

Update on COVID-19

Chief Pegg, Fire Chief & General Manager of Emergency Management

March 27, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.

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

Good afternoon.

On Wednesday, the City announced that all City parks amenities are closed. This does not include the open, green spaces within parks. Only the amenities within those parks are no longer available to the public.

All playgrounds, fitness equipment, sports fields, off-leash dog parks – fenced and unfenced, tennis courts, basketball courts, baseball diamonds, picnic areas, washrooms, garden allotments, skate and BMX parks, frisbee golf, and parking lots at City parks are closed to the public.

Work continues on the installation of signage and to lock gates in parks where they exist, and tape off other parks amenities to ensure public compliance in our collective efforts to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

City park green spaces, though, remain accessible to the public.

As Dr. de Villa has said repeatedly, going for a walk and getting fresh air is healthy, provided you're not sick – in which case, you must stay home and self-isolate.

Of course, as always, you must ensure physical distancing if out walking through City parks.

The City continues to deliver the essential and critical services the public requires, including emergency services, solid waste collection, safe drinking water and wastewater treatment, maintaining city infrastructure, and ensuring our most vulnerable continue to get the support and services they need in these difficult times.

A plan is being finalized for Monday to ensure the safe and efficient distribution of Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) cheques. We will share those details with you as soon as they have been confirmed.

I want to thank the City employees working behind the scenes that are keeping our workforce informed about COVID-19, ensuring staff deployment plans are continuously updated, and to acknowledge the tireless efforts of our Finance and Treasury staff. These are extremely challenging times for them all.

Each is critical in our ongoing efforts to keep Toronto healthy, safe and functioning.

And thank you to the public who are doing the right thing in helping stop the spread of this virus.

Enforcement of the various orders and closures that have been put in place to keep Toronto as healthy and safe as possible, and to ensure our healthcare system can continue to treat those who are sick, continues.

We all need to follow Dr. de Villa's advice to stay home if not performing an essential or critical service.

Those who choose to ignore or defy the law and open businesses that are not essential, or use public spaces that are closed for all of the reasons we have repeatedly stated, will be fined.

As of 11 am today, Municipal Licensing and Standards has responded to 79 complaints since March 24, and issued 10 notices for failure to comply with the provincial order to close non-essential business.

Through our audit we have issued an additional 6 notices and have re-inspected 11 locations that have now complied with the orders.

We've received 90 complaints related to social distancing in City Parks. Since Tuesday, Toronto Public Health attended 95 Bars and Restaurants that were identified as non-compliant last week.

49 of these are now closed, and 8 warning letters were issued for premises that were non-compliant with the prohibition on dine-in operations.

If the public has a concern that non-compliance is occurring with respect to closures, please call 311.

There is a wealth of COVID-19 information on the City's website. Please make toronto.ca/covid19 your first source of credible and up-to-date information.

As I always remind you, please do NOT call 911, unless there is an emergency that requires a response by police, fire or paramedics.

I would like to take a few minutes to talk about something that is very important to me, and to all of us – mental health.

We are in unprecedented times as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic emergency together. I know that many people are feeling anxious, unsure and even scared.

First and foremost, it is okay - not to feel okay - about COVID-19 and about things like social distancing, self-isolation and about the COVID-19 pandemic in general.

These are normal and healthy responses and feelings to an abnormal situation.

Being forced out of our normal daily routines, and being distanced from our normal social networks, support groups and friends is hard and many are struggling as a result.

In times like these, it can help to make an effort to let go of the things that we are not in control of.

Reach out to friends in a safe way, including by phone, skype, facetime or another social platform. Stay active in your home. Focus on doing your best to eat well and stay rested. These are all things that can help.

If you, or someone you know is in crisis or feeling suicidal, you should immediately call 9-1-1.

You can also access crisis support at [crisis services Canada.ca](https://crisis.services.ca), by phone at 1-833-456-4566 or by text message at 45645.

These services are available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

There are also some excellent resources and advice available from our friends at Occupational Health and Safety.

We have already posted much of this information on our various social media channels and we will also post this information to the toronto.ca/COVID-19 website.

Please take a few minutes to check in on your family, friends, colleagues and anyone who might be struggling.

We are all in this together and the more we can do to support one another, the better off we will all be.

And know that we will be here, doing our very best, to lead our city through this emergency and back to daily life, in the great and awesome city that we all enjoy.

Thank you.