

VIDEO: Kawartha Lakes mayor urges caution with for phase 2 reopenings

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Kawartha Lakes has been greenlighted by the province to head into phase two of reopening, but Mayor Andy Letham warns that doesn't mean the city is back to business as usual.

In a video message the mayor said most businesses and services will be allowed to reopen following COVID-19 pandemic shut-downs this Friday. He stressed, however, that things won't be getting back to normal right away.

“Reality is going to look different in the next few months, but it's important to remember that everything being done is for the safety and well-being of us all,” Letham said.

Letham stressed there will still be strict COVID-19 restrictions in place. He used the city modifying layouts at its buildings to accommodate physical distancing as an example.

Ron Taylor, chief administrative officer for the city, said in a June 10 press conference most municipal services will be back online by the end of the month. That means more than 80 per cent of staff is being brought back from pandemic layoffs.

The city maintains it is managing its revenue losses and is looking to break even by the end of the year. While some capital projects have had to be shuffled to next year, they are taking their 2020 budget allocations with them to be completed in addition to 2021 budget projects.

Letham said phase two still limits gatherings to 10 people which made it a challenge to bring back family activities and for the municipality, businesses and restaurants to operate.

“We are doing our best as a municipality to provide our residents and visitors with the experiences they love most about Kawartha Lakes, but everyone needs to keep safety a priority,” he said. “We can only do so much in terms of providing barriers and increased cleaning measures, but the onus is on everyone to do their part.”

Letham asked residents to bring wipes or hand sanitizer if they planned on visiting a public space. He also asked that they respect others.

“Although stage 2 is extremely encouraging, we are still in a state of emergency. I urge everyone to continue to exercise extreme caution and follow public health advice as we navigate through the upcoming weeks together,” he said.

The city will remain in a state of emergency until at least the end of the month. Letham asked council's committee of the whole June 9 if it should consider lifting the emergency before the province. Councillors were against the idea.