



Town of The Blue Mountains

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In my opinion, and supported by most of the rest of Council, (6 of 7), is that we are discouraging unnecessary travel and not encouraging people to come up. Travelling back and forth to visit is definitely discouraged. In this, we agree with the province. With regard to telling people they cannot come if they are coming up to stay, we do not want to go that far with members of our community. This is also consistent with the province. If the province truly wanted to ban travel to second homes, they would have issued a stay in place order for your primary residence. Although the Premier and some other mayors have made statements that people shouldn't go to their cottages, the reality is no provincial order has been issued. So, while these statements are good politics and may play well with some people, they in fact, have done no more than we have in discouraging from going to second homes and not banning it.

To tell people they can't come is the politics of fear and division. If we succumb to that we will have already lost the battle with the Coronavirus. We might not be sick, but our community will be permanently divided and damaged.

There may be any number of reasons why seasonal residents might come up to self-isolate in their second homes.

- They could be part of the household of a first-responder and have decided to divide the family to reduce the risk of the first responder bringing the Coronavirus home to the rest of the family (I am advised of at least one instance where this is the case. A grandmother with her grandchildren sheltering here, as there are medical frontline workers in the household in the home in the city. This is reminiscent of children being moved out of London during the blitz in WWII.)
- They may also be an elderly or high-risk individual who lives in an apartment and wants to get away from the risk of being exposed in the elevator or other common areas.

Each person has their own reason for choosing to shelter in their second home. It is not up to us to judge.

Our position is we don't encourage it, but it is an individual choice, dictated by individual circumstances. Our primary concern is with the safety of our community at large. We ask that those who are thinking of coming-up to consider that our health care resources are not as robust as they might be in larger centres. We also ask that they bring their own supplies and act responsibly.

We are not a small cottage community with a general store. We have a large modern grocery store, which would not exist if we had no seasonal residents. While our grocery store was challenged for a while, the degree to which the shelves are stocked is now no different than is reported from larger centres.

There is no risk to our community from someone quietly residing in a seasonal residence who respects the guidelines and rules.

We ask that **all** citizens respect physical distancing guidelines, and all Provincial orders. To date most people have. Where there have been problems we have reacted by either closing down facilities , or by enhancing patrols by OPP and by-law to educate people.

Our approach is not to be dictatorial, but to use our best efforts to ensure that all of our residents work to keep our community safe.

Finally, much has been made on social media of the fact that no cases have been as of yet reported from our community. Unfortunately, the release explaining the relevance of the data has not be widely discussed. It states,

“While the list indicates the location where confirmed cases reside, the location of where these cases acquired the disease is unknown and could be in any location in Grey and Bruce. It is safe to presume that every location in Grey and Bruce is potentially affected- “Community Spread”. Confirmed community spread means the virus exists in many locations beyond the location of the confirmed cases. Identifying the home municipality of a confirmed case should not provide any reassurance to those who may consider it safer to go to a different locale as there are presumed cases in every municipality. With community spread, there is a level of risk associated with any location.”

Given the limited amount of testing (about 500 tests for all of Grey Bruce, heavily weighted toward the health care sector) it is almost a certainty that the Coronavirus is here in our community. The fact that it is here shouldn't scare anyone. Acting responsibly and respecting physical distancing we can stop it's spread and individual cases will run their course, without moving out into the community at large.

If we allow fear rather than reason to dictate our behavior towards our friends and neighbours, we will all be losers in the battle with this virus.

- **Mayor Alar Soever**