

Update on COVID-19

Chief Pegg, Fire Chief & General Manager of Emergency Management

March 17, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.

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

Good afternoon.

The COVID-19 situation continues to evolve very quickly, both in the City of Toronto and beyond.

As you know, the Premier declared a Provincial Emergency earlier this morning. In declaring the Provincial Emergency, a number of orders have been issued, which is normal under the emergency declaration process.

The City's Emergency Operations Centre continues to operate effectively and respond to the evolving situation.

In light of the emergency declaration, we have transitioned to level 3 operations in the Emergency Operations Centre, with some additional support staff being assigned to the EOC.

In response to the continuously evolving COVID-19 situation, we are making a number of adjustments to service levels provided by the Toronto Public Service.

We are implementing these changes in a considered and measured manner, that is consistent with the advice being provided by Toronto Public Health, and that balances the needs of the communities we serve with those of our dedicated city staff.

First and foremost, let me confirm for everyone, the city services that are NOT being affected and are NOT being adjusted or reduced:

- All emergency services – including police service, fire service and paramedic service emergency response, will continue to operate 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.
- Shelters and respite sites remain open.
- City-operated Long-Term Care homes will continue to operate.
- 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.

- 3-1-1 continues to operate normally.
- And, of course, our Emergency Operations Centre and COVID-19 Task Force teams working on the City's COVID-19 planning and response will continue without interruption.

There are, however, a number of City services that are being suspended until further notice.

Examples of services that are being suspended include:

- Many of the City's administrative functions;
- Counter-based services that are provided in City Hall and other facilities; and
- Marriage services in city facilities.

We appreciate that the list of service changes is both long and continues to evolve. All of this information, including the details on each service level change, will be updated online today and overnight. This information is available to the public at [Toronto.ca/COVID-19](https://toronto.ca/COVID-19).

To that end, effective tomorrow, all City of Toronto Municipal buildings will be closed to the public, including City Hall, Metro Hall and each of the Civic Centres.

City staff, who are not in a role that directly enables the continued delivery of essential services, will be directed to remain at home.

As advised earlier by the Mayor, these changes are effective immediately.

The implementation of these service level changes, on a division by division basis, will be completed as soon as possible, understanding that each service area has different plans and processes that need to be put in place.

Tools and resources are being enhanced, in order for City staff to remain connected, informed and productive as this situation continues to develop.

Employees who are not remaining at work to provide essential or other critical services, will be recalled to work, on a priority-need basis, as the COVID-19 pandemic situation evolves.

Each Division and Agency head is in the process of communicating with their respective staff teams, such that clear information is being communicated to all staff.

The decision to reduce city services and reduce public access to city facilities is a difficult one. However, it is important that we too need to implement effective social distancing, as recommended by Toronto Public Health, as we all work together to slow the spread of COVID-19.

It is important to note that this is a rapidly evolving situation and we will continue to keep our workforce and the public 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.

Our Public Health call centres continue to experience 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). 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.

We have recently become aware that there are a number of scams being reported in relation to COVID-19. I want to be very clear – neither the City of Toronto, nor Toronto Public Health are going door to door nor are any types of COVID-19 testing kits being offered for sale.

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.

In closing, I want to reassure everyone that essential public services, provided by the City of Toronto, are being maintained.

We are continuing to manage the COVID-19 situation and will continue to update you as the situation changes and as any further adjustments to city services are implemented.

I will now introduce my colleague, Mary-Ann Bedard – General Manager of the City's Shelter, Support and Housing Administration to update you.

END