

Mayor Andy Letham focused a good portion of his weekly press scrum addressing the issue of the city's pandemic-inspired \$2.5 million operating deficit — and just how that deficit might be dealt with.

“There will be a financial update at council on July 28,” Letham shared, “and we are currently running a \$2.5 million shortfall. This will impact service levels for the remainder of 2020.”

“We have to have a balanced budget,” Letham added, “and we will have a good discussion at council next week and council will be part of that (decision making).”

The mayor added that he was hopeful the recent federal announcement of funding for municipalities will see matching funds added in by the province.

The press wondered if the mayor might use the potential funding coming from Ottawa and Queen's Park to pay off the current operating deficit.

The mayor shot down that idea very quickly saying, the recovery would take a year “or the next couple of years.”

“Any additional money should not be applied to the deficit. We will need that money to assist in the re-opening of Kawartha Lakes over the next few years. We will find a way to break even this year.”

Where will the money come from?

When asked where \$2.5 million might be found to pay down the deficit, Letham suggested there needs to be a real discussion about the re-openings of arenas, service centres and community halls.

“How many do we re-open,” Letham wondered, “and what will be the demand for these facilities in the fall?”

“Just because people can have an event doesn't mean people will actually rent,” Letham said, “and we are not opening up for the sake of opening up. We are expecting reduced needs and there will be a thorough discussion of these issues at council next week.”

“There will be a challenge regarding paying for services,” he says, “if council decides to go full bore on re-openings in the fall.”

The mayor then reminded those assembled that the provincial state of emergency expires Friday, and if the provincial state of emergency is not re-instated there is a very strong chance that the city mandate might be lifted too.

Letham was generally pleased about the public's response to the mask regulation that took effect last week saying, “Most people are complying quite well, both visitors and residents. Local COVID cases continue to be low.”