

OPP discouraging group gatherings, wants tourists to stay home

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Forks of the Credit in Belfountain is a popular spot for group gatherings due to its winding roads and stunning scenery.

Caledon OPP released a video online this week laying down strict rules after local residents complained about tourists getting together in Belfountain amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Police officials discussed with the Town of Caledon council on March 31 about online reporting of those who are refusing to comply with social distancing and are gathering in large groups.

"This is the preferred method of reporting and contraventions or any non-compliance of the emergency management protection act. This will trigger officers to attend a location that is being reported and make an assessment as to what is happening," said Caledon OPP Inspector Mike Garant.

With a seemingly constant supply of groups visiting the west end of the Caledon community, residents are showcasing their concern for the community's safety by the disregard tourists are displaying.

Belfountain is a known area for outside scenery, parks, trailways and its overall display of nature. But some people are refusing to follow the recommended rules by staying home and are continuing to visit.

"This continues to be a destination for people from the city and elsewhere to attend the Town of Caledon in large numbers, large amounts of cars, people exiting their cars, parking and walking through our parks and trailways causing not only public safety issues with the extra people, but it is not social distancing," explained Inspector Garant. "They're not staying home as recommended by our medical practice professionals."

The Forks of the Credit Road is also known for streetcar racing due to its winding and hilly structure.

"They are congregating and gathering for social purposes and this includes street racers and groups that are in different types of vehicles in organized groups," said Garant. "I have worked with the Town of Caledon and Region of Peel to extend the no parking timeframes that are cleared 24 hours throughout the pandemic."

Caledon OPP has assigned school resource officers who are currently not in schools, as well as the community response unit and traffic enforcement unit within the Town of Caledon to assist with the situation.

Caledon OPP will track and monitor tourist locations in Caledon by what is seen on social media. Tracking posts that are online will help track tourists, and what location they plan on travelling to, in order to stop them.

Parked vehicles will be ticketed and towed. Local businesses within the area who have closed due to being a non-essential service, have taken it upon themselves to close and lock their property to avoid visitors parking in their lots. OPP has asked they take the next step, in posting no parking signs, explicitly stating that those who do will be towed as it is private property.

"The purpose of this plan is to encourage visitors to stay home during the pandemic and to self-isolate and to do their part in flattening the curve of this health crisis," explained Garant.

Caledon OPP are encouraging residents of the Caledon community to report on any activity in their area that poses a threat to the public safety, immediately.

?If you call the non-emergency line, not reporting something that's happening right now, there's not much we can do about it. If you want to report something that happened in the past, do it through online reporting at www.opp.ca/reporting. It's for any public safety concern that doesn't necessitate as a 911 emergency call,? said Garant.

Local Caledon resident Vanessa Marshall displayed her outrage on social media, asking residents from surrounding areas to stop visiting.

?Stop coming up to Caledon because you're bored. Coming to our small towns, wandering around, knocking on people's doors asking to use their bathroom is not appropriate,? she stated. ?Everything is closed for a reason. You are putting people at risk and prolonging how long we will have to be doing this. It's not rocket science.?

For more information about online reporting, or to report on a public safety issue that is happening right now, please visit opp.ca/reporting.