

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW: March - July

March

? Shelburne Mayor Wade Mills has announced the Town is closing all municipal facilities until further notice in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Shelburne Town Hall, the Shelburne Police Station, Shelburne Fire Hall, local library and Centre Dufferin Recreation Centre will be closed for at least the next two weeks as the municipality attempts to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus in our community.

Mayor Mills met with Shelburne Police Chief Kent Moore and Shelburne Fire Chief Brad Lemaich on Monday afternoon (March 16) to discuss various measures municipal leaders could, potentially, implement to maintain the safety of local residents and ensure the continuity of essential municipal operations.

During that meeting, Mayor Mills recalls, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health announced the Dufferin-Caledon region has its first confirmed case of COVID-19.

?While not entirely unexpected, the news is still unsettling and certainly reinforces the need to take strong and sensible action,? Mayor Mills said. ?In some respects, we are lucky that we can learn from the experiences of other countries who have already been impacted by COVID-19 on a large scale. One of the lessons we can take away is that the spread of this virus can be greatly slowed if governments at all levels act early, aggressively and intelligently.?

Effective as of 4:30 p.m. on Monday (March 16), Shelburne Town Hall is completely closed to the public.

? The Town of Shelburne has declared a State of Emergency in response to the continued COVID-19 pandemic, however Mayor Wade Mills is keen to nip any immediate panic or worry local residents may feel in the bud.

?Let me be very clear, this is a legal declaration and does not mean that we face an immediate increased threat, nor does it mean that we face an impending loss of control of the situation,? Mayor Mills said. ?To the contrary, in fact, this declaration will allow us to get a tighter grip on the situation and will expand the weapons in our arsenal so that we can fight this threat more efficiently and effectively.?

Shelburne is the latest municipality in the area to enact its emergency protocols. The Town of Caledon was the first to do so last Wednesday (March 18), with the Town of Mono and Town of Orangeville following suit.

? More than 1,000 individuals have visited the new drive-thru COVID-19 assessment clinic at Headwaters Health Care Centre since it was opened last Thursday (March 19).

April

? A total of 14 staff members and 10 inpatients have tested positive for COVID-19 at Headwaters Health Care Centre as of Wednesday morning (April 8).

The hospital started posting daily statistics on its website this week, highlighting that an additional 38 staff members were self-isolating, having potentially come into contact with an individual testing positive for coronavirus. Of the 10 confirmed inpatient cases, four of those individuals are currently receiving treatment at the local hospital.

?We are doing everything we can to keep our staff and patients safe during this exceptional time,? Headwaters hospital spokesperson Jennifer Hamilton informed the Citizen on Tuesday (April 7).

The number of COVID-19 cases locally, as is the case almost everywhere else around the world, has increased substantially over the past week. As of Wednesday morning, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health has 113 confirmed cases, with 35 of those here in Dufferin County. Visits at our local COVID-19 Assessment Centre, situated at Headwaters hospital, are up again this week, with a total of 1,992 individuals processed and 774 tests administered as of press time

Worldwide cases of coronavirus surpassed the 1.5 million mark on Wednesday afternoon. From that total, around 310,000 people have recovered from the virus, with 83,476 individuals dying. The United States is now recognized as the official epicentre of COVID-19, with 400,549 cases as of 11 a.m. on Wednesday. Spain, Italy, France and Germany round out the top five countries for total cases, with each recording more than 100,000 cases. Canada is now ranked 13th on that list, with 17,897 total cases as of end of day Tuesday.

Concerns have been escalating locally after two Shelburne retirement residences confirmed cases of COVID-19 this week. Dufferin Oaks was already on lockdown after two staff members tested positive for the virus last week. As of Wednesday, the County of Dufferin, who operates the facility, confirmed a third staff member had contracted coronavirus, with two residents also infected. It was also revealed on Tuesday that Shelburne Residence Retirement and Nursing Home had its first resident test positive for COVID-19.

? Shelburne Council participates in first virtual meeting

? Three elderly residents living in Shelburne retirement homes have died this week as the community comes to grips with two further outbreaks of COVID-19 in the area.

