



May 13, 2020

### **Statement from Mayor Ken Hewitt & Council**

For the numbers today go to:

<https://hnhu.org/health-topic/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Thanks to your efforts, we have seen relatively few new cases of the virus in the past few days and previous outbreaks are starting to come under control. Province-wide, the talk has turned to recovery and what the 'new normal' will look like. Circumstances continue to change quickly and this past week has been filled with plenty of questions and lots of concerns. I will try to address them as best as possible here and hope that it will provide some context and clarity on many of the topics that are on people's minds.

First, let me take you back to early March when we were told to close parks and playground equipment. I remember how much pushback we received from the public and heard that individuals were going to allow their children to play on the equipment despite repeated requests not to do so. Today, we are not being asked about the playground equipment, because most families would likely not want their children playing on said equipment for obvious reasons.

Today, as I was picking up some much needed material from the local hardware store to fulfill that long "to do" list, I looked around and noticed that people are changing their behaviours. Everyone is much more conscious of social distancing.

I have always said that outside of the major cities, we already live in a world of social distancing and our numbers within Haldimand-Norfolk outside of the breakout in Anson Place have been very positive measured against the rest of the Province.

Decisions have been made to try to minimize the spread of the virus that really cannot be measured in terms of impact here in Canada, the Provinces within, and locally in Haldimand-Norfolk. Health and safety have been the primary considerations to achieve success in this pandemic. If the health units have over-reacted, it is to try to minimize the case count.

While many of us can choose to agree or disagree with these decisions made by our local healthcare authority, the only thing that we can do is have healthy debate. The medical experts who are making these decisions are doing so from a level of expertise that most of us do not have.



You can shoot holes through many decisions in this pandemic, and sadly there have been winners and losers as a result. How can it be okay to buy shoes in Walmart, but not at a local business that sells shoes? We have heard them all.

The point that health authorities keep making to us, is that they are trying to reduce the risk, not eliminate it, because they know that the risk cannot be completely eliminated.

Just like many of you, I question the decisions that have affected our way of life these past months. Just like you, I am frustrated and would like to see things differently. Just like you, I am balancing the best advice of our leaders, our medical officers and applying it to my personal situation. Everyone's situation is unique and there is no one size fits all.

I have been asked numerous times, "why are the two Counties working together so much lately?". Our shared public health services require us to work closely but in a pandemic, it elevates the need to work closely even more. Haldimand shares 40% of the overall financial costs of the HNHU and does not sit on the Board of Health. While under normal circumstances there is an advisory board that does consist of Haldimand members, that board is not functioning today. As a result, both Mayor Chopp and I believe it is in Haldimand's interest that we are much more actively involved on a day to day basis. We are not revisiting amalgamation of Haldimand & Norfolk counties as some have suggested.

This week, the Ford government will be making announcements on Provincial emergency orders/regulations, including some changes & long-awaited positive news for some of our seasonal businesses.

When can trailer parks be opened? These seasonal sites all fall within the Provincial order and when the Ford government signals the re-opening of these parks we will work with local operators to ensure that they can open safely and effectively for everyone to enjoy.

The municipal boat ramps will open when the private ones are given the right to open. I have been asked, "why not just open them as others have?", and I offer two reasons. For one, we do not believe it is fair to our local businesses operating boat ramps to be forced to close while County-maintained public launches remain open. Secondly, we do not have the ability to safely operate them as they are not supervised.

Why the section 22 order with respect to cottagers? I can say that for all the complaints about the order, there have been as many supporting it. In the end, I think that this is a clear example why politicians and medical officials cannot always be on the same page.



I believe that today, we can ultimately expect that people will be respectful towards our community while enjoying their cottages. I am hopeful that if our numbers continue to look promising, our Chief Medical Officer will reconsider this Section 22 order sooner than later.

While the Premier begins to reopen the Province, here in Haldimand we have been busy ourselves getting ready and continue to make the preparations to hit the ground running.

If you are a business that can now begin to open under the new rules, the provincial website link is:

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/health-and-safety-association-guidance-documents-for-workplaces-during-the-covid-19-outbreak.html>

If you are not that business yet, I would suggest that you use the protocols in such a way to begin to design your business and safety plan so that you are ready when the Province does give you the nod.

Folks, this has been a long haul and I know that many of you are nearing or passed your wits end. The sacrifices made by so many are immeasurable and here in Haldimand I cannot begin to thank you for your perseverance, your patience and your commitment to helping us get to this point thus far.

I truly believe that with a safe, guarded approach, respecting our neighbourhoods, our neighbours, and our families, we can begin to resume those small but well deserved social gatherings that we all so desperately desire.

If I may ask, when these businesses open, please consider them. In all of this, their sacrifices have been considerable. They are the backbone of our local economies and it has never been more important for us to support them.

“Don’t let life be controlled by yesterday. “ — Humble the Poet

Stay Safe,

Mayor Ken Hewitt