



NEWS

Pandemic possibly linked to healthier police force as virus safety measures spur 'unexpected positive effect'

Kawartha Lakes Police Service spent close to \$15,000 on supplies and roughly 40% less on sick time

By [Catherine Whitnall](#) Kawartha Lakes This Week

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The Kawartha Lakes Police Service had to shell out extra cash last year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but interestingly, it wasn't to cover an increase in sick days.

Chief Mark Mitchell recently told board members that last year, the service spent \$14,677 on such items as personal protective equipment, workplace upgrades to

ensure physical distancing and cleaning costs.

A new “C9” time code to cover off staff absences due to COVID-19 was also created for members who were not ill but were held back from the workplace due to risk of exposure — either on-duty or off — or to minimize risk in the workplace, such as with records and court security staff. A total of 2,290 staff hours were recorded in 2020.

Interestingly, sick time was down significantly, falling from 3,343 hours in 2019 to 1,901 hours last year. A major decrease was reported for December, which also happens to be right in the middle of influenza season, dropping from 297 hours the year before to only 76 hours.

Mitchell suggested this could potentially be a hidden benefit of adhering to health and safety protocols including increased cleaning, masking, hand sanitizing and physical distancing.

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“We’ve all been doing our part to reduce the spread [of COVID-19] and it looks like it’s having an unexpected positive effect,” said board chair Don Thomas.

Enforcement of COVID-19 related orders has generated significant public discussion, particularly in the latter parts of the year.

In the early stages, police focused on education and while this remains a priority, enforcement is now included as part of the service’s pandemic response strategy as well.

Mitchell noted that voluntary compliance with health measures has been excellent and the service has received very few complaints. For 2020, there were 11 tickets issued under the Reopening Ontario Act and one charge laid under the Quarantine Act.

“Looking ahead, we have updated our policies and standing orders to reflect measures implemented in the current state of emergency. Our enforcement response continues to be primarily complaint driven,” stated Mitchell.

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