

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Mayor Bifulchi thanks OPP for policing efforts this past weekend in Wasaga Beach

Wasaga Beach – Today, on behalf of council and residents, Mayor Nina Bifulchi thanked the Ontario Provincial Police for their efforts to keep our town safe during an unsanctioned car rally this past weekend.

The rally resulted in illegal gatherings, dangerous driving, excessive noise, and other unsafe activity.

“The OPP, as well as police from Peel and York regions, spent the weekend protecting our town and we are grateful for their help,” Mayor Bifulchi said. “Officers worked around the clock to ensure the safety of residents, visitors, and businesses during extremely trying circumstances. Police did this in the middle of a pandemic, when people ought to have known better than to participate in illegal large gatherings and other risky activities.”

“Questions have come up about why the town allowed this event to happen. The town did not host this rally. It was in no way sanctioned by the municipality. It is very frustrating that the organizers behind this activity snubbed their noses at the municipality and law enforcement. They hide in the dark, unnamed and unaccountable,” Mayor Bifulchi said.

When the town learned of the rally two weeks ago, staff informed the OPP about the details they knew at the time. From that point, the OPP took the lead, using internal expertise as well as expertise from other police departments on high-risk car gatherings, to ensure it had sufficient provincial resources to keep the municipality safe. Town staff also attempted to contact the organizers to find out details about the rally, but received no response.

Prior to the weekend, the OPP provided a high-level briefing to town officials on their plans to ensure public safety and the town kept in contact with emergency services staff over the weekend.

At the request of the OPP, the town installed temporary speed bumps at select municipal parking lots in an effort to slow down vehicles. The town also [advised](#) the community of the weekend, what potential activity could occur, and the stepped up police presence.

“We became aware of the possible impacts on the community when we saw so-called car enthusiasts blatantly disregarding social gathering regulations and taking over a parking lot in Ancaster. Our incident was far greater in size. As Premier Ford has indicated, these types of activities are completely unacceptable in a pandemic. Participants put their own health at risk, as well as others in the community,” Mayor Bifulchi said. “For several years, Ocean City, in Maryland, has struggled with these type of car rallies, including this [past weekend](#), when that city endured its share of unruly large crowds, dangerous driving, and other forms of unlawful behaviour.”

Some people have asked why the town and police allowed car rally participants to enter the municipality. Simply put, the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#) allows people to go about their lives. This includes: “...freedom of peaceful assembly; and freedom of association.” Also protected is the right to gather and act in peaceful groups. Only when officer safety was threatened and public safety was at risk Saturday night, could police step in and limit access to the town.

Others have asked why Mayor Bifulchi did not direct the Ontario Provincial Police to take additional measures throughout the weekend to curb disruptive behaviour. One of the principles under the [Police Services Act](#), is that chiefs of police or OPP detachment commanders do not take direction from elected officials including mayors with respect to specific operational decisions or with respect to the day-to-day operation of the police force.

“Over the weekend I drove around the community and had the opportunity to witness first hand the un-safe activity that took place at the rally. Not only was I concerned for pedestrian safety, but I noticed a number of people congregating and not wearing masks,” Mayor Bifulchi said. “As the weekend progressed, I became increasingly concerned for the safety of the community and applaud the actions the OPP took to keep the community safe.”

Monday morning, Mayor Bifulchi and other municipal officials met with the OPP to discuss enforcement activities over the weekend and the impacts on the community. Mayor Bifulchi and Premier Doug Ford also spoke by phone.

“I want to thank Premier Ford for reaching out to me and offering his support. Premier Ford is incredibly sympathetic to the situation we found ourselves in this past weekend,” Mayor Bifulchi said. “I can assure the people of Wasaga Beach that we will continue to work with the OPP and Premier Ford to find new strategies to deal with such an event, should it happen again.”

For media requiring additional information, please contact:

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FROM/DE: HURONIA WEST DETACHMENT **DATE:** September 28, 2020

Update - Charges Laid During the Unsanctioned Gathering in Wasaga Beach

(WASAGA BEACH, ON) - The Huronia West Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) used all available resources to maintain public safety and enforce the Reopening Ontario Act (ROA), during an unsanctioned car take-over event in the Town of Wasaga Beach.

Enforcement focussed primarily on unsafe vehicles, dangerous driving behaviours and ROA compliance. All enforcement activities prioritized public and officer safety.

Officers issued **172** Provincial Offence Notices (PON) during the event in Wasaga Beach. Included in the charges are moving violations like careless driving, stunt driving and speeding. Also included in these charges were equipment charges like improper tires, muffler and lights. There were **14** vehicles removed from the road.

Police issued **11** offence notices directly related to the Reopening of Ontario Act.

Police continue to enforce provincial and federal statutes, as well as supporting compliance with ROA regulations, while reminding the public that it is the collective responsibility of all Ontarians to comply with the ROA to limit the spread of COVID-19. .