



## Media Release

### **During trying times, Operations Staff helping to provide safe access to Town facilities in our community**

July 23, 2020 – Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Operations staff have had to adjust quickly, often without warning to many changes impacting how they do their work. From working out of different locations with smaller teams to allow for physical distancing, to handling tasks with even smaller crews and implementing many new cleaning protocols for people and equipment. Thankfully, our operations staff know how to handle emergencies and have continued to get the job done.

“The last four months have certainly been challenging for the Ops team,” said James Turnbull, Operations Supervisor. “Small teams make up each of our three daily shifts, yet our crews have still managed to take on many of the usual tasks and duties that we would complete in a normal year.”

Typically, this time of year the Operations Department provides many municipal services, including:

- Road maintenance, line painting, patching, crack sealing, curb repairs;
- Sidewalk maintenance, including repairs, replacements, patching and grinding;
- Trail maintenance;
- Roadside ditch maintenance;
- Street and traffic signs including traffic signal lights, street lighting;
- Boulevard grass cutting and weed control;
- Parks and garden maintenance; and
- Municipal tree maintenance.

Maintenance work is prioritized based on regulatory obligations, with road works and road patrol being top of the list, followed by park maintenance (grass cutting, garbage pickup etc.). However, emergency operations (tree hazards, road sign repair/replacement etc.) take priority when they occur, and this spring/summer has seen several large storms that have resulted in the downing of approximately 200 trees throughout Midland, an extremely high number compared to most years.

When the Ontario Government makes announcements regarding regions entering different stages of the recovery framework, the Operations team has to be ready to roll when it comes to the reopening of various amenities. However, before this can happen the Town has to do its due diligence.

“It’s not a simple case of flipping a switch and everything is open and available for a municipality,” said David Denault, Chief Administrative Officer. “There are specific orders and details that follow these announcements that we utilize to help us determine what we are permitted to do during the next stage. Our municipal and the county partners have been extremely helpful as well and we have established a very responsive and active process to communicate and share. With the assistance of many we are able to thoughtfully make decisions to establish the health & safety protocols required and logistical planning so we can safely reopen services or facilities.”

Playground reopening is a perfect example of this. After reviewing the finer details of the Province’s announcement, and consulting with our partner municipalities and the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, a decision was made on Thursday, July 16 that playgrounds would begin to reopen in Midland. The process of playground equipment/structure reassembly and inspection began on Friday, July 17.



“The Ops team has done a terrific job readying our park playgrounds for use,” added Turnbull. “In many cases it wasn’t simply the removal of caution tape to signify a structure is open. Inspections and reassembly takes time. Determining what is safe and unsafe for public use is not something we rush through.”

As of today, the following parks have some playground equipment/structures available for use:

- Bayview Park
- Bob Merkley Park
- Cook Drive Park
- Gawley Park
- Griffin Street Natural Park
- Harbourside/Rotary Park
- Huronia Park
- Little Lake Park
- Mac McAllen Park
- Pete Pettersen Park
- Quota Park
- Regent Park
- Tiffin Park

Several of the structures/equipment in these parks, and others, require repairs, and staff are prioritizing repairs within the confines of the 2020 operating budget. Structures not open for use have been fenced off with appropriate signage in place.

**Playground users are reminded that these structures are not sanitized, and that physical distancing must be practiced when using them. Signage is posted at all structures advising of this.**

Residents are encouraged to submit cases to our customer service platform, [E-service Midland](#), if they notice issues in parks, at other amenities, and/or around town.

The Town of Midland will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and provide updates on our website at [Midland.ca/COVID-19](http://Midland.ca/COVID-19), and we encourage residents to follow our social media channels for updates as well, [@MidlandON](#) on Twitter, and [@townofmidland](#) on Facebook.

For more information on the state of COVID-19 in our area, please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 or visit their website at [simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://simcoemuskokahealth.org).



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