



# Town of East Gwillimbury

## MEMORANDUM

To: Council

Date: May 5, 2020

Subject: COVID-19 Update #3

Origin: COVID-19 Control Group

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### COVID-19 Control Group Updates

At the Council meeting held on April 7, 2020 the COVID-19 Control Group provided an initial verbal update regarding the status of Town's operation and response as it related to COVID-19. A second update was provided as a memo at the Council meeting held on April 21, 2020. This is the third update from the COVID-19 Control Group and further updates will be provided as this matter continues.

COVID-19 Control Group continues to meet on a regular basis to respond to the emerging situation and is in communications with all Members of Council, neighbouring municipalities and York Region. The group also continues to work closely with Provincial and York Region Public Health Officials regarding this public health crisis.

The Town remains under a state of emergency and continues to monitor the Federal and Provincial updates with respect to the phased approach for a safe restart of economy.

The Town continues to monitor the [Ontario framework](#) for re-opening. This framework outlines criteria for loosening emergency measures as well as guiding principles for a safe and gradual re-opening of businesses, services and public spaces. The COVID-19 Control Group will ensure that all Town decisions regarding reopening of facilities are in alignment with the province's framework, and public healthy agency recommendations

Further COVID-19 related reports have been included on the May 5, 2020 Agenda, through the following reports/memos as they require a more comprehensive update:

- Enforcement Update Memorandum
- Business Support and Recovery Strategy Memorandum
- Preliminary Financial Impact and Staffing Analysis Report ADMIN2020-02
- Recovery of Town Operations Report ADMIN2020-03

- East Gwillimbury Emergency Response Benefit Program for Business Report  
ADMIN-04

## **April 22, 2020 to May 4, 2020 COVID-19 Operational Updates**

### **1. Parks and Trails**

#### **York Regional Forest Tracts re-open to public**

On April 25, 2020, the Regional Municipality of York re-opened public access to the York Regional Forest Tracts with new enhanced guidelines for all users. This update occurred after further review and consideration by their staff team and in alignment with the Provincial Order which permits trails and open spaces to remain open for pass through access.

Residents' using these spaces must keep pets on leash, practice physical distancing of two metres and ensure they are not littering.

#### **Council request to re-open Nokiidaa Trail**

Pursuant to Council's request on April 21, 2020, staff have worked with the LSRCA to come to an agreement to open the East Gwillimbury portion of the Nokiidaa Trail.

As of 5 p.m on May 1, 2020, CPRC staff have re-opened the Nokiidaa Trail and trailhead parking lots. The trail will have signage and staff patrols to help enforce guidelines regarding public health messages.

### **2. Community Supports and Information**

#### **Upgraded Recycle Coach Application**

Due to COVID-19, many residents are self-isolating at home and there has been an increase in waste inquiries through Customer Service. These inquiries include collections dates, times, and what items should be placed where. To respond to this need, the Town purchased enhanced functionality for the current Recycle Coach app. The app provides updates to users on schedule changes, collection calendars through personalized reminders, educational messages and a new "What Goes Where" feature.

The Recycle Coach™ app is free and available from the iTunes Store and Google Play Store.

## **Launch of the Community Support Hotline**

On April 27, 2020, the Town launched a new Community Support Hotline to share critical information and details related to the various emergency support measures available for both individuals and businesses during the COVID-19 crisis. Detailed information is provided in the Corporate Services memo entitled COVID-19 Business Support and Recovery Strategy.

## **Enhanced Communication Strategy**

The Town continues to implement enhanced Communication strategies to keep residents and local businesses informed of the Town's response to COVID-19.

These tactics include:

- Dedicated website for COVID-19 response, frequently asked questions, business support, and health and active living challenge
- Dedicated weekly COVID-19 Town Page and eNewsletter
- Enhanced social media, including boosted posts
- Road signs throughout the community advertising the Town's COVID-19 website, Community Support Hotline and trail safety messages
- Targeted deferral informational flyers in water bills
- Weekly Mayor messages and videos

## **Modernization Activities in Place to Continue Operations & Staffing**

### **Information Technology**

The Town has maintained essential services for residents through front-line essential services in combination with virtual services. This staff deployment has been adjusted to ensure the continued provision of services, while ensuring the health and safety of employees.

To-date, approximately 100 staff have been deployed to work from home and have been equipped with the necessary tools to carry out core departmental functions.

### **E-Council Meetings & Advisory Committee Re-Mobilization Strategy**

The Town held its second electronic Council meeting on April 21, 2020 with 70 live views reported on YouTube.

Staff continue to investigate and establish enhancement opportunities for public participation during electronic council meetings.

