

ADDENDUM



MEETING OF COUNCIL FEBRUARY 16th, 2021

➤➤➤ I) New Business / Affaires nouvelles

- I-3 Resolution to Transition out of shutdown and into the revised Ontario COVID-19 Response Framework.



The Corporation of the Municipality of West Nipissing
 La Corporation de la Municipalité de Nipissing Ouest

2021 /

FEBRUARY 16, 2021

Moved by / *Proposé par* :

Seconded by / *Appuyé par* :

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the municipality of West Nipissing formally request that the North Bay Parry Sound Health Unit immediately be transitioned out of the shutdown and into the revised Ontario COVID-19 Response Framework.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council also asks for the immediate opening of outdoor rinks, toboggan hills and snow machine trails in the district.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council also formally requests to be consulted on any future deviations from the provincial framework.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Council recommends that the health unit conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the lockdown in our region, while weighing the risks of COVID-19 against the toll on local businesses, the increase in opioid deaths in the region and the overall mental health of the residents of our district.

	YEAS	NAYS
DUHAIME, Yvon		
FISHER, Christopher		
LARABIE, Roland		
MALETTE, Léo		
ROVEDA, Dan		
WARD 7 (vacant)	X	X
SÉNÉCAL, Denis		
SÉNÉCAL, Lise		
SAVAGE, Joanne (MAYOR)		

CARRIED: _____

DEFEATED: _____

DEFERRED OR TABLED: _____

Janice Dupuis

Subject: FW: Request to Add a Resolution the Feb 16th Agenda

From: Rejean Venne

Sent: February 14, 2021 7:51 AM

To: Leo Malette ; Joanne Savage; Lise Senecal ; Yvon Duhaime ; Dan Roveda ; Chris Fisher ; Roland Larabie ; Denis Senecal ; Jay Barbeau ; Janice Dupuis

Cc: jvanthof.sf-co@ndp.on.ca; Marc.Serre@parl.gc.ca; vic.fedelico@pc.ola.org; doug.fordco@pc.ola.org; jhamilton-mccharles@postmedia.com; dave@baytoday.ca; stu@baytoday.ca; Isabel Mosseler <journalist@westnipissing.com>

Subject: Request to Add a Resolution the Feb 16th Agenda

Re: Transferring our region to the Pandemic Response Framework

To the members of West Nipissing Council,

I am writing to you as a very concerned citizen of West Nipissing, asking that you consider a proposed resolution to treat our city and our region more fairly when it comes to the COVID-19 response. Many people are upset that our region's residents and businesses have to suffer from more (seemingly arbitrary) restrictions than the rest of the province. Especially when our city and our health district has been one of the least affected regions by COVID-19. Here are some very important facts:

COVID CASES: Our district's cumulative cases per capita are currently the second lowest in the province at 173 cases per 100,000 residents. To put this in context, Toronto Public Health has had 2,865 cases per 100,000 residents. Ottawa Public Health has had 1,317 cases per 100,000 residents. The Sudbury & District Health Unit has had 289 cases per 100,000 residents. (source: Public Health Ontario).

COVID DEATHS: The province has seen over 6,600 deaths (45 per 100,000 residents) due to COVID-19, while our region has seen 1 death (0.81 per 100,000 residents). Again to put this in context: Toronto Public Health has had 2,500 deaths (91 per 100,000 residents), Ottawa Public Health has had 429 deaths (46 per 100,000 residents) and Sudbury & District Health Unit has had 10 deaths (5 per 100,000 residents). (source: Public Health Ontario)

CURRENT OUTBREAK: Although we have seen an outbreak at an apartment building in North Bay in the last few weeks, our weekly case count is still in the range of 20-25 new cases per 100,000 residents, which would put us in the Yellow zone according to Ontario's COVID-19 response framework. We would likely fall back to Green by next week. When the first province-wide lockdown started on December 26th, we were solidly in the Green zone and had never come close to climbing to the next tier in the months preceding. The recent outbreak at an apartment building in North Bay should not be taken lightly, however it does not make us unique in the province. Almost every other district has seen and managed outbreaks of similar size in housing and workplace environments over the last few months.

ACTIVE CASES: While accounting for the outbreak reported this week and the small surge in cases, we currently have 25 active COVID-19 cases in our district (19 per 100,000 residents). To put this in context, the Toronto Public Health currently has 4,400 active cases (183 per 100,000 residents). Ottawa Public Health currently has 445 active cases (47 per 100,000 residents). Simcoe Muskoka Health Unit currently has 310 active cases (57 per 100,000 residents). The Sudbury & District Health Unit currently has 52 active cases (26 per 100,000 residents).

COVID VARIANTS: There have been some cases of COVID variants of concern (VOC) in our district. But as of Friday, more than half of the 31 health districts in Ontario are reporting VOCs. VOCs have been discovered in Sudbury, Timmins as well as over 100 VOC cases in our neighboring district (Simcoe-Muskoka). VOCs also do not make us unique in the province.

