

Town Crier, April 11, 2020

Stratford Town Crier

Public Information, Notices and Meeting Schedules

EASTER HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

City of Stratford Administration Offices will be closed on Friday, April 10 and Monday, April 13.

DECLARATION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

To reinforce the serious nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential threat it poses to the community, Mayor Dan Mathieson declared a State of Emergency for the City of Stratford ON March 26, 2020.

“This declaration recognizes that the health, safety and welfare of Stratford residents is our top priority,” said Mayor Mathieson, “and we want to ensure that we can dedicate all available resources to protecting ourselves against this virus.”

The declaration of a State of Emergency is available to municipalities under Ontario's Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, and gives them additional flexibility to respond to an emergency, as well as access to funding if it becomes available. The Act requires that each municipality develop, implement and maintain an emergency management program and plan.

Stratford's emergency declaration was made:

- to help raise public awareness of the urgency of the COVID-19 situation
- to recognize the danger of community transmission of the coronavirus
- in co-operation with our neighbouring municipalities, with whom we share essential and emergency services

The County of Perth, the Townships of Perth South and Perth East and the Municipality of West Perth have also declared a State of Emergency today. The Town of St. Marys made its emergency declaration March 19.

The State of Emergency declaration represents the next step in the City of Stratford's carefully considered response to the COVID-19 outbreak. That response has included the closure of all City buildings and facilities to the public, and the reduction of some municipal services in order to limit the spread of the virus.

The City's Emergency Control Group was activated on Monday, March 16, 2020 and has met regularly by teleconference since that date to keep members informed and updated on local emergency planning.

The City continues to encourage residents to stay informed about COVID-19 and follow the guidance of health professionals, including Huron Perth Public Health (www.hpph.ca), to reduce the risk of infection.

HELP DO LOCAL GOOD SITE LAUNCHED

The City of Stratford has partnered with the United Way Perth-Huron on a “caremongering” initiative to bring those who have been most affected by COVID-19 together with those who are willing to lend a hand.

A new website has been launched at <http://helpdolocalgood.ca/> to provide information on how to help, and how to receive help.

There is a link on the site to donate to an Urgent Needs Fund that has been established to support to individuals and organizations who need assistance coping with the fallout from the COVID-19 outbreak.

The site also has a link to volunteer information for those who are able to contribute their time and energy to helping others in the community. For those who need help, the site provides links to community resources, including the 211 community information line.

And an associated Facebook group called Huron-Perth Covid 19 Resource Group - Help is Close to Home has been set up to provide information and support for people helping people during these challenging times. Those who do not use Facebook but want to help can contact reception@perthhuron.unitedway.ca or call 519-271-7730 to leave a phone number and briefly describe how and where you can help.

COVID-19 UPDATE – INITIATIVES TO ASSIST RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES

At the April 1, 2020, Special Council meeting, Council approved the following initiatives to provide for the immediate relief and flexibility of residents and businesses in the City of Stratford:

- Waive penalty and interest related to the April 9th property tax installment due-date and stop all progressive collection activities until August 30, 2020,
- Waive penalties, interest, late payment charges and other fees related to water and sewer billing and suspend all progressive collection activities until August 30, 2020,
- Suspend any water meter disconnections until August 30, 2020,
- Suspend the transfer of overdue water accounts to the property tax account to assist landlords,
- Provide free parking until May 31, 2020 or the commencement of the Festival Theatre season,
- Waive interest on any general invoices from the City until May 31, 2020,

- Suspend the non-sufficient fund administration fee for returned payments until May 31, 2020,
- Provide credits or refunds for cancelled city-run community programs and services,
- Provide free transit until August 30, 2020;

Council also approved continuing with the requirement for paid bag tags for curbside collection. Bag tags can be purchased from any of the following locations:

- East End Variety, 231 Douro Street
- Festival Variety, 555 Downie Street
- Esso, 501 Ontario Street
- Mornington Variety, 231 Mornington Street
- Sobey's, 581 Huron Street
- 7-Eleven, 327 Erie Street
- Video 99 and Convenience, 332 Erie Street
- Zehrs, 865 Ontario Street
- Canadian Tire Gas Bar, 1101 Ontario Street
- Shell Station, 405 Huron Street
- Esso, 1041 Erie Street
- Giant Tiger, 477 Huron Street
- Joe's Variety, 760 Ontario Street
- Stratford Variety, 542 Downie Street
- Stratford Mini Mart/GoCo, 666 Ontario Street
- Ultramar, 269 Erie Street

ALL OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL AMENITIES CLOSED

Last week, the Province of Ontario extended its Emergency Declaration to close all outdoor recreational amenities as a means of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

That means all playgrounds, sports fields, basketball and tennis courts, off-leash dog parks, benches, skate parks, picnic areas, outdoor community gardens, park shelters, outdoor exercise equipment, condo parks and gardens, and other outdoor recreational amenities are closed.

