

King to keep some facilities closed to end year

By Mark Pavilons

King is maintaining a cautious and gradual approach to its reopening. Township staff have been evaluating safe, contained and fiscally responsible measures in determining the re-opening plans of some indoor facilities, through to the end of 2020. Based on continued efforts to contain transmission risks and adhere to public health guidelines, as well as uncertainties with the anticipated risk of a second wave this fall, for the safety of the public and staff, King is focusing on gradually reopening a limited number of indoor facilities this fall. We need to be mindful that the virus is very much still active, said Mayor Steve Pellegrini. Right now, I feel that the cautious approach is the best approach. All the hard work that helped flatten the curve can be undone if we don't remain disciplined in our actions. This means we need to continue wearing masks and practicing physical distancing and good hygiene. At this time, King Township is focusing its efforts on further expanding service levels through a limited reopening some of its indoor recreational amenities this fall, in a phased, cautious approach. Although the Municipal Centre will continue to be closed to the public to the end of 2020, staff will be introducing future in-person, by appointment only services, including commissioning, marriage licensing services, garbage bag tag and bin purchases. Details of these services will be announced in early September. Indoor recreational facilities will be evaluated for potential phased re-opening later this year, subject to continued containment of COVID-19. Only those that can practically provide for future indoor recreational programs in a safe and realistic service model. Subject to this evaluation, the Township's intent is to pilot the reopening of one facility in October (subject to user demands, viability of programs). Subject to facility audits, operational plans that meet all health and safety guidelines, as well as financial impact and feasibility of operating responsibly, further announcements will follow. Staff is working closely with the recreational facility user groups to assess their needs, as they too are evaluating if/how they can effectively offer fall/winter programs to their participants. Additional arena capacity may be considered subject to demand and based on these discussions. Any indoor facility used by the public will be subject to York Region's requirements of mandatory face coverings/face masks. Caution and prioritization of safety is at the forefront of decisions being made. King continues to expand virtual services, introducing innovative ways to continue to service our residents and businesses conveniently and safely. Introducing safe indoor public services and safe indoor recreational programs will be considered and phased, as we continue to adjust with the evolving pandemic. The government is strongly recommending everyone to continue following public health advice, including practising physical distancing with those outside your household or social circle (up to 10 people), wearing a face covering when physical distancing is a challenge or where it is mandatory to do so, staying home when ill, and washing your hands frequently and thoroughly. These measures are critical as more Ontarians return to work and access more businesses and services. For more information, please visit our King Township COVID-19 Information Hub for all the latest updates at covid19.king.ca.