

Stay at home?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

?Tillsonburg, Tillsonburg, my back still aches when I hear that word.?

That's Stompin' Tom Connors for ya.

I wonder how many people are really following this current stay-at-home order?

As a card-carrying journalist and member of the newspaper of record for Dufferin County, we are considered an 'essential service.'

Someone has to get the news out there and keep people informed.

I am grateful I am still working, and certainly empathize with anyone whose job or business has been affected by this pandemic.

I'm sure there are a lot of business owners who are really struggling right now ? especially restaurants and salon owners.

Imagine putting your life savings into opening a restaurant only to be told you have to shut down.

Since my job entails 'being out there,' I spend a lot of time on the road roaming from town to town.

When this current stay-at-home order was issued, it sounded pretty serious ? especially since the police were initially given the power to arbitrarily stop motorists and demand to know why they weren't at home.

What I have noticed on my travels is, there is as much traffic on the road as ever.

I was cruising down Highway 9, surrounded by cars and when I stopped at the next red light it was a busy intersection. It's the same in any town ? cars out and about and people going all over the place.

Surely all these people can't be going to the grocery store, medical appointments, or picking up prescriptions, as mandated in the provincial order.

Since many outdoor activities including golf, tennis, basketball, soccer, and baseball, have been ordered to shut down, I have been following the situation in Tillsonburg rather closely.

A local golf course, the Bridges at Tillsonburg, made the decision to ignore the order to shut down and announced they were staying open and booking tee times.

The owners made no apologies for this.

It was an interesting first day. People did show up for their allotted time and played a round of golf. There were a few people who backed off and decided it wasn't worth the risk of being fined.

Many people are watching this situation to see what happens. That includes the sports world and other golf courses who are gearing up to follow suit if the Bridges continues to operate without any repercussions.

So far, the local police have done nothing to stop the situation. They did post a vehicle across the street and watched what was going on, but made no attempt to stop anyone and did not issue any fines.

I think that's a smart move by the police. After all, would you really want to stop a person and issue a fine for playing golf?

The cops are being smart and diplomatic at this time - they know it's a tricky situation.

On the other hand, maybe they are taking down everyone's license plate and when the stay-at-home orders is lifted, they'll be visiting everyone on the list and slapping them with a fine and issuing one to the course owners as well.

I can understand the frustration of the golf course owners.

This past winter, the ski industry was ordered to shut down just as the season started. It cost the industry around \$80 million.

Now that spring is here, golf courses are ready to open and earn a living. Golf isn't a year-round sport. You can't open the links when there's three feet of snow on the fairway and it's 20 degrees below zero.

It costs a lot of money to maintain a golf course when no one is allowed to play. You just can't abandon the course and let the weeds take over and hope to get back up and running quickly when the sport is once again allowed.

I'm not a golfer, but I can understand why people enjoy playing ? you're outside, doing something you like.

It's a safe sport in these challenging times. On the fairway you are inherently physically distanced from other players in your foursome and nowhere near anyone else on the course.

If the Bridges at Tillsonburg remain open and are allowed to operate without interference, you can bet others will be following suit.

If Stompin' Tom was still with us, I'm sure he could come up with a second great song about Tillsonburg and the current events.