

King closes facilities to contain spread of COVID-19

By Mark Pavilons

King has joined the widespread COVID-19 containment measures by closing its facilities through April 6.

The situation is changing daily, with reduced hours and closures becoming commonplace.

Mayhem ensued following the announcement last week that all Ontario schools will remain closed until April 5. Even King grocery stores experienced panic buying last week as worried people began stocking up on essentials such as toilet paper. Store staff worked tirelessly to restock the shelves.

Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, asked residents to practice normal grocery buying habits and rest assured that our grocery production and supply chain will continue to provide Ontarians with the food we enjoy each and every day.

King Mayor Steve Pellegrini said they take their direction from York public health and word was to cancel all public gatherings of 250 people or more. All March Break and subsequent programs have been cancelled at King Libraries until Monday, April 6.

King has closed all recreation and cultural facilities to the public through April 5. Programming at these facilities are also cancelled. The Municipal Centre at 2585 King Road is also closed to the public.

All essential services will continue, including Fire and Emergency Services, water, wastewater, waste collection and roads. Some non-essential services may be impacted.

During the closure, council chambers will be set up for King's Emergency Operations Centre and ready in the event the decision is made to activate.

Citizens can still do business with King on the website at www.king.ca, by phone at 905-833-5321 or by email at serviceking@king.ca.

The risk to York Region residents of acquiring the virus in the community remains low.

Visit york.ca/covid19 for more information or call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653. You may also contact Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 for medical advice. Telehealth Ontario is a free confidential service you can call to receive health advice or information. A registered nurse will take your call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Events throughout the Township have been either cancelled or put on hold.

Church services have been cancelled and the Province has requested that all restaurants close and offer take-out only.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has posted guidelines aimed at helping event planners figure out whether to cancel mass gatherings of people as the federal government works to quell the potential spread of COVID-19.

The information was shared with King officials recently. Risk mitigation strategies could include:

- ? Reducing the number of participants or changing the venue to prevent crowding.
- ? Staggering arrivals and departures.
- ? Providing packaged refreshments instead of a buffet.
- ? Increasing access to handwashing stations.
- ? Promoting personal protective practices (hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, staying home if ill).
- ? Offering virtual or live-streamed activities.
- ? Changing the event program to reduce high risk activities such as those that require physical contact between participants.

York Region Public Health continues to collaborate with local hospitals, emergency services and other health agencies to ensure prompt reporting and follow up of all individuals who may require testing for COVID-19.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever, cough and shortness of breath.

The Regional Municipality of York is implementing reporting changes to make it easier for media, residents and businesses to stay informed about COVID-19. A dedicated web page will be updated twice daily at 10:45 a.m. and 5:45 p.m. that includes information on York Region COVID-19 cases reported to date. This information will be provided in lieu of media releases announcing each new case.

Visit york.ca/covid19 for more information or call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.

Mackenzie Health, Southlake Regional Health Centre and Markham-Stouffville have all opened their own COVID-19 assessment

centres. The centres are located in or adjacent to each of the respective hospitals.