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Kawartha Lakes restaurants might have to get creative to prolong patios

News 09:00 AM by [Sarah Sobanski \(/kawartha-author/sarah-sobanski/CBEEA16C-F183-4F54-99E7-FF22237DF69F/\)](#) [✉ \(mailto:ssobanski@mykawartha.com\)](mailto:ssobanski@mykawartha.com)

Kawartha Lakes This Week



Heather Storey, owner of Murphy's Lockside Pub and Patio in Fenelon Falls, says the restaurant may close for the second half of the winter if staying open for dine-in isn't sustainable at limited COVID-19 capacity. - Muphy's Lockside photo

Patio season is coming to a close and Kawartha Lakes restaurateurs are having to again consider the sustainability of keeping their businesses open during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Restaurants were first allowed to open their patios with safety measures after the province shut down to slow the spread of COVID-19. Kawartha Lakes offered local restaurants the option to apply for patio extensions to increase their capacity.

Even after the province greenlighted dining in at limited capacity, restaurants such as [Murphy's Lockside Pub and Patio \(https://www.facebook.com/Murphyslockside\)](https://www.facebook.com/Murphyslockside) in Fenelon Falls [kept their dining rooms closed out of caution \(https://www.mykawartha.com/news-story/10076920-kawartha-lakes-restaurants-race-to-open-for-dine-in-on-friday/\)](https://www.mykawartha.com/news-story/10076920-kawartha-lakes-restaurants-race-to-open-for-dine-in-on-friday/). But with the cold weather on the way, heading indoors may be the only option for restaurateurs.

Despite second wave concerns, Heather Storey, co-owner of Murphy's, decided to open her restaurant for dine-in Sept. 24.

"We will monitor the situation," she says. "It's a very small restaurant... We're taking it day-by-day."

Storey suspects the restaurant will have to close for the second half of the winter. She says cash flow is already slow in the winter, limiting capacity on top of that will be hard to manage.

"We've always had strong summer's to carry us through," she says, but with government support for businesses winding down it might not be enough.

"Put us at half capacity with no subsidy, I can't imagine that it's sustainable past December," she says.

Storey has considered putting heaters on the patio to keep it open longer, but she says they're likely to cost more than they're worth after the tourism season. She has experience from using heaters at a restaurant in Toronto.

Lindsay downtown's [Olympia \(https://www.facebook.com/OlympiaRestoLindsay\)](https://www.facebook.com/OlympiaRestoLindsay) doesn't have external heaters on its patio either, but owner Nicki Dedes says the restaurant is suggesting customers wanting to sit outside bring their own blankets.

"Luckily, we have been blessed with warm fall days and so our patio is open lunch and dinner," says Dedes, noting she's been planning next steps since early September.

"As with every challenge, we will adapt and make relevant decisions for everyone's safety and comfort," she adds. "We had a great summer with our patio. We're trusting that customers will feel confident enough to continue to enjoy coming out to their favorite restaurants."

Dedes expects demand for dine-in will increase once the patio has to close. She says customers making reservations in advance and a coming online ordering app will help manage that.

"We are continuously adapting in the smallest of ways to meet needs and requests from customers and our staff," she says. "Each day we learn something new, our team confers together, and we make the necessary adjustments."

"We are optimistic that this new reality will carry us through the fall and winter," she adds.

Kawartha Lakes Mayor Andy Letham says many businesses have reported they had good summers from a retail perspective despite the pandemic. That said, he adds he's concerned for the hospitality sector and restaurants who will be losing their patio spaces.

"They do have restrictions... And from what I hear I can't see that loosening up anytime soon and that's going to mean a tough winter for a lot of our local businesses, a challenging winter," he says.

Letham adds the city has been taking the approach to help businesses survive as much as it can since the spring. He says that could be extended to further support to keep patios open longer if business owners approach the city.

“We will certainly continue to do that,” he says. “If they continue with their patio, and they want to put some heaters out, we will work with fire and make sure they take all the necessary precautions. We will continue as a municipality to assist our businesses through this.”

by [Sarah Sobanski \(/kawartha-author/Sarah-Sobanski/cbeea16c-f183-4f54-99e7-ff22237df69f/\)](/kawartha-author/Sarah-Sobanski/cbeea16c-f183-4f54-99e7-ff22237df69f/)

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