Green spaces in parks, trails and river areas remain open for walkthrough access, but individuals must maintain a safe distance of at least two metres apart from others while in these areas.

For everyone's safety, we encourage all residents to follow the directions of the Emergency Order.

Under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, punishments for individuals who do not comply with the Emergency Order include a maximum fine of \$100,000 and a jail term of up to one year.

The Stratford Police Service is responsible for enforcing the Emergency Order, and has increased the number of officers on patrol in the community.

If you have any concerns, please contact the Stratford Police Service at 519-271-4141.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR CITIZENS, BUSINESSES AFFECTED BY COVID-19

Stratford – For many people, the COVID-19 pandemic has created feelings of stress, anxiety, uncertainty and fear, and the City of Stratford would like to highlight some of the mental health supports available to our community.

The City of Stratford Social Services Department works in partnership with Family Services Perth-Huron to make a variety of counselling services available to its clients, including support for mental health and wellness.

Information about those services is available at <http://familyservicesperth-huron.ca/>

For local business owners and entrepreneurs hit hard by COVID-19, help is available through investStratford, the Perth Community Futures Development Corporation and the Stratford Perth Community Foundation, and also made possible through financial donations from Orr Insurance and Hyde Construction. Those partners have funded a project with the United Way Perth Huron to connect local entrepreneurs to the team at Family Services Perth-Huron, who will provide mental health and wellness support and counselling to businesses in Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County.

Referrals to the program are made through the mentorship teams at both the Stratford-Perth Centre for Business (<https://www.stratfordperthbusiness.ca>), and Perth Community Futures (<https://www.perthcfdc.ca>).

The United Way Perth-Huron and the Stratford & Perth County Community Foundation are also providing support and services to individuals, organizations and families affected by COVID-19. Information is available at <http://perthhuron.unitedway.ca> and <https://spccf.ca/>

And all residents can access support through the Province of Ontario's mental health supports including:

- **ConnexOntario:** Adults and frontline workers who are dealing with the realities of COVID-19 can call ConnexOntario at 1-866-531-2600 for mental health, addictions and problem gambling support.
- **BounceBack:** A free, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) program that provides guided mental health self-help supports for adults and youth 15+. Call 1-866-345-0224.

- **Kids Help Phone:** Children and youth 18 and under who need to talk to someone about their mental health can call Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868, for 24/7 virtual, phone and text support.
- **Good2Talk:** A phone and texting service that provides confidential support to post-secondary students. Call 1-866-925-5454 or text GOOD2TALKON to 686868.

“These are difficult times, but we want people to know they’re not alone,” said Mayor Dan Mathieson. “Please don’t hesitate to ask for help if you need it, because we’re all in this together.”

CITY OF STRATFORD ANNOUNCES COVID-19 ECONOMIC SUPPORT AND RECOVERY TASK FORCE

The City of Stratford is working with the business community to spearhead a special COVID-19 Economic Support and Recovery Task Force that will develop immediate and long-term actions to support local industry, small business and the workforce across all sectors.

Co-ordinated by investStratford, the task force will bring together a number of partners, including the Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce, Stratford Tourism Alliance, the Stratford City Centre Business Improvement Area, local employers and businesses, Employment Ontario and others. Communications will be the top priority, and will involve the sharing of information online, through social channels and video updates.

In the short-term, the task force will focus on sharing information with the following groups:

Business Community At Large

- Ongoing updates and communications; conference calls; sharing of information
- Links to Federal and Provincial government websites
- Recommendations to City Council for deferrals of interest and penalties on payments for property tax installments, water and hydro and other City-provided services

Entrepreneurs and Small Business

- The Stratford-Perth Centre for Business is increasing consultations
- One-one time with business specialists to discuss response, recovery and small business needs in the short term.
- Online content (website and Facebook) is being loaded daily and is free to view.
- Perth Community Futures Development Corporation – community loan programs

Recently unemployed workforce

- Federal Employment Insurance programs – standard, self-employed, caregivers
- Expansion of Ontario Works and emergency supports for our most vulnerable
- Recommendations to Council for deferrals of interest and penalties on payments for property tax installments, water and hydro and other City-provided services
- Online and virtual employment training and skills development via Partners in Employment and Conestoga College

“Public health and safety are the number one priority today, but we will recover,” said Mayor Dan Mathieson. “Work has begun on longer-term economic strategies. With our partners, we’ll focus on sectors hit hardest, working to unlock large project funding from all levels of government and lobbying for what our businesses need most.”