Additionally, work is currently underway to implement the phased-in plan for re-mobilizing advisory committees to conduct electronic meetings, if required. Staff have contacted all Council Advisory Committee Chairs and Staff liaisons to identify committee/group workplan projects and determine members' technology requirements. Further updates will be provided as this work continues.

### **Virtual Staff Town Halls**

COVID-19 Control Group continues to provide updates to staff via email and through Virtual Town Halls. The Town held its second Virtual Town Hall on April 23, 2020 with 146 in attendance. These meetings have received positive feedback from employees and will continue to be utilized to keep staff up to date.

### **3. Employee Health and Wellness**

The health and wellness of residents and employees continues to be the Town's number one priority. As we continue to have the majority of Town staff working remotely, and in smaller teams, it is important that we provide support for employees mental and physical health. To prioritize these programs, the Town has developed a cross-functional team consisting of the Town's Employee + Team, Human Resources, Health and Safety and the COVID-19 Control Group. This group is prioritizing health and safety programs such as ergonomics, safe work environments, mental health programs and employee engagement.

### **4. Launch of the Health & Active Living Challenge**

During this difficult time, it is important to stay healthy, active and engaged. The Community Parks, Recreation and Culture team has officially launched the Health and Active Living Challenge to keep residents healthy, active and engaged. The videos have received great engagement with a high watch rate.

Each day the team shares a challenge or an activity for everyone to try at home. The challenges are available daily on the Town's Facebook (Town of East Gwillimbury), Twitter (TownofEG) or on our website at [www.eastgwillimbury.ca/ActiveEG](http://www.eastgwillimbury.ca/ActiveEG).

The Health & Active Living Challenge videos averaging a reach of approximately 3020 people and 270 engagements (clicks/watches) on the videos on Facebook. The videos are also averaging approximately 154 views per video on Twitter. The top posts are related to healthy and active living including karate, stretching and exercises. Other popular posts include the pyramid or funny family challenges.

## **5. Library Service Updates**

### **WIFI Access at Library & Other Town Facility Parking Lots**

Town is reviewing options to provide access to select facilities including the libraries for WIFI access from vehicles by partially opening parking lots. A list of facilities that provide this service will be provided when confirmed.

### **Food Pantry Updates**

The Library opened the Food Pantry in 2016 to help families and individuals in the East Gwillimbury area who are experiencing food insecurity. The Library has seen growth in clientele over the years as the pantry becomes more established. The first quarter in 2020 served 160 individuals. This is not unique individuals, as many clients rely on the pantry and come on a monthly basis. This February served a record high of 73 individuals. In 2019, the Food Pantry served an average of 50 individuals each month, with summer months being the busiest.

The Library continues to work with the Newmarket Food Bank and the Mount Albert United Church Food Pantry, as well as Vince's Market and The Neighbourhood Market to ensure food security in the local community.

On April 25, 2020, the Food Pantry served 49 individuals. Library staff continue to receive donations from the community and are financially stable for the foreseeable future based on the current operating model. York Region has provided guidance on the safe operations of food banks and the Library is following these recommendations.

## **6. Public Information Session with York Region Medical Officer of Health**

Mayor Hackson will be hosting a Virtual Town Hall with Dr. Kurji, the York Region Medical Officer of Health at 2 p.m. on May 7, 2020. This sessions will occur on Facebook Live and is an opportunity for residents to hear updates and ask questions.

## **7. Financial relief to residents and businesses on property tax and water bills**

Council has approved the waiving of interest on outstanding property tax and water bills for 90 days or until July 31 to help provide financial relief to those in need. To assist municipalities with cash flow pressures resulting from relief measures, Regional Council recently approved the waiving of interest on the outstanding balance of tax installments provided by municipalities for a 90 day period. Municipalities are expected to remit any taxes they have collected on behalf of the Region in accordance with the scheduled due dates, with any outstanding balance

exempt from interest for 90 days. The following chart outlines the Region's payment due dates and associated 90-day interest free periods.

**2020 Regional Property Tax Installments to be Remitted by the Town**

	<b>Installment Amount</b>	<b>Installment Date</b>	<b>Interest Waived on Outstanding Balance Until</b>
Interim Tax Installment	\$6.2 M	April 30, 2020	July 29, 2020
Interim Tax Installment	\$6.2 M	June 30, 2020	September 28, 2020
Final Tax Installment*	\$6.2 M	September 30, 2020	December 29, 2020
Final Tax Installment*	\$6.2 M	December 15, 2020	March 15, 2021

\* Final tax installment dates and amounts have not been finalized by Regional Council