



Public Statement from Mayor Stewart Strathearn & CAO Amanpreet Sidhu

Sunday, March 15, 2020 – The health and safety of our residents and our employees is always a top priority. In spite of the best efforts of the authorities, we now have 3 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Simcoe County and things have and continue to change quickly. Amid the uncertainty, anxiety and stress associated with the spread of COVID-19, it is important to note that we are working with the most up-to-date information from our Global, Federal, Provincial and County health partners.

“We are in the early days of this pandemic and in particular in this part of the world, in Canada, in Ontario, in Barrie and Simcoe-Muskoka we’ve only just had our first cases this week. I fully expect there will be community transmission in the near future. For that reason, we are advising people to take the protective measures they have been hearing about,” said Dr. Charles Gardner, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit medical officer of health, at a media conference held on Sunday.

Please continue to follow the directions of public health authorities and:

- Wash your hands thoroughly and often with soap and water;
- Cough/sneeze into your sleeve or tissue. Dispose of tissue immediately and wash your hands;
- Keep surfaces clean and disinfected;
- Stay home when sick; and
- If you have symptoms, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or TTY 1-866-797-0007 or contact your Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7750 or <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/>).

Information can be found at [Ontario.ca/coronavirus](https://www.ontario.ca/coronavirus) and on our [website](#).

It important to bear in mind that efforts being put in place are geared to **reducing the rate of spread** of COVID-19; not eliminating the spread. **Reducing the rate of spread** will ensure that our medical facilities and staff are not overwhelmed. We are treating this as a marathon, not as a sprint where resources and people are exhausted before the start line. Also remember that greater than 80% of people contracting COVID-19 experience mild-to-moderate flu-like or cold-like symptoms.

Steps already in place:

1. Essential services such as Water/Wastewater, Fire and Police remain fully operational;
2. Corporate Communication – COVID-19 – Update 1 was sent to staff and Council on March 12. It provided information with respect to the status of COVID-19 (at that time), proactive corporate measure, coming to work options (quarantine, self-isolation) etc...;
3. A media release was distributed and posted online on March 13, outlining closures and further actions by the municipality to help reduce the rate of spread of COVID-19;
4. The North Simcoe Sports & Recreation Centre is closed for three weeks and all programming therein is cancelled;
5. The Library is closed until further notice;
6. Communications are open with Waypoint to offer an alternate assessment site for Midland and neighbouring municipalities;



7. Information with respect to Employee Assistance Plans has been shared with employees and Council;
8. A Pandemic Plan has been drafted and will be presented to Council for approval; and
9. We continue to have ongoing communication with other municipalities in North Simcoe and across Simcoe County.

Next steps:

1. Municipal offices remain open, albeit with curtailed services and access restricted to only those with urgent matters;
2. Decisions with respect to procedure for holding Council meetings and around access by the residents to the next Council meeting (scheduled for March 18, 2020) will be made on Monday, March 16 after considering the latest information from Public Health authorities;
3. Plans are being put in place to assist employees that must work from home due to post exposure, two-week self-isolation requirements. Internal Corporate Communication – COVID-19 – Update 2 will follow shortly;
4. Council will consider deferring property tax due date to May 29th to reduce financial hardships to residents who may not be able to work as a result of COVID-19;
5. Convene a weekly meeting of the Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG); and
6. Council and corporate leadership will continue to meet regularly, in person and through electronic means.

The steps above are being taken out of an abundance of caution and in an effort to reduce risk. We want to do our part in the fight against COVID-19 in Midland, Simcoe County, Ontario, Canada and indeed the World.

We know these decisions will cause some disruption, and we apologize for that.

To our employees and employees at Public Health and GBGH who have been working long hours to ensure we are prepared to manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our community – **thank you!** Your care for this community is extraordinary.

To the residents – regardless of the unknown, and the angst and anxiety inherent in these circumstances, we know that our community will rise to the occasion looking out for each other's best interests. Remember that war time saying recently made popular again: **Keep Calm and Carry On.**

Stewart Strathearn, Mayor

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