

This can't be a real newsletter. Not because there's no news. There's just *too much news*, and it's changing daily. Any Covid19 stats here would be out of date by the time this newsletter reached you.

We are just reaching out to our members and friends, to say our thoughts are with you all and we hope you are managing.

Whatever situation you are in – and everyone's will be different – we hope you are finding ways to cope. For some, humour is helpful, but we're not going to add to the ton of funny videos and jokes you're probably already receiving. This is more like a phone call from a friend, just getting in touch, sympathizing with your challenges and sharing some updates.

Covid19's effects here

On March 23, our Township asked all marinas (as well as others on the Province's list of non-essential services) to close. Seasonal residents are asked not to come to their cottages, and boaters are asked not to launch their boats (unless it's the only way to reach their permanent residence). Visit the township's website www.leeds1000islands.ca which maintains a page for local information related to the Covid19 pandemic.

Prime Minister Trudeau announced on April 18 that border crossings from the USA would be restricted to essential travel for another month.

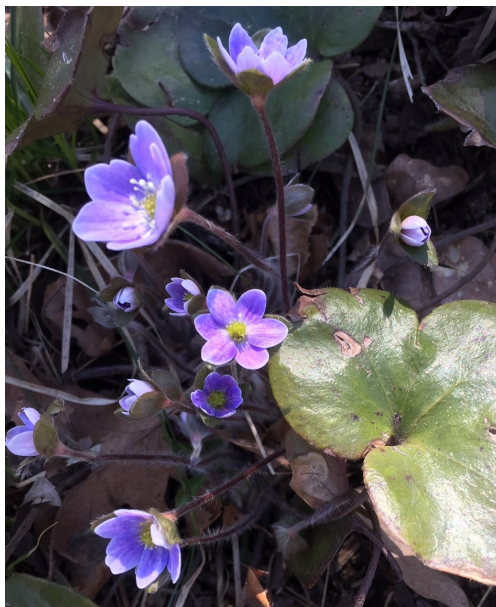
So much of our local economy depends on cottagers and tourists. The Township has to find the balance that is agonizing governments world-wide: how to save lives without wrecking the economy. The worst part is the uncertainty. How long will it go on? We all require patience and courage. We will get through this.

Flooding in 2020

To add to our concerns about Covid19, there are also worries about water levels.

Along with others, over the winter TIARA encouraged the IJC (International Joint Commission) to delay the re-opening of the Seaway until April 1, later than the usual March 20 – 25. The idea was to let as much water as possible over the Moses-Sanders dam before shipping began. (A high rush of water would threaten the big lakers' ability to navigate safely below the dam.) The IJC did delay the opening and it allowed for a few more days' outflow.

On April 21, the IJC's International Lake Ontario St. Lawrence River Board (ILOSRLB) reported that Lake Ontario was still well above average but also well below record levels. Lake Ontario and Ottawa River levels are lower than in 2017 because of the current milder and dryer conditions.



*Spring in the 1000 Islands:
Hepaticas are just starting to bloom.*

Last year the unusually large snow-pack didn't melt until suddenly in mid-April, causing the Ottawa River to flood at Montréal, so outflows from the St. Lawrence had to be held back. However, this year, although Lake Ontario is 6.7" (17 cm) higher than at the same time in 2019, much of the snowpack has already melted.

The IJC reports that the mild winter and early spring has allowed "the release of outflows near or above record rates over the past several months", but it also warns that high inflows are continuing from the upper Great Lakes. Considering current and forecast conditions, it estimates that "Lake Ontario levels will likely peak below the levels observed in 2017 and 2019". You can find the IJC's news releases on its website www.ijc.org. To track water levels, go to the IJC's <https://ijc.org/en/loslr/b/watershed/water-levels>.

TIARA has also been urging the IJC's GLAM (Great Lakes Adaptive Management) Committee to complete its analysis of the control actions during the flooding of 2019. Frequent and intended deviations from Plan 2014 were made to lower the high water levels primarily caused by the unprecedented precipitation over all the Great Lakes basin and the Ottawa River.

