

## Kawartha Lakes targeting reversal of some COVID-19 restrictions in mid-May

*Sarah Sobanski*

Kawartha Lakes will begin to inch towards reopening the economy in the second week of May.

Mayor Andy Letham says the city is targeting May 12 to reopen boat launches, landfills and open the rail trail to motorized vehicles. The rail trail would usually open around May 1, but will only be open to pedestrian traffic in light of COVID-19.

“These are outside activities. These are local decisions we can make on a local level, but it will depend on the provincial state of emergency and our local state of emergency as well,” Letham said at a media briefing on Thursday (April 23).

The province recently extended its state of emergency to May 12. As that’s the day the declaration could end, that’s the day the city is targeting.

Letham stressed that anything could change between now and then with the pandemic, but he said he wanted to let residents know the city was “working on it.”

“There’s things we can do there to maintain distancing and put some parameters in place,” he said.

“I just want to stress that this is not a done deal. If we can continue on the route that we’re going, we’re on a good path over the next two or three weeks, then we can look at easing some of these things back into the community if we can do it safely.”

The province still has control over what businesses can be open, but the city can begin reversing some of its local pandemic decisions such as closing municipal boat launches.

When asked if he thought the virus had peaked in Kawartha Lakes, Letham said he hoped so.

“When we talk to the hospital, when we talk to some our long-term care homes, Victoria Manor, from the community, it certainly seems like it’s settled a little bit,” he said. “I would like to think that we’ve been very consistent and I think consistent is what we’re looking for right now.”

Letham said the community hadn’t seen the surge it expected and that’s why the city was beginning to plan next steps for the community.

“If people continue to stay home, and act responsibly, and do what they have been doing...then hopefully we can start to do this,” he said. He added that those targets could move but it is important to set some goals as something to look forward to.

But should the community be worried about a second wave of COVID-19 if it hasn’t

seen the surge it expected due to good work by residents? Letham said the city was working closely and listening to its health partners to set benchmarks for getting back to normal responsibly.

“We need to do this slowly,” he said. “If we can do a few very, very small things on May 12 to sort of trigger that process and go forward from there — as long as we’re doing it responsibly and we continue with some of our safe practices — I see no reason why we would see a second wave.”