



July 13, 2020

### **Statement from the Mayor and Council**

Hope everyone had a wonderful Canada Day and was able to enjoy their friends and family. As we continue to return to a new normal, many starting back to work, some starting their summer holidays, the COVID virus still lingers around us all and we must continue to be vigilant in our behaviours.

I have received many questions regarding residents, businesses and public spaces. Let me start by saying that local government and OPP cannot manage all the choices that people make. That responsibility rests with all of us. If you see a business putting yourself and its employees in danger, I would ask that you contact the owner with some advice and/or concerns. If it persists then I would not continue to do business there. If your neighbours are behaving in such a way that you feel is dangerous, call the public health hotline. Do not engage them and stay away to be safe. In public spaces, the County is trying its best to protect the people and ensure that everyone can enjoy them.

Please understand that By-law officers cannot be everywhere and simply put, they are not the answer to manage the bad behaviour of some. That said, they are trying and I would ask if you do approach them, thank them as well. They are human and they do not deserve the constant language being thrown at them. OPP are there to assist as well but know that while your issue is important to you, there may be other ones that the OPP must prioritize and therefore cannot always respond as efficient as we would all like.

I have been asked about the County adopting a mask bylaw. We continue to look for direction from Public Health, but my first thought is that everyone should be wearing a mask in public spaces where it is difficult to maintain social distancing, especially inside of stores. Many stores have put in protocols to protect their workers and customers and have expressed to the Premier and local councils that they will not be forcing their employees to wear masks.

Everyone must be able to make their own decisions that make them feel the most comfortable in any given situation. I will be wearing a mask in stores and I would recommend that you all wear them as well but that is your decision.

Mandating the wearing of masks in stores is just not logistical in that it cannot be policed and it would only give people a false expectation that it can. The best way to manage the inside of stores is with the ownership and their staff. They are suited to ensure that if there is a requirement to wear a mask in the store, they can enforce it themselves. Should masks become mandatory it will be on the direction of our Chief Medical Officer and we are discussing more on this over this week.



Pools in Haldimand are now open. Splash pad protocols are currently being finalized and reviewed by Public Health. They will be opening this week.

Staff have been busy pushing through licensing patios for our businesses and will continue to assist the owners who desire to extend our add patios to their establishments.

We are looking at several ways to protect our public spaces such as the Port Maitland Pier. We have asked staff to come back with ideas on charging the public to attend the area. While we want to promote our County, we also want to ensure that we can protect it.

As we move forward, it is our hope to keep a positive outlook and continue supporting our business community and protect our residents in Haldimand. Protecting the community is paramount and if required, through the Public Health Unit or the County we will do everything possible, including closing public spaces. We'll continue doing everything we can to ensure that should a second wave arrive, Haldimand County is positioned well to meet and overcome it.

If you are a business that can 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>.

Stay safe,

Mayor Ken Hewitt