



Town of East Gwillimbury

MEMORANDUM

To: Council

Date: September 22, 2020

Subject: COVID-19 Update #9

Origin: COVID-19 Control Group

COVID-19 Control Group Updates

The COVID-19 Control Group continues to meet and is in communications with Council, neighbouring municipalities and York Region. Town is closely following the Provincial Stage 3 reopening. The group also continues to work closely with Provincial and York Region Public Health Officials regarding this public health crisis.

Provincial Updates Regarding an Increase in COVID-19 cases

The Province continues to express concerns over the rising cases of COVID-19 as the average number of new daily COVID-19 cases has doubled in just three weeks.

In consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, local medical officers of health and local municipal leaders, the Ontario government has amended order O. Reg 364/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 3 under the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020, setting a new limit reducing the number of people permitted to attend unmonitored social gatherings and organized public events in three regions (Toronto, Ottawa & Peel Region) experiencing higher rates of transmission of COVID-19. This includes functions, parties, dinners, gatherings, BBQs or wedding receptions held in private residences, backyards, parks and other recreational areas. These measures will take effect as of Friday September 18, 2020.

As the numbers continue to trend upwards, it is the responsibility of Ontarians to continue to follow the public health measures to mitigate a second wave. As such, the Town continues to monitor public health recommendations and messaging to ensure our programs and services remain aligned with Provincial reopening plans. The Town will continue to communicate public health messaging to remind residents and businesses to follow provincial regulations regarding social gatherings, proper hygiene and use of masks.

Town's Position on Fall/Winter Events

Due to provincial regulations, the Town will not be moving ahead with traditionally operated in-person events in 2020. These include Remembrance Day, Santa Claus Parades, and the New Year's Eve Celebration.

The Town is working on innovative non-traditional ways to host these events. Currently, the Town is considering the following options for Fall/Winter events in lieu of in-person events. The following concepts may be subject to change.

Halloween Hike – Changed to Online activities

- Virtual activities from October 26 – 30
- Virtual Halloween crafts, activities, and snacks (similar to Canada Day)
- Additional idea: Hallo'week' box containing materials for activities that go along with online videos

The Province of Ontario is expected to make an announcement on permitting door to door trick or treating for children in the coming weeks.

Remembrance Day – The Town is planning a virtual ceremony with a message from Mayor Hackson and laying of wreaths by Council and dignitaries in the morning. The public may visit the Cenotaph at their leisure throughout the day on a flow through basis while maintaining physical distancing and ensuring that maximum occupancy for the area does not exceed 100 occupants.

Tree Lighting and Farmers' Christmas Market – To be Confirmed

- To be held at the Sports Complex in the outdoor parking lot, joined with Farmers/Christmas Market
- Vendors selling food/produce, similar to the farmers market, fire pits set up
- Secure check in and check out to track attendance (contract tracing). Maximum attendance of 100 occupants (outdoors) with pre-registration and assigned time slots.

Santa Claus Parade – The Town will not be proceeding with a traditional parade for this year. The Town will be organizing a Lighting Celebration and Competition. A tour of community businesses, organizations, and home decoration/lighting displays. Businesses, organizations, and homes can register to participate. A map will be provided for a self-guided tour through the Town and prizes will be provided for the best decorations and lighting displays (business, organization and residential categories within each community will be provided).

New Year's Eve – The Town is proposing to host a pre-recorded virtual event/concert.

Innovation with events this past Spring/Summer

The Town is committed to providing innovative event experiences for our residents. Since COVID-19 the Town has successfully hosted the following innovative events and interactive experiences:

- Virtual Canada Day Celebration in partnership with the Sharon Temple
- Physically distanced Summer Concert Series at the Sharon Drive-in and Sharon Temple
- Physically distanced Farmers Market at their new location, the EG Civic Centre
- Nature Day back-pack program for children in lieu of EG Nature Day in partnership with the EGPL, Mount Albert Lions, 4H Club, LSRCA and Tiny Seedlings
- Virtual Art Show and Sale in partnership with the Art and Cultural Committee of Council with participation from the EG Group of Artists

Emergency Management Requirements & Business Continuity Planning

Emergency Management

The Emergency Management and *Civil Protection Act* was amended to allow municipalities that have had Control Groups active or engaged as a result of the pandemic, to be exempt from conducting an annual exercise. Municipalities are still required to account for staff training and review of program elements (Hazard Identification Risk Assessment and Critical Infrastructure). In addition, post incident evaluation will have to be conducted.

Business Continuity Planning

Business Continuity Planning (“BCP”) is an important part of Emergency Management, and although not a mandatory element of Municipal level emergency planning, completing this major project will help the Town and its employees to determine key areas of business functions that are vulnerable in the event of a serious disruption. BCP is a proactive measure to mitigate the impacts of an emergency event on Town operations and our residents. This was one of the forefront recommendations from the *Build Back Better* report and will be a significant undertaking that will require staff commitment to complete the first steps. The Town will work collaboratively with York Region staff to conduct an initial Business Impact Analysis which is intended to be completed by the end of 2020, with the rest of the project to commence in 2021.

Increased Access to Civic Centre

As the Town continues to increase access to municipal facilities, Council members and staff will be provided access to return to the Civic Centre by request only. These requests will be considered if access to the office would significantly enhance the individual’s ability to conduct work or attend virtual meetings, for example, if the home internet is not sufficient to attend extended virtual meetings.

Council meetings will remain virtual until the end of 2020, however, Council members who wish to access e-meetings from the Civic Centre can do so by request and while ensuring the appropriate COVID-19 safety procedures and protocols are followed.

Virtual Town Hall Updates

The Town held its sixth Virtual Staff Town Hall meeting on September 16, 2020. These meetings have been used as a key method of communication with staff to provide updates related to COVID-19 and other key priorities related to the organization. The meetings also offer an opportunity for staff to ask questions in real-time.

Visitor Management Solution

The COVID-19 Recovery Team is currently piloting a visitor management solution. This solution will provide the Town with the necessary tools to screen and sign-in employees, contractors and visitors to Town facilities. This solution will provide an overview of who is in the facility at any given time, assisting with occupancy control, and will also provide COVID-19 warning notifications upon failed screenings which, in turn, will improve contact tracing efforts within the Town. Further details will be provided upon the completion of this pilot program.

COVID-19 Relief Municipal Allocation Phase I

As part of the federal-provincial *Safe Restart Agreement*, the province of Ontario has announced up to \$4 billion in emergency assistance for municipalities. These funds have been allocated to municipalities to address operating pressures and local needs that have arisen due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Funding is to be allocated in two phases, 50% allocated in Phase I for all municipalities in Ontario based on number of households, and 50% allocated in Phase II for municipalities that require additional funding. Through Phase I, the Town of East Gwillimbury is set to receive \$662,300 in September 2020. Town staff are working collaboratively to identify cost pressures that would be eligible for this funding and prioritizing them based on a set of criteria. This will ensure that funding is directed toward cost pressures and initiatives that; promote and protect the health and safety of the community and employees; ensure business continuity; and provide increased flexibility and adaptability to respond to future COVID-related needs.