After an outbreak of the highly contagious virus was declared at Headwaters Health Care Centre in Orangeville on March 31, two retirement homes in Shelburne ? Dufferin Oaks long-term care home and Shelburne Residence Retirement and Nursing Home have this week announced outbreaks of their own.

On Monday, it was revealed that two residents of Shelburne Residence had died after contracting COVID-19. This followed news that a Dufferin Oaks resident had passed away

? Dufferin Oaks staff and residents are undergoing arduous COVID-19 testing at the county-run facility.

Brenda Wagner, the administrator at Dufferin Oaks in Shelburne, told Dufferin County Council last Thursday (April 16) that a proactive approach has been taken against the virus that's caused a worldwide pandemic.

Administration was informed March 30 that two Dufferin Oaks residents had been in contact with a COVID-19 positive healthcare worker at hospital in Orangeville. The Dufferin Oaks residents had received care at Headwaters Health Care Centre.

Five staff members and four residents have tested positive for the novel coronavirus, said Wagner. As many as 105 residents have been tested and there are about 50 left to be tested. One resident has died of COVID-19, she said

? As of April 6, schools across Ontario began 'distance learning' for students to continue learning within the walls of their own homes.

May

? Top brass at Shelburne Residence Retirement and Nursing Home say staff at the facility are doing all they can to protect its residents and limit a deadly outbreak of the COVID-19 virus.

As of Tuesday afternoon, 55 residents and 23 staff members had tested positive for the virus, with 15 residents having died.

Operated by Cambridge-based Southbridge Care Homes, the local facility houses approximately 60 residents.

While the provincial government has started to take steps to reopen the economy over the next few weeks, new cases of COVID-19 continue to come in. In the past week, there have been 10,449 new cases nationwide, with more than 2,000 of those here in Ontario. In total, Canada has 31,010 active COVID-19 cases, with a further 31,036 closed cases ? 4,043 of those being deaths. There has been 18,310 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ontario

? (May 14) Chuck Ferguson, Manager of Communications for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health told the Free Press this week that his organization has been working closely with both of Shelburne's long term care residences ?on a daily basis in terms of infection control and case management.?

He reports, ?Headwaters Health Care Centre has had 25 staff, including 18 nurses and other health care workers, as well as administration support, working full-time inside the residence for the past few weeks. They will remain in the home until this coming Sunday and are ensuring staff of the Shelburne Residence are trained and equipped to support the residents there.?

An update released by the regional health unit on Wednesday (May 13) included the following statistics for Shelburne's longterm care facilities: Dufferin Oaks has had four residents and 6 staff members test positive for COVID-19, with two individuals passing away. Shelburne Residence Retirement & Nursing Home has been hit particularly hard, with 55 residents and 29 staff testing positive. The facility has recorded three deaths in the past week, bringing the total up to 18.

It is important to note that the retirement home section of the Shelburne Residence has had no cases of COVID-19.

? (May 28) Residents and staff at the Shelburne Long Term Care residence in Shelburne got a reprieve from the boredom of isolation and quarantine at the facility when a group of performers arrived to give a show and provide some entertainment.

Smiles Are Essential, a Brampton based group of performers, have been travelling around the region and performing at retirement homes to help lift the spirits of residents who have been unable to meet with family members due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Singers and dancers performed on the street facing the building while residents watched from inside the rooms facing the roadway.

The performance was arranged by the family of a resident who recently passed away from the COVID-19 virus at the senior facility.

? Shelburne Fire Chief Brad Lemaich resign, taking new role in Tillsonburg. Shelburne Fire Chief Brad Lemaich, began his firefighting career in 2003 in his hometown, Tillsonburg, Ontario. On June 8, he will be returning to the town where it all began as it's new fire chief.

Brad has been Shelburne and District Fire Department Chief, since 2015, when he came to Shelburne from his previous position as Fire Chief of the Municipality of Greenstone, some 280 Km north of Thunder Bay ON.

His last day in Shelburne, will be June 5, following which he will commence duties in Tillsonburg on June 8.

? Council convened Monday afternoon at a special council meeting, to discuss Town business and re-opening plans.

June

? Many rural households across Dufferin-Caledon will soon be introduced to the 21st century, with Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) set to invest \$12.4 million in a broadband internet infrastructure expansion in the region.

