My wife keeps saying, 'I don't know what I'm going to do with you Monday nights now.' I'm going to have to find another hobby to keep me busy," says Hernder in a phone interview.

But he's not worried about twiddling his thumbs.

"I have lots of projects, so I keep busy anyways," he says.

He also still works part-



Ken Hernder is looking forward to spending time with his new grandson. SUPPLIED

time as a wine consultant at Two Sisters Winery.

"It keeps me busy. And hopefully when this pandemic's all over, I also do Niagara-on-the-Lake culinary walking tours."

One the biggest changes

will be adjusting to not having to be readily available for fire calls, Hernder says.

"You get kind of set in your way from doing this for 38 years, especially when you're on call 24/7. So it's a different life."

"I don't have to listen to (my pager) any more. No more getting up at three or four o'clock in the morning, so that's nice."

He said it's been a "very good run" for him and looks back fondly to his

early years.

"Queenston, back in the day, we were one of the first halls. Niagara-on-the-Lake didn't have any rescue equipment when it came to the jaws of life, and the boys in Queenston along with local people, we actually raised the money to purchase it ourselves," he says.

He's seen plenty of changes over time and remembers when Queenston firefighters did water rescues and were trained to rappel down into the gorge for rescues.

"When I first joined, believe it or not, Niagara-on-the-Lake did have a rescue boat. The Queenston fire department went out and bought a little 12-foot aluminum boat with a nine horsepower on it. But it didn't last very long after a couple of incidents on the Niagara River. We made requests to the town to purchase a bigger boat and the town said no, so we immediately sold it."

Before the Jet Boats, the Queenston fire service also did body retrievals.

"And for years we were the only fire department in Niagara-on-the-Lake that ran to every motor vehicle accident call."

He said he'll still be involved in the fire hall's various events and be there to mentor any up-and-comers.

"We have a very strong association side. And we do our spaghetti dinners and our fundraising for sports and local families, etc.," he says.

"A lot of our retired members are still very active."

One thing he'll miss is the camaraderie of Monday night meetings.

"It's going to the hall, the training, it's working with brothers and sisters," he says.

With his extra time, he's looking forward, pandemic pending, to spending time with his new grandson Holden.



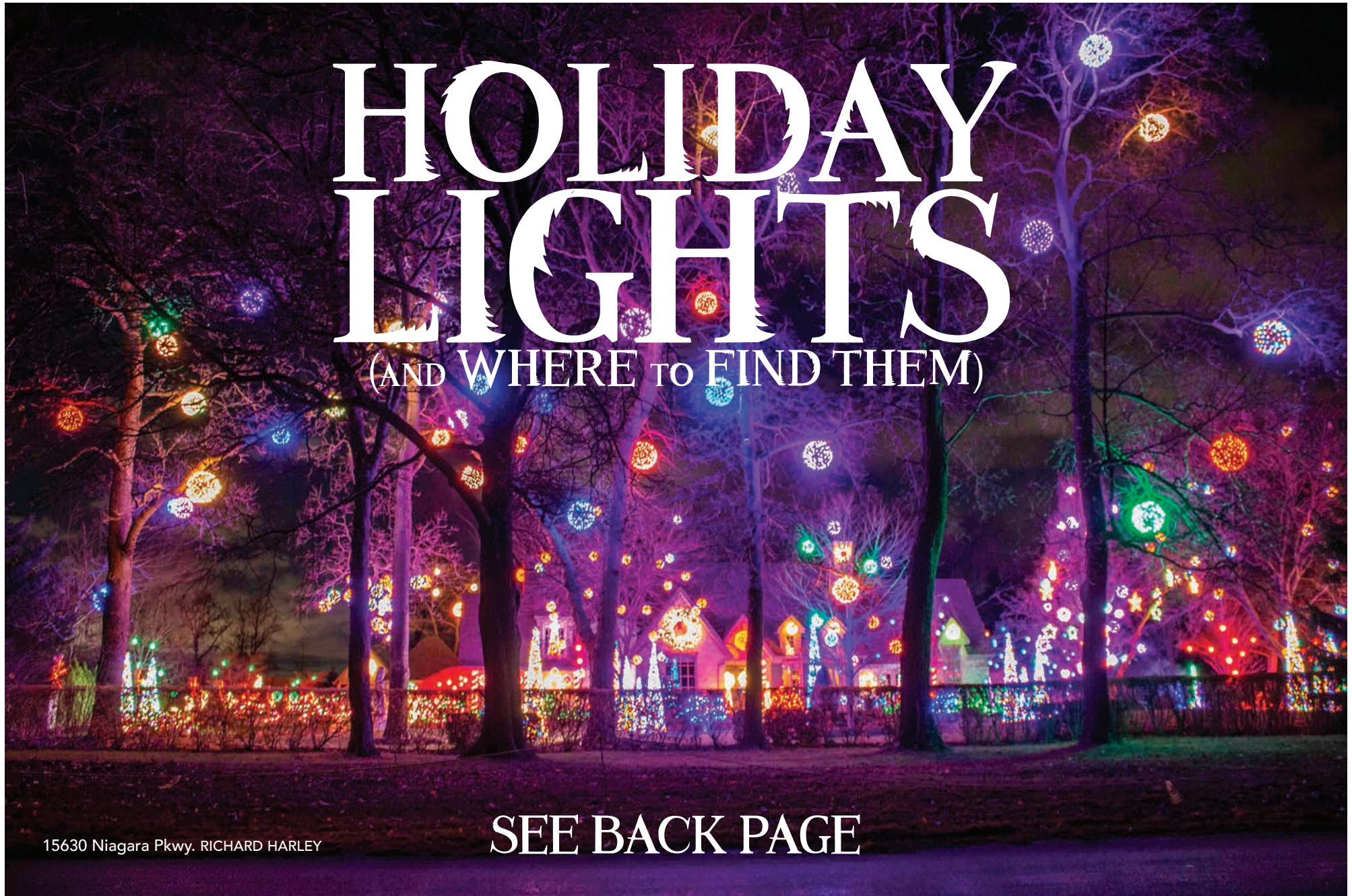
neobLavender  
Customer Service (t)905.357.0723



