

Kawartha Lakes paramedics low on protective equipment, asking for community help

Sarah Sobanski

Kawartha Lakes is reaching out to the community to help outfit its paramedics in personal protective equipment (PPE).

The city sent out a release March 23 asking all manufacturers and non-essential health-care practitioners, such as veterinarians, for N95 masks, surgical gowns, face shields and hand sanitizer.

Paramedic chief Andrew Rafton confirmed the city's paramedic service is running low on supplies.

"We are mandated to use mask, gown, face shield and gloves when we're entering a residence that has been screened to be of risk of COVID-19," he said.

"On a typical call, attending paramedics require up to three sets of personal protective equipment. The driver also has to put on and take off PPE twice during a call. After they load the patient into the ambulance, they have to take off the initial set. Then to enter hospital, they have to put on a new set."

Mayor Andy Letham said he had met with the city's emergency group and its paramedic service that morning (March 23).

"(The paramedics) like to be 30 days ahead and they didn't have that, not even close, so it is important that they get stocked up beforehand," he said.

"It doesn't take long to add up. They can have a good supply, which doesn't last very long when they're answering a bunch of calls. They're just trying to take the necessary precautions."

Letham said local businesses had begun reaching back to the city to help out.

"Our big concern is just protecting our front line health-care workers because if this ramps up, which I'm pretty sure it will, we're going to need their help moving forward that's for sure."