

March 9, 2021

Hi Camp Families,

We hope you are doing well and wish you the best moving forward.

It was a year ago on Thurs. Mar 12 that I was driving home from school, looking forward to March Break when I heard the government announce that the Break was to be extended an additional 2 weeks. It was the first COVID announcement signaling a shutdown. As we approach the anniversary of this first closure due to the pandemic, we can take stock of how we have endured this past year. If you have been directly affected by the sickness or death of a loved one, our thoughts and condolences are with you. If you have been burdened with financial instability, we empathize with your hardships.

In spring of 2020, I compared the pandemic crises as entering a long tunnel. At that time, we were heading further and further into darkness. With a new virus and so many unknowns, it was hard to predict anything, let alone agree on some of the simplest concepts – “does wearing a mask help?”

The camp industry, led by the Ontario Camps Association (OCA) mobilized immediately without knowing the consequences of this new virus beyond its deadly reach on the world’s population. As an industry, we met using the new ZOOM platform within a collegial environment to share and collectively problem solve. As the spring progressed, the challenges to running a safe camp only grew and when the Ontario government gave the order to closedown Summer 2020, we knew it was a tough but necessary decision.

Fast forward to the present and there is optimism that makes it feel like we are reaching the light at the end of the tunnel. We are being bathed by that distant light that will only get brighter the further we travel forward. Health Canada has recently approved a fourth vaccine likely enabling acceleration of the COVID-19 vaccinations across Canada. Rick Hillier, heading Ontario’s vaccine distribution task force, says that the goal for completing a first round of vaccines in adults is now June 20th; and the number of cases and deaths per day in the past few weeks, has plummeted by about two-thirds.

...and camps, including Camp Kawartha, have been mobilizing throughout! We know how important this summer is to our children’s growth and well-being. We know how important it is to parents to get back on track to support their children’s independence. Camp is not simply an escape or an experimental venture in the time of COVID, it is essential skill building and a fertile safe-space in preparing your children for their current challenges and future opportunities. Right now, our children need less screen time and more camp!

This means that we are preparing for our, “best summer yet,” with adherence to safety measures to ensure we are doing everything to mitigate any effects COVID-19 could potentially have on the camp community this summer. This will include measures such as quarantining of campers prior to camp, rapid tests and cohorting. This will be further layered with masking, distancing, hand washing and cleaning protocols. This on top of the safety measures that have always been in place including being small, remote, outdoors and bubbled to ensure that we mitigate the effects of a COVID case on our campsite. We cannot predict the future and whether things will get easier between now and camp, but we are preparing for different scenarios and learning from the experiences of others including summer camps that ran in 2020 (both successfully and unsuccessfully) to prepare for this summer. More information on our protocols and how to prepare for camp will be provided to families in the coming months.

With summer around the corner, your children should feel confident in anticipating the launch of another Camp Kawartha summer. This is still a time to remain vigilant against our unwelcome COVID-19 guest, but it is also a time to reengage in the healthy risks and life lessons that are guaranteed by the experiences of summer camp.

Sincerely,

Adam Strasberg (Wham)
Summer Camp Director

James White (Gretskie)
Summer Camp Registrar

Cathy Romano RN (Fleet)
Health Care Coordinator