

Kawartha Lakes Mayor Andy Letham says grocery sales were down 40 per cent over a typical long weekend in the city because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a wide-ranging media scrum Letham and CAO Ron Taylor shared their thoughts on the disappointing business trends from the recent Victoria Day weekend and what issues the city will be facing moving forward next month and even into next year.

On the grocery store numbers, Letham says that “unless residents use their local businesses they are going to lose them.”

On the other hand the mayor was pleased that the Ontario Provincial Police and Kawartha Lakes Police Service — as well as bylaw enforcement — had a very quiet long weekend. The mayor complimented residents for “getting back to being outdoors responsibly.”

Letham says that while a quiet weekend was good in the eyes of law enforcement officials, it was a tough weekend for local businesses. While some local businesses are doing very well, he notes, some are struggling with declining sales and others “are teetering on disaster.”

The mayor says he drove all over the city last Monday and found it was “quiet.”

“There were fewer cottagers. It was not a typical long weekend. It was much more like a weekday. It was partially the weather but typically on May 24 the weather doesn’t interfere that much. With many businesses, restaurants and bars closed there was less choice and fewer options.”

Letham is putting his faith in domestic tourism to help businesses salvage their season. The mayor believes, “there will be fewer trips from out of province or out of country. I think Kawartha Lakes should be close enough to the GTA to be considered a day trip and I hope people will come and explore local lakes and parks.”

The meeting then pivoted to issues directly impacting the running of the city.

Taylor said the library board has recently met and is contemplating curbside drop off and pickup beginning in early June.

The CAO suggested that the only farmer’s market likely ready to be open for May 30 will be Lindsay’s. He is hopeful that four or five others across the city will be ready to safely open in June, although Bobcaygeon’s

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