

Update on COVID-19

Chief Pegg, Fire Chief & General Manager of Emergency Management

April 08, 2020 at 3:45 p.m.

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

Good afternoon.

I will provide a number of important updates today.

As you know, the issue of personal protective equipment continues to be one of the challenges being managed within our emergency operations centre. We are continuing to exhaust every viable supply chain option, to secure the timely supply of quality PPE we require.

As I advised yesterday, immediately upon becoming aware of the issues with surgical masks, we took action and recalled them. We also initiated a full occupational health and safety investigation to ensure that any potential impacts to both our staff and residents are understood and mitigated effectively. We have also proactively notified the Ontario Ministry of Labour.

While this investigation remains ongoing, preliminary results indicate that these masks were used in 2 long term care homes, by approximately 220 city staff. We continue to screen each staff member who enters any of our Long Term Care homes for symptoms of COVID-19, take their body temperature twice per day and each staff member monitors themselves for symptoms daily.

Additional physical inspections and verifications of all incoming personal protective equipment have been put in place by our purchasing and materials management division in response to the growing global concerns about poor quality and fraudulent PPE. The health and safety of our staff is a top priority for the City of Toronto.

As you know, the City of Toronto has also been taking a number of swift and significant steps to help our most vulnerable.

Yesterday we received word of a positive COVID-19 case in Seaton House. A client who was exhibiting symptoms was sent for testing and subsequently received a positive result for COVID-19. Immediately upon displaying symptoms, he was transferred to our isolation site while Toronto Public Health began their Case and Contact investigation. Additionally, the person who shared a room with this client has also been transferred to the isolation site.

Over the last two weeks, the capacity at Seaton House has been decreased by 40 beds as clients have been discharged. Taking this action has allowed us to limit the use of pre-existing bunk beds and to increase physical distancing inside the shelter. By the end of this week, 100 clients will have been moved to hotel or additional community center locations to provide for appropriate physical distancing in Seaton House.

As I have explained in the past, one of the roles of the Emergency Operations Centre is to plan for the potential impacts of any emergency. Some may refer to this work as "worst case scenario" planning.

As we have witnessed in other jurisdictions around the world, one of the grim realities of the COVID-19 pandemic is the potential for a significant number of deaths in our city as a result. As uncomfortable and difficult as it is to plan for these potential outcomes, it is the job of the teams that I am privileged to work alongside, to ensure that we do. Accordingly, we have planning teams within the Emergency Operations Centre working on a number of "worst case scenario" plans.

These contingency planning efforts include working directly with the Chief Coroner for Ontario, Hospitals and other public and private agencies to proactively identify various options that could be implemented to increase existing morgue capacity in the event that existing morgue and coroner's facilities in Toronto were to become overwhelmed. Our team is also proactively building service level adjustment plans such that we are prepared to respond in the event that personal protective equipment were to become unavailable due to Global supply chain issues.

These are two examples of the worst case scenario contingency planning efforts that have been underway for some time, and are continuing within the emergency operations centre. I share these examples with you, not to cause alarm, but in an effort to be fully transparent and to provide our residents with an understanding of the non-stop planning and preparedness work that is happening with your emergency operations centre.

I know that all of this is difficult information to hear. But this is important information to hear.

Yesterday, the media reported that the number of deaths in New York City from COVID-19, surpassed the total number of people who were killed at the World Trade Centre terrorist attacks of 9/11. This is a sobering reminder for us all about why we have taken the measures we have to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Toronto.

All of the actions we take in Toronto are in support of our objective: to save lives, avoid overwhelming our healthcare system, and to protect as much as possible our social and economic systems in Toronto and beyond.

As always, I encourage everyone to make [Toronto.ca/COVID-19](https://toronto.ca/COVID-19) your first point of contact for information relating to COVID-19 in Toronto, including the critical City services that continue to operate

Thank you.
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