



Office of the Mayor

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August 12, 2021

Matt DeMille
Manager, Fish and Wildlife Services
Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

Sent via email to: matt_demille@ofah.org

Dear Mr. DeMille:

Re: Short-term COVID-19 Waterfront Parking and Boat Launch Program

Thank you for your email dated August 9, 2021, outlining concerns regarding the City's COVID-19 Waterfront Parking and Boat Launch Program which is planned to run until September 12, 2021.

You have presented some very good information on the benefits to recreation and to the economy from Lake Simcoe fishing and we are anxious for things to get back to some sort of normal. I will say at the on-set, that as unhappy as you and some of your members may be, we were just as unhappy at the prospect of having to contemplate such measures and certainly going into an unforeseen second summer season of COVID.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented every municipality with unique challenges. We have made great strides in the fight against COVID-19 with more people getting vaccinated every day, but we are not out of the woods yet. With the health and safety of everyone attending our parks top of mind, Orillia Council re-implemented the COVID-19 Waterfront Parking and Boat Launch Program in order to help manage crowding and discourage travel to Orillia as we work through the province's Roadmap to Reopen.

Although we see this program as a necessary health and safety measure, it is very counterintuitive to our normal operations. We were left with little option as we were experiencing uncontrollable numbers and some poor behaviour.



During normal times, we would welcome visitors to Orillia with open arms and we certainly look forward to doing that again as soon as possible. At this time, however, we need to have restrictions in place at our waterfront parks and beaches to create a safe environment as we work our way through the COVID-19 pandemic and, as much as we would prefer not to need such measures in place, this program was very effective in curbing numbers and some reckless behaviour last year. I have certainly seen firsthand that without such restrictions in place, it was nearly impossible for those attending our waterfront parks/beaches to meet physical distancing measures.

This summer, the program did evolve to include neighbouring residents from Oro-Medonte, Severn, and Ramara Townships who can opt to purchase a seasonal permit for Orillia waterfront parks and boat launches from their respective townships for a one-time fee of \$50 per vehicle (plus administrative fees if applicable). The seasonal permits issued by the townships neighbouring Orillia must display both the City of Orillia's corporate logo and the issuing Township's logo, and can only be obtained through the townships directly. The Chippewas of Rama First Nation have opted for a \$.50 per resident contribution.

Worth noting, the City of Barrie is charging its neighbours \$90 for a pass and the Town of Collingwood is charging \$100. The Town of Innisfil is only allowing their own residents access to their waterfront, this season. Certainly, all have had to implement a parking restriction program and corresponding ticketing program and of course, these restrictions by other municipalities have pushed more people 'this way' and exacerbated the issue.

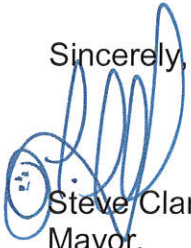
The City's Emergency Management Committee (EMC) discussed whether any changes should be made to the COVID-19 Waterfront Parking and Boat Launch Program in light of the province moving to Step 3 of their Roadmap to Reopen. The consensus at EMC was that the program will remain status quo for now. That said, the EMC continues to monitor the program closely in conjunction with other factors such as the rates of the Delta variant and what other communities are doing with their waterfront restrictions (as this has significant impacts on our visitor numbers) and will be reviewing options for moving forward in the near future.

I do want you to be aware that parking and launching at our waterfront parks remain free from Monday to Thursday (excluding public holidays) and after 7 p.m. on Fridays/weekends and public holidays.

Mr. DeMille
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I hope that this background information has been helpful. Thank you for taking the time to write to the City of Orillia.

Sincerely,



Steve Clarke,
Mayor.

SC:as

Copy to: Members of Council
 Shawn Crawford, Manager of Legislative Services