

## Update on COVID-19

Chief Pegg, Fire Chief & General Manager of Emergency Management

**April 23, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.**

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

Good afternoon.

Work and proactive planning in Toronto, began before the first reported case of COVID-19 arrived in Canada. In January, we commenced coordination meetings across each of the City divisions and agencies.

We proactively assembled the COVID-19 Planning Task Force, and this team laid the foundation for the response that would follow. On March 11, we activated our emergency operations centre at Level 1, and only one day later, escalated that activation to level 2. On March 17, we transitioned to a full level 3 activation of our EOC, where we continue. This is the longest continuous activation of the EOC in Toronto history.

Today, we are operating the largest incident management system structure ever implemented in Toronto, with more than 40 separate sectors, functions and task groups working daily.

From the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, personal protective equipment has been a key issue and a significant challenge. The global nature of COVID-19 has placed unprecedented demands on the global PPE supply chain, and our team has had to deal with a plethora of issues that include:

Lack of availability, severe delivery delays, price gouging and scams, the introduction of fraudulent and poor quality PPE into the supply chain, and the ever-changing needs and demands on our front lines. But our team has, and continues to overcome these challenges.

Today, as a result of the tireless work of our PPE task force, we have been able to maintain a working inventory of PPE that continues to meet the needs of our workers.

COVID-19 has been one of the most rapidly changing situations that I have ever seen, let alone managed. The situation evolves not only from day-to-day, but literally from hour-to-hour. This resulted in us building nimble and robust processes that enable timely and effective decision making.

Formal Senior Leadership Team escalation processes have been implemented, whereby our EOC can escalate critical decisions for immediate action.

To date, 30 SLT escalations have been completed, with full accountability and authority tracking mechanisms embedded in the process. We have seen divisional partners step up to create solutions to emerging needs.

Examples include:

- Having our Technology Services team enable remote working capacity for more than 6,000 staff in record time;
- Creating leading-edge PPE management portals and dashboards;
- The TTC repurposing decommissioned buses to meet the emerging needs of Paramedic Services;
- The TTC again stepped up to provide dedicated transport for our shelter clients, who have tested positive or who require travel to be tested for COVID-19;
- Converting libraries into temporary food bank locations;
- And creating more than 1,300 emergency shelter spaces to name but a few.

I have also witnessed incredible examples of dedication, by people who continue to go above and beyond in response to this pandemic.

Like people who cancelled wedding dress fittings, rescheduled weddings and the many who haven't been home with their families in weeks, as they support our continued emergency operations;

Hundreds of people who have stepped up to take on new roles and to be redeployed to meet the needs of our residents;

Our healthcare, shelter and long-term care staff who deliver extraordinary care in the face of often-daunting pressure;

Numerous first responders who have cancelled pre-approved vacation plans so that they can report for duty each day when our city needs them the most;

And many, who are working extraordinary hours every week, as we continue to manage COVID-19 in our city.

The City of Toronto's response to COVID-19 has been, and continues to be robust, responsive and responsible.

Our three top priorities are first and foremost, to save lives; to prevent our healthcare systems from becoming overwhelmed; and doing all we can do to protect our social and financial systems. I am extremely proud and thankful for everyone who continues to give their all, as we battle COVID-19.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge that today also marks the 2 year anniversary of the Yonge Street tragedy. Two years ago today, I witnessed the impact of extraordinary evil and experienced firsthand, the devastation it caused. We lost precious lives in our City on that day, and many more were injured.

On behalf of our entire team, I extend sincere condolences to all those impacted by these tragic events. We also witnessed incredible acts of bravery, caring and kindness as our city responded. In the days following the van attack, I witnessed the incredible strength that so clearly emerged in our City.

Strength like that shown by the D'Amico family who have turned tragedy into hope for many, through the Turtle Project. We came together to mourn, to heal and to recover.

And together, we showed the world that we are: Toronto Strong.

I am proud of this city and of each and every person who steps up to help when we face challenges.

COVID-19 is one of the largest challenges that we have ever faced. But we will get through this together.

Of that, I am fully confident.

Because we are Toronto Strong.

Thank you.

END