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Province reacts to developing COVID-19 crisis

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The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve daily, even hourly. Precautions and safety measures continue to rapidly intensify as numbers of confirmed cases grow. But, for some, the virus doesn't seem to faze them.

The Ontario government along with the Ontario Provincial Police, are beginning to enforce strict penalties for those who refrain from social distancing and self-isolating to prevent the spread. Communities continue to gather at outdoor public facilities which goes against the strong recommendation to stay home.

This past Monday, the Ontario government has closed all outdoor facilities including leash free dog parks, playgrounds and sports fields to avoid spread of COVID-19. The emergency order was issued as a result from the recommendation from the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

?I made a commitment to be open and upfront about what we need to do as a province to beat this virus,? said Premier Doug Ford in a news release. ?Based on the best medical advice available, we are taking further steps today to protect the health and safety of all Ontarians by closing outdoor recreational amenities, like sports fields and playgrounds, and extending our emergency orders to save lives. We all need to work together and do our part to stop COVID-19 by staying home, practising physical distancing, and avoiding social gatherings.?

The outdoor facilities that will closed effective immediately include, playgrounds, sports fields, basketball and tennis courts, off-leash dog parks, beaches, skateboard and BMX parks, picnic areas, outdoor community gardens, park shelters, outdoor exercise equipment and condo parks and gardens

?We are acting on the best advice of our Chief Medical Officer of Health and other leading public health officials across the province,? said Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Christine Elliot. ?We will continue to take decisive action to stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect Ontarians health and wellbeing.?

To ensure large social gatherings, the Ontario government has also enforced no more than five people are to gather under a new emergency order under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. This emergency orders overpowers the previous act which prohibited gatherings of over 50 people.

?If we are going to stop the spread of COVID-19 now and keep our communities safe, we need to take extraordinary measures to ensure physical distancing,? said Premier Doug Ford. ?I strongly encourage everyone to do the responsible thing and stay home unless absolutely necessary. I can assure everyone that we will do everything in our power to stop this virus in its tracks.?

The Town of Caledon previously announced the closure of the town's facilities through to April 5 but have released the recreational facilities will remain closed until further notice. The Town declares through the Caledon Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) that they are in constant work with regional partners and continue to monitor and make any necessary changes that will secure Caledon residents safety.

?We don't take this decision lightly; we know these closures impact the daily lives of our residents. But based on the best advice we are getting from public health experts we need to continue doing all we can to fight this pandemic,? said Mayor Allan Thompson.

A local business that was drastically impacted, was Garden Foods located in Bolton. After one of the employees tested positive for COVID-19, the grocery store shut down their facility on March 25 temporarily, to do a deep clean and sanitation of the store.

Peel Medical Officer of Health, Lawrence C. Loh released a statement informing the public on the store's situation. ?Today we had

our first confirmed case. One of our office staff has been confirmed with having the COVID-19 virus. Peel Public Health is currently in contact with the individual to ensure they have the care they need and that they are in self-isolation? said Loh.

Loh explains that the employee isn't showing knowing signs of the virus, and that they haven't been in the store since March 18, but they are taking specific precautions to ensure the store is properly taken care of, and able to provide for the community once again.

?The COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, and it has become clear that with every day-to-day interaction, we all need to be vigilant and consider those moments chances where we may have come into contact with the virus,? he said.

The province continues to strongly recommend social distancing and practicing proper hygiene to keep themselves and those around them healthy and safe, including seniors. The Ontario government is advising those who are 70 years of age and older to self-isolate and only leave the house for essential reasons.