

Mayor's Report

Tuesday, February 14, 2023



Healthcare in Port Colborne

If you can believe it, we're already half-way through February and it's been a busy few weeks since we were last together. There continues to be lots happening in the community including some changes to hospital and healthcare services in Port Colborne and our surrounding areas.

As we all know, healthcare across our province is experiencing a transformation and we're already starting to see the effects of some of these changes. I know Niagara Health is working hard to deliver the safest and most effective healthcare for residents *across* Niagara. We are working closely with them, other municipalities in the region and elected officials at the provincial level to make certain that the residents of Port Colborne continue to have access to safe, quality healthcare services.

You may have seen in the media that Niagara Health is planning to make some changes to their healthcare delivery model and some of these are coming as soon as later this month. This will include a modification to the services offered in Welland, which is the closest full hospital and emergency department to Port Colborne.

As of February 27, the Welland hospital will not offer any operating room or surgical procedures outside of the regular business hours of 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. All patients with urgent surgical needs that come in on evenings and weekends will need to go to the St. Catharines or Niagara Falls hospitals for treatment.

I strongly believe that it's very important for our residents to continue to have easy access to a full emergency department with intensive care and surgical units running at full capacity.

Senior staff and I have attended several meetings recently with the Mayors of Welland, Wainfleet and Fort Erie, and with elected members of Provincial Parliament – MPP Jeff Burch, MPP Wayne Gates and MPP Sam Oosterhoff. I also have an upcoming meeting with the Ontario Minister of Health, Sylvia Jones and will continue working on behalf of our community to ensure these vital hospital services are not lost.

That said, at this time, the Port Colborne Urgent Care Centre will remain open for all non-emergency treatment for injuries or illness like sprains or strains and minor cuts or burns. I understand that our Urgent Care Centre will remain open until the new South Niagara hospital opens, sometime in 2028.

This planned closure means that we need to do everything we can to ensure services in Welland continue at full capacity so our residents can access them as needed.

This is an important issue and as such, it's vital that we focus on the facts and don't spend any time on rhetoric or spreading misinformation.

Last year, the Port Colborne Urgent Care Centre had almost 17,000 visits and the Fort Erie Urgent Care Centre had more than 13,000 visits – combined these 30,000 visits need to be accommodated somewhere. Residents of South Niagara have come to rely on our Urgent Care Centres, and we cannot lose this resource.

In addition to continuing to meet with elected officials to discuss this matter, we will continue working to bring more community-based healthcare resources to Port Colborne. Since 2019, we have worked with healthcare providers to bring in services

such as Pathstone Mental Health, Hospice Niagara and other similar community health agencies. We have also worked with the province to bring in new physicians through regional physician recruitment efforts. We're beginning to see more mobile health services as well, including things such as the mobile dental clinic and mobile mammograms. We will continue pursuing these community-based services for our community.

There will be more to come on this issue, and I am committed to making sure everyone continues to be updated and well informed since it is so important to our residents and our community.

Bank of Montreal

Some sad news for Bank of Montreal customers in Port Colborne. Our local BMO branch on West Side Road will be closing soon. This is tough news for members of our community who rely on this branch. The nearest BMO branch will now be located at the Seaway Mall in Welland.

SportsFest

Now for some happier and fun news. We celebrated SportsFest last weekend, after a few years hiatus. Many of the activities reported record attendance, and we had a great weekend full of sports and activities for all ages and interests. Proceeds from various events were donated to the Port Colborne Fire & Emergency Services Fire Prevention Program, Light of Day Foundation, and Special Olympics Ontario.

I always enjoy SportsFest and had a great time participating in the Mayor's Cup Invitational Hockey Tournament. This year Port Frontenac won in the A Division, Pelham won in the B Division, Niagara Region won in the C Division and Haldimand won in the D Division.

We also welcomed 9 new members into the Port Colborne Sports Wall of Fame, and this event was also very well supported. You can see the new plaques on the wall along the walking track next time you're at Vale Health & Wellness Centre.

The Polar Plunge raised more than \$15,000 for Special Olympics Ontario. About 40 plungers participated this year. For those who didn't get an opportunity to donate but still want to contribute to the Special Olympics, the Polar Plunge donation page will remain open for a few more days.

As always, we are grateful for the support of the community groups and local businesses that help bring SportsFest to life.

10th Anniversary of the Vale Health & Wellness Centre

Another highlight from the weekend was the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Vale Health & Wellness Centre. The event was very well-attended, and it was great to welcome MP Vance Badawey and many other familiar faces to mark the anniversary. We enjoyed live music, food, interactive games for kids and a series of highlights from the past decade. The Vale Health and Wellness Centre is a hub of Port Colborne and offers something for everyone – it's fully accessible for sport, recreation, health, wellness, entertainment, commerce and more. If you weren't able to join in on the celebration this weekend, I encourage you to stop in soon.

Port Colborne Operatic Society

Congratulations to the cast and crew of the Port Colborne Operatic Society, who on Saturday evening opened their 76th production, Roger and Hammerstein's Cinderella.

Founded in 1945, the Operatic Society devotes months of effort and energy into every production. The musical this year was staged in Centennial Auditorium in Welland, as the theatre at Lakeshore Catholic High School was not refurbished in time.

We're all so proud of all the volunteer members of the Operatic Society for their commitment to the arts, and for their support of young people pursuing careers in the arts.