

Town of Caledon declares State of Emergency amid COVID-19 crisis

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

The Town of Caledon has activated its Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) due to the severity of the COVID-19 outbreak. A variety of public facilities have closed from March 14 to April 5 to protect the community of Caledon, and surrounding areas.

"My top priority, and that of our Council, is to ensure we are working hand-in-hand with the Region of Peel to monitor the situation and make decisions that are in the best interest of public safety for Caledon residents," said Mayor Allan Thompson. "Activating the EOC allows the Town to dedicate the Town's resources to effectively address this growing concern."

The Town of Caledon, alongside the rest of Peel Region, are keeping in close contact with Peel Public Health, who have taken leadership in relation to COVID-19, and are consistently getting updates with recent actions, and information.

The Town and staff have made the decision to declare a State of Emergency only a day after Premier Ford declared one for the province.

"Our staff is already fully engaged in the COVID-19 response," said Mayor Allan Thompson. "This declaration gives us more flexibility to call on additional financial resources if needed. We want to ensure we have access to all the tools in our tool chest and that we can act with the utmost speed as circumstances warrant."

All publicly funded schools in Ontario are closed, and students are told to stay home as the situation grows fierce. Schools will be closed beginning on March 14 until April 5.

Alongside school closures, Peter Joshua, the Director of Education released a list of other programs that will also be closed for the next three weeks, including:

- ? Full-day child care programs
- ? Before and after school programs, including March Break camps
- ? Early On/Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLC)
- ? All co-op placements
- ? Dual credit programming
- ? Extracurricular activities
- ? All evening and weekend permit in all school and board offices

"While these are significant steps that may seem alarming, I want to stress that the risk in Peel remains low at this time," said Dr. Jessica Hopkins, Medical Officer of Health for the Region of Peel in a recent news release. "These measures are preemptive to help protect our population in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we understand that these recommendations create challenges for families and for the broader community, now is the time to pull together and take collective action to reduce the risk for all."

Though the severity in Ontario has not hit a high risk as of yet, Peel Public Health is requesting that residents take specific precautions to protect themselves and their community. Peel Public Health has released steps residents should practice which include:

- ? Stay home if you are ill
- ? Practice social distancing
- ? Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- ? Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose as much as possible
- ? Avoid contact with people who are ill and their items
- ? Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or into your arm
- ? Maintain a healthy lifestyle, including a healthy diet, exercise and enough sleep, to enhance your body's immune system
- ? Get the flu shot

The Town of Caledon has issued their own closures to protect the community and residents from COVID-19. Recreation and community centres and all their programs will be closed and put off through the effective time of March 14 to April 5. The Caledon Public Library branches will all be closed as well as Town Hall and Provincial Offences Court, and all Council meetings. All Provincial Offences Act matters that are scheduled from March 16 to April 3 are to be rescheduled to a later date. The Town encourages residents to take advantage of their online services.

All remaining offices and buildings to the public have closed down, but staff plan to continue to work with the public through, phone, email and online services. Construction, by-law enforcement, road maintenance services will continue with minor restrictions.

?Our goal is to flatten the curve,? said Mayor Allan Thompson. ?Now is the time to act to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and protect the integrity of our health care system. Following the province's declaration of a state of emergency, we are acting out of an abundance of caution. And even though Town Hall will be closed to the public we will do our utmost to continue providing services to the public ? by phone, by email, through online services ? whatever it takes.?

Peel Region are encouraging residents to take a self-assessment so those who are suffering from the COVID-19 symptoms are able to get treated quicker and more efficiently. Anyone who is not experiencing fever, cough and respiration issues or has no known exposure will not be tested.

Assessment centres have opened in Peel Region. Peel Public Health, Trillium Health Partners and William Osler Health System have partnered together for COVID-19 containment and testing. To visit an Assessment Centre at Trillium Health Partners people must go through their local Emergency Department or Public Health, but referrals are not required at William Osler Health System Assessment Centre.

Headwaters Health Care Centre declared the first positive COVID-19 case today, a male in his 40's travelling home from Atlanta, Georgia who was confirmed by the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health.

?This does not change our protocols around containment of the COVID-19 virus in our area,? said Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. ?We are following up with any contacts of the individual and ensuring the public is aware and protected from the spread of this virus. It is important to know that 80 percent of people with this virus will have mild to moderate symptoms. Anyone who is concerned should phone their health care provider, call Telehealth or visit an assessment centre.?

Headwaters Health Care Centre has opened their COVID-19 Assessment Centre for the residents of the Caledon and Dufferin area.

As of March 18, there are 569 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Canada, 189 of them here in Ontario. There are currently 12 confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the Peel Region, and nine pending cases who are in self-isolation.

Residents of Peel Region are able to contact Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700 and 905-584-2216 in Caledon but ask for patience due to the large quantities of calls coming in. For specific information and updates visit peelregion.ca/coronavirus.