

Appendix 1

Mayor Santos Responds to Announcement of Windsor-Essex held in Stage 1 at the June 22, 2020 Regular Meeting of Council

“Earlier today, the Province of Ontario confirmed that our Windsor-Essex region would not be advancing to Stage 2 as part of their established re-opening plan.

Clearly, this is not the news our Kingsville community nor region had hoped for. However, I cannot say that the decision was not to be expected. No one can ignore that the case numbers being reported across our region here remain high, and above any jurisdictions’ comfort level. Moreover, it is specifically due to outbreaks among workplaces in the agriculture sector.

These are critical times for our businesses, our residents, our communities and us. From the day our municipality and region first declared a state of emergency, all of us have been unrelenting in our commitment to take measures to keep safe. Our staff, our essential workers, and health care leaders have been working tirelessly in collaboration with the province and its ministries. We’ve been connecting with multiple organizations focusing on response, on care, on awareness and support for those in need. Constant updates with the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit and joined our community leaders and representatives from across all government levels to advocate and call for increased COVID-19 testing across the agri-food sector. Testing is just one piece of the plan, but as we have learned over the past 3 months, is still a key piece. Key because the results help us to better develop a comprehensive response strategy to safeguard our farm workers and reduce the spread of infection in the farms and the community.

Just over the past three weeks’ alone, our efforts with our local health-care partners have resulted in the province initiating proactive on-site targeted testing for agri-food workers in our communities. From the tremendous collaboration of all agencies, and that began this past Saturday. While this is what we have been working towards, this approach will only be successful with the full support and cooperation of the farm owners.

I join the Premier and my local community leaders in strongly urging the farm operators to take responsibility and encourage testing for all of their employees. This is absolutely necessary for the health and safety of the agri-food workers and the community.

Over the course of this pandemic, there have been many sacrifices. We know businesses have been kept from reopening, and there is a community uprising and escalating frustrations because of the negative economic impacts being felt by the people of Windsor-Essex.

Tonight, I am asking our residents and our business community to continue to be the great stewards you have been in flattening the curve and keeping our community case numbers exactly where we need them to move forward. It cannot go without saying, that we do see how much has already been sacrificed by each of you, and from the Kingsville Council table, we acknowledge that. It is so clear in our minds that we will stand up and get the message to our province and to our agri-community as a whole. Together, we must respect the Premier’s cautious, regional approach to reopening. And as leaders, we will heighten our efforts even more so, to contain this outbreak in a manner that maintains our community safety and standards that we have set.

Tonight, I am adding all of our community voices to strongly encourage our farm operations to take all steps necessary to help control the spread of COVID-19, so that we can join the rest of Ontario and move to Stage 2 and reopen our vibrant business community."