

Update on COVID-19

Chief Pegg, Fire Chief & General Manager of Emergency Management

December 21, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

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

Good afternoon.

Saving lives, preventing the spread of COVID-19 and doing all we can to prevent our healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed have been our top priorities since the outset of this Global pandemic.

With those goals in mind, our coordinated enforcement teams have been working diligently to enforce the Regulations relating to COVID-19.

The City has taken formal enforcement action 1,744 times to date.

This weekend, our enforcement officers continued to monitor compliance with the Reopening Ontario Act.

216 bars and restaurants were inspected, resulting in a 99% compliance rate. 2 charges were laid as a result of violations of the Act. Our officers also laid 8 charges against non-essential businesses, as a result of operating in violation of the Act.

I am pleased to report that our enforcement teams did not observe any violations during shopping mall patrols, where only essential businesses are permitted to be open.

I want to thank the vast majority of residents and businesses who continue to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in our City.

Over the course of the weekend, 25 charges were laid, as a result of the investigation of complaints relating to large gatherings at various venues including a bar and lounge; an industrial unit; and on private property.

Toronto Police also responded to a number of protests and rallies over the course of the weekend.

This included a rally in downtown Toronto, a pop-up protest that overtook an intersection in 14 Division, a protest in Yonge Dundas Square, and a protest at Queen's Park.

Toronto Police also responded to an anti-mask, Santa Claus-themed rally in Downtown Toronto.

3 charges have been laid against the organizers of these protests and rallies, and the investigation into these protests and rallies remains ongoing by Toronto Police.

Penalties associated with being convicted of an offence under the Reopening Ontario Act are as high as \$100,000 for an individual, \$500,000 for a director or officer of a Corporation and up to \$10 million dollars for a Corporation.

Jail time is also possible for individuals.

On the 28th of November, 54 of the City's outdoor skating rinks opened, with new operational guidelines in place that reduce the risks associated with spreading COVID-19.

These safety provisions include a maximum of 25 skaters per ice pad, a reservation system to allow for contact tracing if necessary and no shinny or hockey play being permitted.

Outdoor rinks are open from 10 AM through 10 PM daily, with a maximum of 25 people on the ice surface at any one time, and subject to outdoor skating reservations being made in advance.

Attempting to access and/or use outdoor rinks outside normal operating hours is both illegal and dangerous.

Generally, usage has been in compliance with COVID-19 guidelines and requirements.

However, this weekend we experienced and responded to a number of issues that included:

- Unauthorized, after hours usage;
- shinny hockey play;
- exceeding of the capacity limits on the ice;
- open alcohol;
- groups loitering off the ice;
- insufficient physical distancing;
- not wearing masks;
- skaters not wanting to register or provide the required contact tracing information; and
- damage to property when accessing ice after hours.

I am very disappointed to report that a number of City staff were subjected to threatening behaviour when asking patrons to comply with guidelines, and when attempting to restrict access to the ice, during after-hours periods.

Toronto Police officers were engaged, and assisted in dealing with issues at 6 outdoor rinks, and also provided enhanced patrols at a further 7 outdoor rink locations.

These efforts were augmented by both Municipal Law Enforcement officers and Corporate Security, who responded to assist our Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff in addressing the issues that arose.

Amidst all of the difficulty and challenges associated with the restrictions that have been put in place, in response to COVID-19, it is important to remember that work is happening around the clock, to make vaccines available as very soon as possible.

The dedicated women and men, who are assigned to our immunization task force, are working tirelessly, ensuring that we are ready to launch vaccine administrations in Toronto, as very soon as vaccines are made available by the Province of Ontario.

Our City teams are directly connected to the teams being led by General Hillier and will continue this important work over the upcoming Holidays.

In a recent meeting with General Hillier, he described the work being done to procure, supply and administer COVID-19 vaccines as the bright light in the battle against COVID-19.

I hope that we can all both take comfort, and find a renewed sense of hope, as the COVID-19 vaccine programs continue to roll-out.

We will get through this and back to the thriving, vibrant and exciting city that we all crave so badly.

Thank you.