HOSPITALIZATIONS: Since the pandemic started, we have never had more than a single person in our local hospitals due to COVID-19. To put this in context, there are currently 786 hospitalizations in Ontario due to COVID-19. Eastern Ontario has 120 COVID-19 hospitalizations and Western Ontario has 167 COVID-19 hospitalizations. All of Northern Ontario currently has 24 hospitalizations (just a single one of those is in our district). Many other districts are reporting 10 or more current hospitalizations while being transferred out of lockdown and into the Pandemic Response Framework.

OPIOID CRISIS: Since the pandemic started our region saw the biggest increase in opioid related deaths in Ontario (source: Public Health Ontario report linked at bottom of letter, page 15). The North Bay Parry Sound health district went from a pre-pandemic opioid death rate of 5.4 deaths per 100,000 residents to 13.2 deaths per 100,000 residents in comparing a 15 week window before and after the pandemic started. The local health unit indicated in December that the region saw 33 opioid-related deaths (**27 per 100,000 residents**) in the first 8 months of 2020. This represented an increase of 19 deaths (16 deaths per 100,000 residents) compared to the year prior (a 135% increase). We must evaluate this number against our current **0.81 death per 100,000 residents from COVID** so far (over a 52+ week period since COVID arrived in Canada).

OUTDOOR RINKS, TOBOGGAN HILLS AND SNOW MACHINE TRAILS: We are the only district in the province that has closed outdoor rinks, toboggan hills and snow machine trails. Not even the cities of Toronto or Ottawa have taken these measures.

MENTAL HEALTH: The pandemic restrictions in our region have led to a significant increase in mental health related problems. In a January 27th article in the North Bay Nugget, Hands (the Family Help Network in North Bay) indicated that they have been averaging about 120 new requests per month since August for its online counselling clinic. Michelle Dermenjian, Hands' director of child and youth mental health services, says that children and youth are not receiving the physical activity they need to cope with isolation, depression and anxiety. Therapists, she says, are witnessing an increase in both the severity and complexity of symptoms.

The reason for my letter today is that as of Tuesday, February 16th, the entire province of Ontario will be moving back to the COVID-19 Response Framework, except for our region and the Toronto districts. We are now being lumped in with the city of Toronto, which is still reporting ten times more cases and hospitalizations than we are. Council needs to properly weigh the costs and benefits of these lockdown measures in our region. Many more residents of our region may now be travelling to other regions to enjoy winter activities, indoor dining or shopping starting next week. Our residents who want to support local businesses may see the discrepancy in rules as an encouragement to spend their dollars in other regions. Will our unique lockdown rules help in reducing cases or will it lead to more cases? Do our unique lockdown rules contribute in any way to our uniquely high growth in opioid-related deaths since the pandemic started? What are the long term mental health ramifications of these lockdown measures on the residents of our region?

Let me be clear. I am **not** asking that we should be exempt from the provincial restrictions of the framework because of **our region's low incident rate of COVID since March 2020**.

I am also **not** asking that we should be exempt from provincial restrictions because **our hospitals are far from being overwhelmed**.

I am simply asking that our local businesses **NOT be exempt from the provincial framework**.

I am asking that the council have a discussion on the matter and **pass a resolution, formally requesting that our district follow the same rules as other districts. We should simply follow the rules established by the province's framework designed by Ontario's health experts**. This includes the immediate opening of outdoor rinks, toboggan hills and snow machine trails. Furthermore, our council should request to be consulted on any future deviations from the provincial framework. We definitely need the advice of our local health experts, however I believe our elected leaders should be consulted on these matters as well.

Council should also ask our health unit to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the lockdown in our region, while weighing the risks of COVID-19 against the toll on local businesses, the increase in opioid deaths in the region and the overall mental health of the residents of our district.

Thank you,

Réjean Venne

CC: John Vanthof, Vic Fedeli, Marc Serre, Doug Ford, West Nipissing Tribune, Baytoday.ca, Nugget.ca.

Proposed Resolution:

Be it resolved that the Council of the municipality of West Nipissing formally request that the North Bay Parry Sound Health Unit immediately be transitioned out of the shutdown and into the revised Ontario COVID-19 Response Framework. The Council also asks for the immediate opening of outdoor rinks, toboggan hills and snow machine trails in the district.

The Council also formally requests to be consulted on any future deviations from the provincial framework.

Furthermore, the Council recommends that the health unit conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the lockdown in our region, while weighing the risks of COVID-19 against the toll on local businesses, the increase in opioid deaths in the region and the overall mental health of the residents of our district.

Sources:

Link to Public Health Ontario's report titled "Preliminary Patterns in Circumstances Surrounding Opioid-Related Deaths in Ontario during the COVID-19 Pandemic": <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/o/2020/opioid-mortality-covid-surveillance-report.pdf?la=en>

Link to the daily published reports on COVID by Public Health Ontario: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/data>

Link to Ontario's COVID-19 Response Framework: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-response-framework-keeping-ontario-safe-and-open>

My Westnipissingnow Article titled "Opioid deaths more than doubled since pre-pandemic: Health Unit" on December 17th, 2020.

<https://www.mywestnipissingnow.com/40149/opioid-deaths-more-than-doubled-since-pre-pandemic-health-unit/>

North Bay Nugget Article titled "Pandemic restrictions taking toll on youths' mental health" on January 27th, 2021: <https://www.nugget.ca/news/pandemic-restrictions-taking-toll-on-youths-mental-health>