



April 10, 2020

### **Statement from the Mayor and Council RE: COVID-19 situation**

For the numbers today go to: <https://hnhu.org/health-topic/coronavirus-covid-19/>

First of all, let me say “Happy Easter” while I know that it is difficult in these times to be happy. It is important to be strong for your kids, for your parents, and for all of those around you; where every other year you would come together and celebrate the values of being family. The event this year may have changed but the traditions are still the same and the principles behind the traditions still exist for everyone.

As I watch the updates coming forth in from the Chief Medical Officer of Ontario, it disturbs me why the Government is not taking a more assertive approach to containment. All of their statistics suggest to take an aggressive approach to stopping the spread of the virus and yet everything up to now has been a reaction rather than to be more proactive. So I have sent an email to the Premier asking them to lock down the GTA. They are better equipped to be able to keep those within the boundaries of the GTA from leaving to us trying to keep them from coming. I say this with all the respect to our friends who live within the GTA that this is not a personal, us and them decision but the fact remains that the centre of the virus exists in the GTA and allowing people to leave that area and attend ours, or other rural municipalities contradicts everything that we are all doing to flatten this curve.

Further, we do not have the resources to manage the influx of people whether they are cottagers, day trippers or bikers out for a nice ride. All of which increases the risk to our communities. We can say STAY HOME all we want but we need more deliberate action from our Provincial and Federal leaders. I encourage you all to let your concerns known and your voices heard to our local MP Diane Finley and MPP Toby Barrett asking them to use their influence to help us. They need to help us ALL deliver a strong message that everyone outside of Haldimand-Norfolk needs to hear. Give us a fighting chance and stay where the resources are best to serve you and not come here and drain ours.

For those of you who have applied for the CERB benefit, I can tell you that it is working, many people have already received their first cheque and I must say that in every other instance that trying to apply for something through the government, we can all say that it always would come with some frustration. This has been really seamless and very easy to do. If you have not and think you qualify, I urge you to get online at Rev/Can and apply. It is your money and you deserve it as much as anyone else. The CEBA for businesses is about to be launched and while it will benefit many small and medium sized businesses, there is currently a hole in the program for those smaller businesses with payrolls of less than \$50,000 or those that are not incorporated. I encourage you to as above make your concerns known to the levels of government that our small communities are predominantly made of small business and there is nothing yet there for us.



If you witness something that is in contravention to any of these new orders as set out it is your duty to protect your community and contact the following with names and/or license plates etc any information that would be helpful. You are not in the wrong and you are not to feel guilty. The guilty party is the one that is disrespecting you and everyone else and there is no patience left for those people.

1. OPP Hotline 1-888-310-1122
2. H-N Hotline 519-428-8019

Please do not call or send me or council members the information, as we are simply passing the information across to the hotlines as well and it would be more efficient for everyone to use the hotline. Furthermore it tracks all calls and cases which is important for enforcement.

Also please do not engage those that you feel are breaking the orders as we do not want you to put yourself in potential conflict or dangerous position. People's reactions will differ and it's best you make the call and let the authorities sort out the issue.

The biggest question that I keep getting asked is; "Why is Ontario one of the lowest in Canada for daily testing?" It is frustrating to see the Premier saying we need to do more testing and yet test protocols are still stricter here than other Provinces. I continue to push for more testing and can only hope that soon the Premier's office and their Chief Medical Officer will be sending the same message to the public. While it is their duty to ensure that the testing is available it is our duty to continue to manage ourselves and protect ourselves as best as possible. That is what we can control and I am truly proud of the sacrifices that you all have made to control the spread. We are doing our part and we need the Province to theirs.

I continue to see bikers out for a social ride and stop at the local Tim Hortons for a coffee and a chat. Without stereotyping bikers, I cannot believe that a bike is required for essential travel today and that while many bikers are very responsible, like in everything there are those that are not and we seem to be getting our fair share of them as they travel throughout Haldimand-Norfolk. Mayor Chopp and I continue to have dialogue with the owners of Tim Hortons but again the real issue is the behaviours of those individuals and not the store owners. If all else fails, it would not surprise me to see our Health Unit put a ban on bikers within both Counties.

Folks, this is serious and I do not believe that taking a half ass approach to this is in our best interest. Like you, I want to get through this and start the re-building process. While I do not like it any more than you I support any restrictions that gets us there the soonest. While the majority of us are following that path and there are still the very few who will prolong this into more months.



More months that none of us can afford, more months without wages, more months without our families. Signage and warnings have all been established along our trail and paths and public spaces. There is no more room for forgiveness and fines are being issued and more will come. Any one issued a ticket today, DESERVES IT; there is no sympathy for those individuals. I know that is harsh but I possess 100's of emails and calls suggesting otherwise.

The local health unit and their team have been working tirelessly around the clock and I am truly amazed at their ability to manage the flow of information and direct the constant traffic of requests that are coming in hourly. I believe that with their expertise, Haldimand-Norfolk is much prepared and better equipped than other areas of the Province and both Mayor Chopp and I continue to be impressed with the readiness of all staff involved. We all meet by conference almost daily to discuss the many concerns and issues and the ability to execute has been second to none. I share this with you so that you know that you have some of the best talent in the Province working to protect you and we are lucky to be getting their advice.

The acts of kindness that I keep hearing about in both Haldimand and Norfolk only solidifies the ideology of who we are, who we have been. We have always celebrated the best of our Counties, those people who continue to step up with the various selfless acts that define the greatness of our Communities. Truly a great place to live, work and play.

“Hope is that long four-letter word we put in between where we are and where we want to be”

Stay Safe,

Ken Hewitt