Announced on Monday (June 1), the proposal will see \$7.2 million worth of work carried out in Dufferin County, with an additional

\$5.2 million invested in Caledon. The project, which will improve access to faster, reliable internet services for hundreds of homes in the area, is being co-funded by the provincial and federal governments.

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health has issued an order requiring all persons to wear face masks while visiting local stores and businesses.

The best available evidence indicates face coverings reduce the possibility of transmission of COVID-19, said Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph. By ensuring we can move to Phase 2 in the safest way possible, we are all making an investment in a safer community.

Made as Dufferin enters Phase 2 of reopening in the wake of COVID-19, the order was issued by Dr. Mercer at 10:00 a.m. Wednesday (June 10) and will come into effect at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, June 12.

Monday night's Council meeting heard two proclamations from Mayor Wade Mills, one proclaiming June as Pride Month in Shelburne and the second, proclaiming June 21st as National Indigenous Peoples Day in the Town. Following these, the Mayor expressed his thoughts on an issue that would become almost the theme of this meeting, racism and the reactions to it. Mayor Mills said that he personally felt that he could and should do more about confronting this issue, so recently amplified by the murder of George Floyd, a black man, by a police officer, in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25.

The mayor said that the silence of friends, not the words of enemies, allows racism to flourish and exist.

Over a hundred protestors marched through the streets of Shelburne on Sunday (June 14) as part of a Black Lives Matter protest, one of many that have swept the nation in a stance against racism.

What we have seen in towns and in cities across North America, and what we are witnessing right here today, I believe, is evidence of a major sea-change, said Shelburne Mayor Wade Mills, addressing the crowd outside Town Hall. We've seen demonstrations in the past, but to me this really feels different this time and I think all of you know what I'm talking about.

The crowd of protestors started the peaceful demonstration at the Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex and made their way to Shelburne Town Hall. Organizers Shyanne Ricci and Hailey McLarty lead the march, carrying a sign that read Shelburne Stands Together.

Ricci and McLarty both spoke to the crowd before the march, touching on their reasons for organizing the event.

We started this to show that the Town of Shelburne, as a community, will acknowledge the racism and hateful acts taking place in the world, as well as showing full support for those affected by racism and promoting the need for change, said Ricci.

Some of us might not be subjected to racism on a personal level, but that does not mean that it is not happening in our community and others every single day, said McLarty.

Some protestors carried signs written with messages such as Black Lives Matter and Shelburne United, while others could be heard chanting no justice, no peace, no racist police and hands up, don't shoot as the crowd made its way down Owen Sound St.

Standing outside Town Hall the crowd followed a call and response chant of no justice, no peace and black lives matter. Cars driving by also took the time to honk in support of the movement.

Mayor Wade Mills, Deputy Mayor Steve Anderson, and local pastor Jay Wagstaff spoke to gathered protestors. The speeches touched on the need for further action, the acknowledgment to be better and Shelburne's role in the movement for justice.

Local businesses begin to re-open their doors with move to Phase 2

July

? Shelburne Town Council held a special meeting on Tuesday (July 7) for a public information session from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP). The meeting was an opportunity for Council and the community to ask their questions following the second OPP costing, presented back on June 22.

Similar to the first costing public information session that took place in April 2019, elected officials and community members raised question regarding response times, financial costs, and police presence for local youth in the schools.

The public information presentation was presented by OPP Sgt. Ken Kee and Staff Sgt. Nicol Randall.

? Amaranth Mayor Bob Currie has been removed from his position as chair of a County committee following comments he made about the LGBTQ community in June.

?There is simply no place in leadership at any level that includes hateful and divisive comments that serve only to hurt,? said Dufferin County Warden Darren White in a statement to county council last week.

Currie was asked by Warden White to step down from his role as chair of the Infrastructure and Environmental Services Committee last Thursday (June 25).

? While Pride Month, alongside practically everything else, may have been overshadowed this year due to the pandemic, recent comments made by one Dufferin County politician made it ?absolutely vital? for the third annual Celebrate Your Awesome, Pride event, to take stage this past weekend.