It's not a question of ditching Plan 2014. It was always the intention that it could and should be adapted to respond to changing conditions, and it's time to decide what those adaptations should be. The information that the GLAM committee has gathered and is analyzing should give some clear direction for that.

Save The River's Winter Conference

Several TIARA Directors attended STR's 31st Annual Environmental Conference at Clayton on February 2. Presenters spoke on highly relevant environmental topics. Two in particular interested us.

Barbara King of Watersheds Canada discussed using nature-based shoreline features to manage properties threatened by flooding and erosion.

Native trees, shrubs and flowers have deep roots which can stabilize the soil far more securely than grass in a lawn. These plants also add to the shorelines' beauty, and contribute to cleaner water and habitat for fish and aquatic wildlife.

Dr. Drew Gronewold of the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability discussed the historical, current and future Great Lakes water levels, including the hydrologic conditions that contribute to water level variability.

Time to renew – or join us!

Our memberships start on May 1, so we hope you will renew, or join us if you are not already a member. Still \$40 for a single membership and \$50 for you and your immediate family. Send a cheque to TIARA, 481 Thousand Islands Parkway, Lansdowne ON K0E 1L0. Or you can renew with PayPal through our website www.tiaraweb.org.

Also, please make sure we have your up-to-date email address. In this uncertain year, we want to keep you informed, especially if we decide to have an Annual Meeting, not planned yet. Our own email address is tiara@tiaraweb.org and we'd love to hear from you.

Rockport Traffic Study

Last fall, the Township hired Dillon Consulting to seek ideas from the public about traffic in the village of Rockport. Front Street, which loops through Rockport from the 1000 Islands Parkway, is clogged during the summer with (as the Township states) "buses, passenger vehicles, trucks and boat trailers, pedestrians and cyclists". These buses, bringing tourists to the boat line, also remain in the village's centre, idling their motors and further detracting from the village's gradually eroding historic charm.

Three public meetings were held over last winter. The Recreation Hall was packed on all occasions, and the reps from Dillon took away many suggestions from local residents about how the traffic problem might be solved. Presumably they are still back at the drawing board. Residents are hoping any new proposals will finally address what to do about the buses, which are the core problem - but not considered in Dillon's last presentation.

Volunteer-driven organizations

They're the lifeblood of our community, providing services and enriching our lives. Here are two examples of associations who work with TIARA in many ways:

TIWLT, the Thousand Islands Watershed Land Trust is a conservation organization, founded with the aim of "protecting one of Canada's most biologically significant regions". Since 1993, through donations, acquisitions and easements, it has conserved over 5,000 acres of land, including islands, grasslands, forests and wetlands. Don and Marnie Ross are the driving force behind this organization, as they have been for so many important initiatives in the 1000 Islands. This year TIWLT is issuing its Thousand Acre Challenge. It is raising funds to acquire – and preserve forever - 1,000 more key acres of precious

natural landscapes in our watershed. Read more about TIWLT on their website: www.tiwl.ca.

TIA, the Thousand Islands Association, was founded in 1934. Boaters up and down the River are grateful for the familiar white shoal markers which it places every year. Its Shore Breakfast preceding its Annual Meeting is a summer social highlight. When flooding in the St. Lawrence in 2017 and 2019 threatened to damage many waterfront properties, TIA expanded its horizons and now has appointed Britt Bedford-Jones as Environmental Chair. To learn more, visit www.thousandislandsassociation.com.



Staying at home! An inspirational sign along the Thousand Islands Parkway.

This summer...

It's still hard to know what the summer will be like. Already, popular events are being cancelled after much agonizing thought. The first two plays of the Thousand Islands Playhouse's season have been postponed until another year. The 1000 Islands Writers' Festival didn't happen, nor will the Lansdowne Agricultural Fair. There are so many places where we are used to seeing each other: shops, parks, restaurants, marinas, the Playhouse, museums, docks... all closed down for now. As of now, TIARA has not made firm plans for an Annual Meeting. We're waiting to see how things develop.

In the words of the WWII song, made famous by Dame Vera Lynn (who just turned 103!): "We'll Meet Again".

TIARA

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