



For Immediate Release

April 3, 2020

Niagara's municipalities declare State of Emergency in response to COVID-19

Today, in anticipation of a surge of COVID-19 activity in Niagara in the coming weeks, Niagara Region and Niagara's 12 local area municipalities have jointly declared a State of Emergency.

Declaring an emergency under s 7.0.1 (1) of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* provides Niagara with all options available to protect the health and safety of Niagara residents.

The Mayors and Regional Chair offer the following joint statement regarding the decision to declare this emergency to help protect the health of Niagara:

"The timing of this declaration is imperative as our actions over the next several weeks will determine how well Niagara will fare in the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation represents a real and pressing risk to the health of our community and we all need to work together to slow the spread of the virus.

By declaring this emergency together, we are underscoring the critical nature of the situation with everyone in the region. We know most of you are following the guidance of our public health experts, and we offer our sincere thanks. We recognize how hard this time is for everyone, and the sacrifices you are making to practice physical distancing, and even complete isolation in some cases.

We are here today, as a united Niagara, to ask everyone who is currently following these directives to keep it up. You are making a real difference by slowing the spread of the virus and you are helping to protect the health of your friends, families and neighbours.

Your responsible behaviour is also helping to protect our vital healthcare workers, hospital staff and first responders. These are the people who are working around the clock to keep us all safe and we all need to step up and do our part to help keep them healthy.

But through this declaration we also want to address those in our communities who think these rules and regulations do not apply to them. Ignoring the order to stay home and practice physical distancing is not negotiable. We are at a tipping point in this pandemic, and everyone needs to get on board – we are all in this together and we need everyone to do their part.



We know that with the arrival of warmer weather, and the upcoming religious holidays, there will be some across Niagara who may not follow the public health directions as closely as they should. But these next few weeks could be the most important for our community if we want to slow the spread of the virus and protect as many people as possible.

On behalf of the people of Niagara, we would like to offer our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the healthcare workers, hospital staff and first responders in our community. You are doing incredible work and putting your health on the line to keep us all safe. We will forever be in your debt.

We want to acknowledge and thank the residents, non-profit groups and service clubs helping those in need during these difficult times. We recognize these efforts and encourage those who are helping their neighbours in self-isolation due to age, health or being at a higher risk to keep it up.

We also want to call the people of Niagara to action. There are countless examples of our residents and businesses rising to the occasion over the past 50 years, and this will be no different. We ask you to check in on each other with a phone call, email or video chat. Offer to help friends, family and loved ones with groceries if you have to make the trip. If you have family members or neighbours over the age of 70 do what you can to make sure they don't have to leave the house. And finally, if you have the means, consider making financial donations to your local food banks.

It is during these most challenging times that Niagara proves it is one of the best places to live, work, raise a family and do business. As your Mayors and Regional Chair, we want to assure you that when we arrive on the other side of this emergency we will be a stronger, and more resilient Niagara. Remember, stay home and stay safe."

Directives for Niagara

Residents are reminded that the following mandatory directives are now in place:

- Stop all gatherings of more than five people (this includes private gatherings of extended family)
- Avoid all outdoor recreational amenities, including parks, playgrounds, beaches and sports fields
- Close all non-essential businesses
- Stay home as much as possible and only leave the house once a week if required



- Self-isolate for 14 days if you have symptoms or have returned to Canada from being outside the country
- Practice physical distancing and wash hands frequently

Enforcing the Emergency Management and Civil Protections Act

Municipalities across Ontario have the power to issue fines to enforce these public health and emergency directives. Failing to comply with an emergency order carries a fine of \$750 per offense, and up to \$1,000 for obstructing those attempting to carry out their duties under the *Act*.

Concerns around enforcement should be directed to local municipal by-law offices. After-hours calls may also be directed to the Niagara Regional Police Service's non-emergency line at 905-688-4111. Do not call 911.

More information on Niagara's response to the COVID-19 situation can be found at niagararegion.ca/covid19, or by calling Public Health's COVID-19 InfoLine at 905-688-8248 (press 7, then press 2).

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Media inquiries can be directed to your local municipal contact, or by contacting:

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