



June 10, 2020

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

Yesterday a protest took place to get media attention against what I felt was unfair representation of Haldimand-Norfolk and against the regional opening of Ontario. Recently the Ford government made the announcement to open businesses in parts of the Province and not here locally.

It was not that I was so passionate that our businesses should be open, but that I felt the whole Province should be treated the same. Ford says our numbers are higher than others. I say that is two specific cases that are being contained. Otherwise our numbers are consistent with other areas that are allowed to reopen. But truly is that the issue? If you can travel anywhere in the Province to enjoy what is open elsewhere than what difference does it make what the local numbers today are so long as they are contained. And our community numbers are the same as the rest of the Province. Is he saying that if we keep getting high numbers as result of having a regional agricultural economy that is dependent upon migrant workers that all our businesses will suffer by staying closed?

I have consistently heard from the Province that we are all in this together and regionalizing and opening parts of the Province is simply wrong and unfair to any business that has worked so hard to be ready to open today. We were not consulted or advised in advance or we could have shared our strong belief it is fundamentally wrong to treat different parts of the Province differently and punitive to those areas that remain closed but who have worked so hard to bring the overall Provincial numbers down.

Yesterday I chose to fight for our local economy, for our local businesses and I used the media and a protest platform to gain the attention of the Premier and maybe our local MPP, who continue to say they are consulting with us but frankly are not. That platform was wrong and unfortunately the message that I wanted to send was lost in the translation. My actions, many of you felt was not becoming of the leader that I always have aspired to be.

For those of you that were offended I truly apologize and take the responsibility of my choices. While I can see that some felt the protest to be inappropriate, I was fighting for what I believed to be the right thing for our small businesses who cannot open today. I was angry because I felt the characterization by the Province of us supporting this regional approach was incorrect. However, as Mayor I know my role is to demonstrate morale leadership for the rest of the community and in hindsight my participation in a protest by breaking the rules undermined that. The intent was pure but the execution was flawed.



This pandemic has not been easy for anyone and as I look back at decisions made, some good, some bad by many people at all levels of government. I have to believe that in all of them the principle of trying to do the right thing for those that have elected us to represent them is always first and for most.

Over the past few months I have fought for our County on so many levels to ensure that you have the right information, to ensure that our Public Health team is equipped to meet the needs of the Communities. To ensure that our staff have the tools to fight this Pandemic on every level, and most of all to ensure that your tax dollars are wisely spent throughout this.

However, today, I take a somber second thought and say sorry to my staff, and to my council members, and mostly to all of you who have trusted me with the responsibility of being Mayor.

In my position it is inevitable that mistakes will be made but when they occur they must certainly be learned from. I can assure you that this is the case.

Stay Safe,

Mayor Ken Hewitt