Curb side delivery  
e-commerce delivery  
neobniagara.com







## Dr. Brown: Vaccine **won't mean** immediate end to distancing, masks, restrictions

Dr. William Brown  
Special to The Lake Report

The last two weeks have brought great news from Pfizer and Moderna for two highly effective and similar RNA vaccines.

Pfizer's vaccine was approved for use in the U.K. last week and on the heels of that very welcome news was an announcement this week by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that the Canadian government has approved Pfizer's vaccine for distribution beginning later this month.

Approval in the United States for both vaccines should follow this week. That's excellent news in



People will still be wearing masks for a while, even when the COVID vaccine starts to roll out. PIXABAY

a pandemic now clearly out of control throughout much of the United States and threatening parts of Canada, including Ontario, with each day's toll of new cases and deaths often ex-

ceeding the previous day's grim tallies.

In the worst affected places, intensive care units are jam-packed with seriously ill patients, sometimes with no alternative slots

available and staff near the end of their physical and emotional ropes and some freely admitting that any more cases could threaten to overwhelm the system, quality care and the life of their patients.

It all seems like a horror movie, except that these days the horror is playing out in real time. And worse – the tragedy is unfolding because of the wilful ignorance and failure of many to socially distance, wear masks and avoid get-togethers with others.

This has especially been so at indoor venues such as bars and restaurants or

*Continued on Page 17*

## Hundreds of 'friends' **support plan** to reduce Ryerson Park traffic

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

The Friends of Ryerson Park had no idea they had so many friends.

The community group was formed out of frustration this summer after residents near the small, lakeside park grew increasingly upset with a huge influx of traffic, illegally parked cars and large numbers of tourists.

After discussions with Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake officials made it clear they needed evidence that more than just a few vocal residents were complain-



Niagara Shores Park is being suggested as an alternative to Ryerson Park. KEVIN MACLEAN

ing, the Friends organized a blitz.

They went door-to-door in the Chautauqua neighbourhood outlining their suggested solutions and soliciting support.

*Continued on Page 2*

### Peninsula Flooring Ltd.

13 Henegan Road  
Virgil Business Park

(905)-468-2135  
www.peninsulaflooring.ca

**15% OFF**  
KANE CARPET  
FACTORY FINISHED  
AREA RUGS  
DEC.03 TO DEC.23

**15% OFF**  
STANTON & HIBERNIA  
FACTORY FINISHED  
AREA RUGS  
DEC.10 TO DEC.23

Week 3



**HOLIDAY LIGHTS**  
(AND WHERE TO FIND THEM)



1621 York Rd. PHOTOS BY RICHARD HARLEY



137 Queenston St.



78 Prideaux St. - Biscott House



285 Victoria St.



805 Charlotte St.



688 Penner St.

Here's a list of some great light displays around NOTL. Find more photos at [www.niagaranow.com](http://www.niagaranow.com):

- 792 Warner Rd.
- 200 Four Mile Creek Rd.
- 1621 York Rd.
- 137 Queenston St.
- 15630 Niagara Pkwy.
- 78 Prideaux St. - Biscott House
- 69 Prideaux St. - Demeath House

- 285 Victoria St.
- 210 John St. East
- 805 Charlotte St.
- 827 Charlotte St.
- 375 Butler St.
- 3 Wilberforce Ave.
- 64 Shakespeare Ave.

- 48 Colonel Butler Cr.
- 688 Penner St.
- 650 Penner St.
- 13 Autumn Cr.
- 1585 Concession 6 Rd.
- 58 Wright Cr.
- 39 Niagara-on-the-Green Blvd.