

Update on COVID-19

Chief Pegg, Fire Chief & General Manager of Emergency Management

March 16, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.

Members' Lounge, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W

Good afternoon. As you know, this is the first of what will be daily media briefings as we move forward.

We are all aware that the Federal and Provincial Governments just recently announced new information relating to COVID-19. That information has already been fed into the City's EOC and is being evaluated and actioned as we speak.

As you know, last week, the City activated its Emergency Operations Centre. We continue to operate at level two and continue to operate a city-wide COVID-19 Task Force.

The EOC is coordinating all aspects of the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, across all City services, to ensure that both the safety and the needs of Torontonians remain our top priority. As issues and changes arise, they are readily identified and addressed through our incident management system.

First, let me remind everyone of the city services that have NOT been affected and have NOT been adjusted or reduced in any way:

- All emergency services – including police, fire and paramedic services, are operating as normal.
- Toronto Water continues to ensure our drinking water is reliable, safe and remains at the high standard we have all come to expect.
- Garbage collection will continue as scheduled.
- Road operations, including snow removal services if required, will continue as normal.
- Toronto Hydro is operating normally.
- The TTC is operating normally.

There are a number of services, however, that are closed until at least April 5, including:

- March break camps are closed.
- City-operated daycares are closed.
- Licenced, third-party operated days care centres in Toronto are strongly encouraged to close.
- All Parks and Recreation facilities are closed.
- City-operated museums and community art centres are closed.

- Provincial Offenses Act court appearances have been suspended.
- All City Council and committee meetings, public meetings and public consultations are suspended.
- All Toronto Public Library branches are closed.
- The Toronto Zoo is closed.
- While garbage collection will continue as scheduled, all scheduled yard waste collection that was set to begin is suspended.

As this matter rapidly evolves, the EOC and City operations remain nimble and ready to respond and adjust service levels as required. The decision to adjust, alter or suspend city services is made in conjunction with the advice and guidance being provided to the City by the respective authorities having jurisdiction. Most commonly, this advice and guidance is coming from Dr. de Villa and the Toronto Public Health Team.

In the event that any further changes to City services are implemented, we will communicate here and provide the updated information online at [Toronto.ca/coronavirus](https://toronto.ca/coronavirus)

Residents and businesses look to the Toronto Public Service in their time of need and we need to be there to support and serve them.

- The City, as an employer, is working through processes to ensure we have the right balance of employees available to service the public in the workplace, while recognizing that we, too, need to practice social distancing, as recommended by Toronto Public Health.

At this point, we have asked City employees, who are not sick, who have not recently returned from travel outside of Canada and who do not need to self-isolate, to continue to report to work.

It is important to note that this is a rapidly evolving situation and we will keep our workforce updated as this situation evolves. We will continue to make decisions in consideration of the advice being provided by Dr. de Villa and Toronto Public Health.

The City is directly connected with community partners, including the United Way and other community organizations across the City, to ensure the most essential services remain available for those who need them most.

We are working with the Daily Bread Food Bank and other governments to ensure that those in need are able to continue to access food in a safe manner, even as some food banks are closing.

Our Public Health call centres are experiencing an incredibly high volume of calls. Many of the questions being asked can quickly be addressed by accessing [Toronto.ca/covid-19](https://toronto.ca/covid-19) and I encourage everyone to make this your first point of access.

PLEASE, do not call 911 when seeking information about COVID-19 or city services. 911 is for use in emergency situations, requiring response by Toronto Police, Toronto Paramedics or Toronto Fire Services only.

The City encourages residents with questions they have about City services, to visit [Toronto.ca/COVID-19](https://toronto.ca/COVID-19). The web site is being updated continually with key information, including public health information and recourses.

Please seek information online from credible sources only.

As I said, the City is working flat out to protect the people of Toronto. That work won't stop.

I know that there are many people who are feeling both anxious and scared. I want you to know that these are normal and healthy responses to this very abnormal situation.

The most important thing that each of us can do is to seek out accurate information and to follow the advice and guidance being provided by Dr. de Villa and our Toronto Public Health team.

The best source for that accurate information and advice is [Toronto.ca/COVID-19](https://toronto.ca/COVID-19).

We are a strong and resilient city and we will get through this together.

END