

Donatella's has been in discussions with the health unit — as other restaurants myKawartha.com spoke with said they had — to clarify and implement COVID-19 protocols including signage to remind customers masks are mandatory in all commercial spaces in Kawartha Lakes.

“The main thing is that you have to make sure that people coming into the establishment are feeling secure,” he says.

Kovacevic says he's encouraged by the [low COVID-19 case numbers the area](#) has seen over the past few weeks. He says things needed to reopen eventually and, as long as people continue to act responsibly, it's time for it to happen.

“I have concerns if people don't do what they have to do,” he says. “It's a two way street.”

Kovacevic adds Donatella's is doing better now than when it was when the pandemic first started. It's been operating in the each incremental capacity the province has allowed first with takeout, then reopening patios and soon to be dine-in.

But a few restaurants have had to make the hard decisions to stay closed.

[The Olympia, for example, skipped reopening in Phase 2 when the province allowed patio dining. Dedes says she found it wasn't viable for the business to operate with such a small patio.](#)

Heather Storey, owner of [Murphy's Lockside Pub and Patio](#) in Fenelon Falls, finds herself hesitating before Phase 3 re-openings this time around.

Murphy's will sit out on the reopening of dine-in for now. Storey says the restaurant is choosing instead to further expand its patio and see how the next few weeks go.

Storey says the reaction from customers when a business doesn't open as soon as the province allows is that the business must be doing fine. That isn't the case for Murphy's which makes 50 per cent of its revenue from June to mid-September.

“It was a difficult decision... It seems too soon for us,” she says. “We have a real need and desire to bring revenues up, however we've weighed it against.”

Storey has concerns about a second wave of COVID-19 coming through, watching how the virus is developing south of the border. She also has elderly parents and doesn't want to risk it.

Dedes isn't sure what to expect in the coming weeks — if customers will flood back to the Olympia or not — but she says the reality is people need to work. She says after reconnecting with staff, it really seems “like we just took the weekend off.”

“The real excitement is we'll be able to provide a normal happy experience for our customers,” she adds. “I can't wait to see their faces.”