



June 1, 2020

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

For the numbers today go to:

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

What does the new normal look like?

No one expected that a pandemic would bring about so much change, so fast. Just in the past 3 months, the way we live, what we do, when we do it, where we go, how we shop and how we socialize has been completely transformed. There are so many new processes for us to digest and manage in our day-to-day lives, and I know this has been difficult for many.

Over the next few months there will be more protocols put in place as the Province moves forward with its re-opening plan. Of course, these protocols are in place to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our communities from COVID-19. It has been challenging to adapt to this 'new normal' and will continue to be as the situation evolves. However, it is up to us all to accept these changes and do our best to adapt. That means being patient in line at the grocery store, postponing your family reunion or helping an elderly neighbor by picking up their groceries. We're all in this together, and we must all do our part.

We cannot control the actions of those who still choose to take unnecessary risks for themselves and those within our communities, but we CAN control our own actions and take all precautions necessary to keep ourselves and our communities safe.

If you enter a business or a location where you do not feel safe, you should remove yourself from that space. A number of businesses are starting to open and are working to finalize their unique safety plans. While it may take some time to develop an appropriate plan, business owners will surely welcome your input as a patron and I would encourage you to offer input where you see improvements could be made. Of course, local businesses have support from the Health Unit and provincial government, but customer feedback can go a long way.

These local businesses need our support to succeed. What they do not need is negative press, blame & finger pointing on social media. These businesses are the backbone of our local economy; they are the ones that donate to our communities at times of need, provide meaningful employment to families and generally make our County a more vibrant place. Collectively, they all need our help to manage this new normal.



Recently, a large farm operation with migrant workers was struck by the virus and currently there are over 150 workers that have tested positive, with 7 hospitalized.

This farm took all recommended precautions to prevent this from happening, the current outbreak just goes to show how quick and vicious this virus can be. I know that the Health Unit and our Medical Officer of Health have been and are currently working closely with them to help through this very difficult time. I can say that this outbreak should not be considered a reflection of the farm, its owners, or the operation. They are a very well run, professional operation and are highly respected in Norfolk County. I am confident that all steps are being taken to protect the workers, the farmers, and the surrounding communities.

We're currently are working on some better ways to manage the public parks. The current issue involves people coming from far away to enjoy our public green spaces. While this would normally be very welcome, it is a problem during the pandemic as we cannot provide public washrooms under local and provincial public health guidelines. Understandably, this has become a problem for local residents along with enforcement from by-law and OPP. It's not going to be easy finding a solution, but we are exploring several options to prevent individuals from relieving themselves in our parks which is both unsightly and unsanitary.

For these same reasons we have kept the Port Maitland Pier and boat ramp closed and we are looking at more security around that area to prevent people from using the Pier. It is a problem for everyone at this time and until we can fully commit to opening everything, including washrooms, we must find a way to keep the broader public away.

We have installed signage along the many side roads around the Hagersville quarries warning drivers of the tow away zone. While it remains to be another concern for by-law and OPP, they are doing the best they can to drive people away from that location. It is a growing issue and once again managing the behaviours of those that disregard rules is not easy with limited resources.

Today the Ford government announced a new fixed electricity price, known as the 'COVID-19 recovery rate', for customers. Set by the Ontario Energy Board, the COVID-19 recovery rate will charge 12.8 cents per kilowatt hour from June 1 to October 31. I welcome that news and am excited for our businesses and residents who will benefit from this energy program.

The Ford government also alluded to a regional program for re-opening businesses and I look forward to seeing what that looks like and how it will benefit our local economy. While we want to see all of our businesses operating and profiting, I do have some concerns. Under normal circumstances we would welcome visitors from all parts of the Province, but opening certain regions and not others will motivate people to migrate. This has the potential to impact smaller communities by potentially transmitting the



virus, overwhelming businesses and hospitals. We will await news from the Province regarding these 'regional re-openings'.

Please remember that support is available if you are a local business impacted by COVID-19. If you are a business that can now begin to open under the new rules, the provincial website link to resources and operating guidelines is: <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/04/health-and-safety-association-guidance-documents-for-workplaces-during-the-covid-19-outbreak.html>.

"Change can either challenge or threaten us. Our beliefs pave your way to success or block you."

Stay Safe,

Mayor Ken Hewitt