

Update on COVID-19

Chief Pegg, Fire Chief & General Manager of Emergency Management

October 26, 2020 at 2 p.m.

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

Good afternoon.

Over the course of the weekend, we learned of the highest daily COVID-19 infection counts, since the outset of the pandemic.

This is not the news that any of us wanted to see.

We all long for decreasing case counts, less infections, less stress on our healthcare systems, less Toronto businesses being impacted and most importantly, less lives being impacted and lost to this terrible virus.

I feel the same things that each of you feel.

I want us to be able to reopen the city.

I want to be with family and friends, without having to be concerned about physical distancing, masking and transmission of COVID-19.

I want to be able to meet friends for dinner, shake hands, and be back in person with my colleagues at work.

I know that we are all tired of COVID-19.

We are frustrated, annoyed and even angry.

In my role as your Fire Chief, I am no stranger to dealing with emergencies that interrupt and impact life in our city.

When we respond to major fires and other emergencies, our number one priority is always to save lives.

We close roads, evacuate buildings, impact both transit and traffic flows and establish evacuation perimeters – all to reduce the risks associated with the emergency at hand.

When those emergencies happen, I stand in front of you and do my best to explain both what is happening and what we are doing about it.

I do my best, to beg your indulgence and patience, as we disrupt the normal cadence of life in our city.

I know that situations like major fires, are easier to understand than COVID-19.

We can both see and understand the risks associated with the smoke and flames from a major fire, and that makes immediate sense to us all.

Building an incident management system on this scale, and responding to an invisible emergency like COVID-19, is unlike anything any of us have had to do before.

We are exhausted by the impacts, tired of the restrictions and closures, and frustrated by how profoundly this is impacting our lives every day.

But now, more than ever, I need your help.

I need you to make the choice to be part of the solution; by following the advice and direction of our Doctors.

And I ask you to seek out credible sources of information about COVID-19, such as toronto.ca.

Now, more than ever, we need to stay the course.

Our teams are doing their very best, as we continue to battle this pandemic.

Every single day, we are planning for and responding to this emergency as it evolves.

We are working hard to ensure that we have the PPE that our frontline workers need, as they work to serve others.

And, while PPE certainly continues to be a global challenge, we are well prepared.

Our critical and essential services continue to be delivered each day.

From the outset of COVID-19, our incident management system priorities have remained the very same: to save lives and prevent our healthcare systems from becoming overwhelmed.

But, we simply can't achieve these goals without you.

Every time we avoid gatherings, every time we wear a mask, wash our hands and keep our distance, we save lives.

We prevent our hospitals and other healthcare systems from becoming overwhelmed.

We protect our long-term care homes, our shelters and the most vulnerable among us.

I know you are tired, frustrated and that you have been heavily impacted by COVID-19.

I know that, because I am too.

But we can do this.

Together, we can beat this virus and get back to all the things we miss.

And, until we get there, we will not stop doing all that we can to beat COVID-19.

Many times, I have stood in front of the media and asked each of you for your patience, understanding and indulgence as we battle whatever major emergency is occurring at that time.

Today, I am asking you again.

And I know that is a bigger ask than ever before, but:

We can save lives.

We can prevent the spread of COVID-19.

We can ensure that our hospitals and other healthcare facilities are able to deliver the world-class care we both need and enjoy.

And we can all get back to enjoying our friends and family, our vibrant dining, hospitality and entertainment venues that Toronto is so famous for, and get back to enjoying each of the activities and services that we so badly crave.

Please, follow the advice of our Doctors, and maintain compliance with the important public health measures that have been put in place.

Together, we can minimize the resurgence of COVID-19 in our city.

I know this is a big ask.

But I also know that we can do this.

Thank you.