“While the current health crisis is evolving rapidly and the ultimate impact remains unknown, investStratford, the City and its economic development support partners are committed to ensuring the economic health and wellbeing of area citizens, businesses and industries,” added investStratford CEO Joani Gerber.

For more information about the task force, please contact:

Elke Bidner, Marketing & Communications Lead, investStratford
519-305-5055 or Ebidner@investstratford.com

Joani Gerber, CEO, investStratford
519-305-5055 or jgerber@investstratford.com

NOTICE OF DEFERRAL OF PUBLIC MEETING

Z01-20- 677 Erie Street- Planner: Rachel Bossie

Please be advised that the public meeting scheduled to hear all interested persons regarding the Zoning By-law Amendment Z01-20 submitted for 677 Erie Street scheduled for Tuesday April 14, 2020 at 7:00pm in Council Chambers City Hall has been DEFERRED.

In light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, no date has been scheduled for the public meeting at this time. When the public meeting is scheduled notice will be provided.

Further information may be obtained by contacting the Development Services Division at 519-271-0250 ext. 5345 during normal business hours.

CITY FACILITIES – HOW THEY'RE IMPACTED BY COVID-19

As part of our ongoing efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19, and in keeping with the Province of Ontario's declaration of a State of Emergency, the City of Stratford has closed its administrative buildings to the public, until further notice. **The City will continue to provide services to the community, including Social Services to our clients in Stratford, Perth County and St. Marys.**

Facilities that are **closed** to the Public:

- City Hall
- City Hall Annex
- Cemetery Office
- Stratford Landfill (remains open for curbside collection contractors and commercial customers only)
- Stratford Municipal Airport Office
- Stratford Fire Hall Offices
- Festival Hydro
- Stratford Tourism Alliance (Visit Stratford)
- Invest Stratford
- Stratford Perth Centre for Business
- Stratford Public Library
- All daycares and camps, including:
 - Anne Hathaway Daycare
 - March Break Daycamps
- All recreation facilities, including:
 - Stratford Rotary Complex (including arenas, walking track, community halls and meeting rooms);
 - Burnside Agriplex;
 - Dufferin Arena;
 - Allman Arena
 - Playgrounds, all-wheels skatepark

Facilities that are **open** to the Public

- Exterior washrooms at City Hall

MEETINGS, PROGRAMS, EVENTS – HOW THEY'RE IMPACTED BY COVID-19

Meetings, programs and events that have been CANCELLED until further notice

- Committee Meetings;
- Sub-committee meetings;
- Advisory Committee meetings;
- Public meetings, open houses, and public consultations (including Municipal Accommodation Tax);
- Stratford Lakeside Active Adults Association (SLAAA) programming;
- Swan Parade (April 5);
- Dairy XPO;
- Invest Stratford International Women's Day event;
- Farmers Market;
- Stratfords of the World Reunion, Ontario (postponed to 2021).

For updates, please visit our website at www.stratford.ca, email clerks@stratford.ca, or call 519-271-0250 during business hours.

RETAIL STORE CLOSINGS DURING EASTER HOLIDAY

Stratford's designated tourism season is May 1 to November 12 each year and does not extend to the Easter Holiday Season.

Shoppers and merchants are reminded that under the Retail Business Holidays Act, both Good Friday – April 10, 2020 and Easter Sunday – April 12, 2020, are among the designated holidays annually when most retail stores must be closed.

Minimum fines for opening businesses on prohibited days of retail operation are \$500 for the first offence, \$2,000 for a second offence and \$5,000 for a third or subsequent offence. Retail outlets may be fined up to \$50,000 or the total amount of gross sales for the holiday, whichever is greater.

Enforcement of the Retail Business Holidays Act in Stratford is the responsibility of Stratford Police Services.

For more information about retail shopping and closures under the Act, call the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services toll-free at 1-844-286-8404. For more information, visit www.ontario.ca/page/retail-business-holidays

GREEN BINS

The City of Stratford's green bin collection began the **week of April 6th, on your regular garbage day**. This is a weekly collection. Clearly marked compostable plastic bags, paper bags or newspaper can be used as liners.



MEETING SCHEDULE

Apr 14	Committee of the Whole In-camera	1:00pm	Electronic Participation
Apr 14	Regular Council Meeting	3:00pm	Electronic Participation

Given the COVID-19 Pandemic, the declared emergency and the closures of the building to the public, Rogers will be posting the video of the Regular Council meeting through their service and on their website. The City will also be posting a video to our website once available. Agendas can be accessed from the City's website. The Town Crier is also posted on the City's website.

Telephone: 519-271-0250 www.stratford.ca TTY: 519-271-5241