

Mayoral Message in regards to the Covid-19 Situation May 16/20

It's been a couple of weeks since I published a community note. I was waiting, hoping I would be able to give some good news in regards to opening up the Province. On Thursday, after many discussions with myself and many other Mayors across the Province as well as continuing to consult with our Provincial Medical Officer of Health, our Premier has announced that we can open up our Golf Course and our Campgrounds. The openings are welcome by all of us and yet come with a number of restrictions.

Our Golf Course will officially open today at noon for members only. They will be required to call in for a Tee Time, pay electronically and also a number of other rules that will be discussed when they come on site. We also ask that golfers only come to the Course no early than 15 mins before your Tee Time or you may be turned away at the gate, until closer to your time.

Our Campgrounds will officially open on Wednesday May 20th at noon to seasonal campers only as per the Provincial order. This opening will also come with a number of new restrictions caused by the Covid Crisis. No large gatherings and 14 day isolation for anyone returning from out of Country are some of the things that are still required, with Police and CBSA enforcement. Other rules that will be in place such as social distancing need to be observed.

There have been a number of questions in regards to the status of our Parks in the Twp. They are posted closed and yet people are out using them. The reason they are posted closed is because of Provincial legislation. It instructs us to close any parks that have active elements to them, playground equipment, any type of sports fields, washrooms, park benches etc. However, if they are a "passive" Park for walking, they are allowed to be used, just don't walk on the sports field. So if you are walking through any of our Parks and not on the active sports field part of it, the Twp has interpreted that all parks then become "Passive" Parks. In Thursday's Provincial order, individuals may use the sports fields for training purposes, but no team sports are allowed.

We have also interpreted that boat launches are part of water transportation, and trails are part of a Passive Park system. We have been told that we will not see any additional Provincial restrictions unless they see that people do not keep social distancing. Their intention is to get the Province back up and running as safely and as quickly as possible.

We have also had a number of questions in regards Twp bylaws allowing the use of 4 wheelers, side by sides, golf carts, and unlicensed dirt bikes using Twp streets and trespassing on private property. There are no Twp by laws regulating these activities. These are criminal activities which are governed by Provincial legislation under the Highway Traffic Act and the Trespassers Act. These activities are illegal and are enforced by the OPP only. We have been asked to pass a Bylaw allowing ATV's and UTV's on our roads and streets, but as of this note we have not done that. If we were to pass a Governing Bylaw to allow these vehicles on our roads and streets then the Twp Bylaw enforcement officer would be the only person that could enforce activities related to the Bylaw. The OPP does not and will not enforce any Twp Bylaws.

Our burning Bylaw has been questioned as well, and it is still the opinion of the Emergency Control Group that if our residents follow the Bylaw, there will be no impact to neighbours. There is no open burning in built up areas allowed unless it is essentially a smoke free, 2x2 cooking type fire using seasoned dry wood. If a person is burning wet materials causing smoke and a complaint is reported then the Fire Department will put it out and you can be fined.

I left this information in from the last note, as I have had additional questions in regards to what is legislated for individuals and businesses. There are only three public compliance orders that have been issued by Provincial or Federal legislation for individuals. The hope is that through education and reminders that individuals will comply. However if not, individuals could be fined or even receive jail time if non-compliance persists in these areas:

- 1) Not self-quarantining for 14 days when returning to Canada, reporting is done by calling--1-888-502-9060
- 2) Being open for business when you are not an deemed an essential service--reporting is done by calling 1-888-310-1122-Provincial
- 3) Group gathering of more than 5 people not from the same household--reporting is done by calling 1-888-310-1122-Provincial

Social distancing or staying home is not legislated but is still a strong recommendation from our Public Health Officials. We are seeing the positive results from everyone following these recommendations. It has been proven that these responses to the COVID-19 Virus are very successful in slowing and eventually eliminating the transmission. We understand how difficult it is for everyone as many open businesses have long lineups outside and limited access. We are encouraged that the Province has allowed many more businesses to open with restrictions. We hope that everyone will continue to pack their patience before leaving to shop and maintain their distance... I am very pleased that everyone I have seen are practicing social distancing very well and I know it is appreciated very much by others.

We have set up a Q&A document on the COVID-19 section of the Township website which will have the most up to date information that we have. These are really unprecedented times for all of us. We are deeply concerned about the health and safety of our Residents, both younger and older, as well as our Staff in regards to the impact of COVID-19. We have been working with the Twp and County Emergency Control Group as well as taking Medical leadership and direction from our Medical Officer of Health Dr. Renedate, including both the Province and the Federal Governments. We continue to monitor the situation here locally and have seen positive results that we are slowly winning the battle against this Bio Hazard Virus.

Be assured that critical supply chain infrastructure such as the water and sewer systems, grocery stores, gas stations, pharmacies and other commercial venues will stay open for business and be able to supply the needs of our residents throughout this time. Patience is the key for all of us. Our Emergency Response Personnel, Fire, Police, Paramedics and Public Works will also continue to provide assistance as they are needed.

The Twp office continues to be closed to the Public and will remain so until this Bio Hazard Virus has run its course. For those that have immediate planning needs, they are to be done through Lambton County.

We have conducted a number of electronic meetings of Twp Council, County Council, Emergency Control Group and other committees that Council is responsible for. We have been on calls and had conversations with our MPP, MP, the Premier and Cabinet Ministers, encouraging them to open up our Golf Course, allowing owners to stay in their second properties and open Campgrounds for all previous seasonal campers. We have also encouraged them to allow businesses to reopen with restrictions and are pleased that they are doing many of the things that Council has requested. We feel that the Premier and his Cabinet are doing a great job in balancing the openings and the concerns to continue to keep everyone safe. But it is only us as individuals that can really make the difference by our behaviours.

On behalf of all of us on Council, I say thank you to everyone, for doing their part to defeat the Virus. I also want to publically thank all our Senior Management Team for their leadership, the Employees of the Twp for their care and concern for the health of those around them. They continue to complete their work diligently and safely in a very concerning and stressful time. They like everyone else are balancing so many emotions and responsibilities during this time and I ask that all of us be respectful and patient when you call and discuss issues with them. I also ask the members of the Public to call the MPPs office in regards to issues that they have in regards to things that are not yet open, restrictions that are in place or for clarifications of any legislation that is affecting us during this Virus Crisis. They are the ones that control the openings and their recommendations around them.

I just want to once again say thank you to everyone for their patience and willingness to do whatever is necessary to bring us out of this situation stronger and more resilient than ever before. I would like to encourage everyone if possible to wear a mask or some type of mouth and nose covering when you are out and about. I know that it is not legislated or even recommended by our MOH, however, those countries that do, seem to have overcome the virus more quickly. Be sure to thank (indirectly of course) all those around you that are serving us all so well and unselfishly. Take time to wash your hands often, look out for each other and above all else stay safe, stay home as much as possible and stay socially distant as we navigate through this COVID-19 Situation... know also, that our thoughts and prayers are with all of you and trust that we will be back to normal soon.....

Mayor Steve Arnold