
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID-19 service updates to support residents and front-line workers

Midhurst/March 20, 2020 – As the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Simcoe County increases, the County is reminding residents to follow the advice of public health experts to help protect our residents and front-line staff who continue to provide essential services. Following best-practices outlined by public health officials will help flatten the curve, limit the impact of COVID-19 on our health care capacity, and speed up recovery.

All residents, businesses, and organizations have a responsibility to do their part and social distancing is paramount – especially avoiding group gatherings and ensuring seniors take precautions. The County of Simcoe continues to make necessary adjustments to services to protect the public, our staff, and valued contractors while responding to these public health recommendations.

Service Updates:

Waste services

While landfills and transfer stations are closed to the public, the County's curbside waste collection continues. The efforts of our waste collection operators are appreciated more than ever during this time, and the County is taking steps to ensure their wellbeing while continuing to offer this important service to residents.

Effective, Monday, March 23 the following adjustments to curbside waste collections will take effect:

- All green bin organic materials must be bagged, sealed and placed inside green bins. Compostable bags are preferred; however, plastic bags* are being accepted on a temporary basis to assist residents with this change
- All garbage must be bagged and sealed properly
- Residential units may place out diapers in clear, sealed bags on their garbage day without additional bag tags
- Exercise social distancing with collection operators

**Note the County's contracted organics processor is temporarily accepting plastic bags and will continue to separate and divert organic materials in support of the environment. All plastic bags (clear, grocery, garbage) will be accepted but must be sealed and placed inside green bins.*

LINX Transit

Effective March 23 the County is implementing free ridership on all LINX routes until further notice. Additional sanitization measures are in place on all County buses. The County will be reducing the frequency of service on some of routes in the near future and further information on reduced hours of service will be updated on the County's website.

Ontario Works

Ontario Works have closed offices in Angus and Bradford West Gwillimbury, and hours of operation to the public at all offices are being adjusted to 12-4 p.m. Monday to Friday. Details are located at: www.simcoe.ca/covid19.

Social Services - Supporting Vulnerable Residents

The County continues to work closely with homelessness service providers around the region to identify available resources to assist with continued provision of supports to individuals experiencing homelessness. A number of emergency shelters are electing to begin this relocation while others are planning to retain their current shelter models at this time.

On Friday, March 20, the County authorized and provided funding support for the relocation of emergency shelter occupants to motel/hotel rooms across Simcoe County to better support social distancing and isolation measures. The possibility of accessing space through other community organizations has also been explored. Meetings with stakeholders have focused on their Emergency and Continuity of Operations plans and the allocation of municipal funding toward processes associated with social distancing and isolation.

Long Term Care

Visitors are restricted to essential visitors only at all the County's long term care homes, retirement home and supportive housing facility. Furthermore, the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Simcoe-Muskoka has advanced directions that now prohibit long term care residents and clients of these facilities from leaving except under medically warranted circumstances. The County is strictly adhering to these directions.

Necessary health precautions

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, led by Dr. Charles Gardner, has recommended that residents take the following precautions:

- As of March 16, if you have travelled outside Canada please self-isolate for 14 days. People who are self-isolating should not go to work
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Do not use surface disinfectant wipes to clean your hands
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, and avoid close contact with people who are sick
- If you are sick, stay home
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Maintain a 2-metre (6-feet) distance between persons

These measures are recommended by federal, provincial, and local health experts. By following these precautions, residents can limit their chances of contracting COVID-19.

The County will continue to provide regular public updates through social media, website content www.simcoe.ca/covid19, and press releases to ensure residents are well informed. Service Simcoe contact centre remains open and waste related details are posted on the Simcoe County Collects app.

For up-to-date information on the status of County services, including waste collections, residents can visit simcoe.ca/covid19, or call **1-800-263-3199** or **705-726-9300**. Waste collection details are also posted on the *Simcoe County Collects* app. For health-related information, go to simcoemuskokahealth.org, or call the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit directly.

County of Simcoe is composed of sixteen member municipalities and provides crucial public services to County residents in addition to providing paramedic and social services to the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia. Visit our website at **simcoe.ca**.

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