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Local Business Owner Starts Petition To Reopen Outdoor Restaurant Patios



By **Pamela Vanmeer** April 21, 2021



KAWARTHA LAKES-Adam Matthews is often very outspoken and sometimes takes a lot of flack for his opinions, but he wants to make one thing very clear: Outdoor restaurant patios need to reopen.

“Like everyone, I’m tired of seeing successful businesses failing because of the Government locking down businesses that have PROVEN to not be the problem!” said Matthews, who is the owner of 72 Bolton Sports Cafe in Bobcaygeon. “Allowing us to do Takeout does not fix the problem. We don’t make money on Takeout. The lockdowns have a devastating affect on restaurants and more and more are closing permanently as this continues.”

On April 7th the Ontario government declared a third **provincial**

emergency under s 7.0.1 (1) of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* (EMPCA). Officials said the declaration was in response to the increase in COVID-19 transmission, the reported threat on the province's hospital system capacity, and the increasing risks posed to the public by COVID-19 variants according to provincial officials. A stay-at home order was issued with most retail and all restaurants ordered to close their doors to in person shopping and dining.

"The Covid-19 situation is at a critical stage and we must act quickly and decisively to stay ahead of these deadly new variants," said Premier Ford. "By imposing these strict new measures we will keep people safe while allowing our vaccination program to reach more people, starting with our high risk population and identified hot spots. Although this is difficult, I urge everyone to follow these public health measures and together we will defeat this deadly virus."

Restaurants have been closed to in-person dining for months at a time throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. Eateries in Toronto and Peel have been closed almost entirely since last November.

According to the latest survey from Restaurants Canada:

- Eight out of 10 restaurants are either losing money or barely scraping by.
 - 65% are continuing to operate at a loss, while 19% are just breaking even.
 - 63% of foodservice businesses that are losing money expect to take at least a year to return to profitability.
- 48% of single-unit foodservice operators expect to permanently close their establishment within six months if conditions don't improve and 56% of multi-unit operators said they expect to close at least one of their locations within the same time period.

Rather than sitting idle while his fellow business owners fail, Matthews decided to start a petition demanding restaurants be allowed to re-open.

"I started this petition to bring awareness to our industry and allow people to see and understand how safe it is to sit on a patio during this pandemic and enjoy a drink and a meal with your loved ones. We have taken every precaution... we greet you on the sidewalk outside the restaurant, we sit your party at a table that is minimum 6 feet from another, you are shown all the hand sanitizer stations, plexiglass is installed where social distancing is not possible, we take your name and number should you need to be contacted for a potential outbreak, masks are mandatory until your food is at the table!" Matthews says.

The restaurant sector has been "scapegoated" even though it's not a significant part of the problem, Todd Barclay, President of Restaurants Canada said.

That's one of the issues that frustrates Matthews the most.

"Restaurants in Ontario have always had to follow strict Health Code regulations and this Pandemic is no different. We are one of the only industries that have had to record all patrons names and numbers for the purpose of contract tracing, tens of thousands of dollars have been spent on making restaurants safe for social distancing, plexiglass installed and sanitizer stations." stated Matthews.

According to Restaurants Canada, Between March and April, more than 800,000 workers in the Canadian foodservice sector lost their jobs or had their hours of work reduced to zero. More than 400,000 restaurant jobs were recovered between May and September, but then the industry began to lose ground again in October, as heightened restrictions during the second wave

have resulted in further job losses. According to the **November Labour Force Survey** from Statistics Canada, there are still more than 260,000 fewer jobs in the foodservice sector than there were in February.

The restaurant industry says when restaurants fail, it impacts the entire community as 95% of restaurant sales go back into the economy in the form of jobs, food and beverage purchases, contributions to charity and more.

"The restaurant industry has been unfairly targeted since the beginning of the Pandemic and this needs to end NOW! Please sign this petition to let the Government know that restaurant patios are safe and NEED to be opened NOW!"

So far the petition has garnered 769 signatures. Click here for a link: https://www.change.org/p/doug-ford-open-ontario-s-outdoor-restaurant-patios?recruiter=902152761&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=psf_combo_share_abi&utm_term=psf_combo_share_message&recruited_by_id=6cdb2260-c1fc-11e8-9b14-578722128282&utm_content=fht-28429819-en-ca%3A6