

## Special Council Meeting Speaking Notes – Dennis Nabieszko

Good afternoon Mayor Henderson, Deputy Mayor Seguin, and Councillors.

I am here to clarify and answer any questions you may have about the petition presented to you to keep the beach closed.

I am not speaking just for the Cobourg Taxpayers Association. I am speaking for the residents who have signed the petition urging you to keep the beach closed.

There appears to be a misunderstanding about the real concern being expressed by residents. It is not just about keeping the beach closed. It is about keeping everyone safe.

That is what this petition really is about and I hope to clarify.

Everyone might better understand the petition if it had read:

“Petition to keep residents, health care workers, first responders, and retail workers safe by preventing the influx of potentially infected visitors from a region where cases remain high and exposing all of us to a life threatening illness that may also overwhelm our health care system.”

The concern is not that we want to prevent people going to our beach, especially residents. The concern is the means to do that safely without putting everyone at significant risk. The Town does not have a process or procedure to do that.

What would happen if an influx of outside visitors overwhelm the beach like the incident at Trinity-Bellwood Park in Toronto? Our police and bylaw officers would not be able to handle the situation without putting themselves at risk. Until the Town has developed a complete plan to address these issues and to safely manage these situations, the beach should remain closed.

You have a difficult job and we respect that. We have chosen you as our leaders to represent us and keep us safe. We need you to make the decisions to keep residents safe and keep safe all those around us who provide essential services.

We know this is not an easy decision but Cobourg has already cancelled all summer events, shows, and sporting events. With other Ontario beaches closed, including provincial park beaches, an open beach in Cobourg will attract large crowds and negate the actions already taken with regards to large gatherings. With so many places closed, people will look for places to go. An open beach will attract thousands of out of town visitors and create significant risk for everyone.

Residents will continue to make sacrifices to maintain social distances, wear masks when appropriate, and stay home. We will do everything possible to protect others, including our Council members. We ask that you protect us.

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The petition initially provided to the Town had 1,482 signatures. Over the weekend, additional signatures increased that number to 1,662. Of those 1,662, 1,370 or 82% of signatories are Cobourg residents and 1,611 or 97% of signatories live in Northumberland.

All of you ran on a platform of encouraging more public engagement and listening to residents. The residents are now overwhelmingly telling you what they want. They want to be kept safe.

Never have so many residents spoken up in such a short period of time to tell you what they want.

You have to listen.

You need to listen.

All they want is for you to keep them safe.

That is all this is about. That is what you need to consider above all else.

As you make your final decision, keeping everyone safe should be your priority, your only priority.

People are counting on you to make the right decision that protects them from avoidable community spread of this lethal virus.

All of us will have to live with the decision you make. Let's hope that we do not live with the regret of a wrong decision.

Thank you for listening to the residents of Cobourg and keeping us safe.