Niagara-on-the-Lake Declares a State of Emergency

For Immediate Release  March 23, 2020

-Niagara-on-the-Lake-  Today, in consultation with the Town's Emergency Control Group (ECG) and with the support of her Town Council colleagues, Lord Mayor Betty Disero declared a state of emergency to further protect Niagara-on-the-Lake from the potential spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act S. 4(1) states,

"The head of council of a municipality may declare that an emergency exists in the municipality or in any part thereof and may take such action and make such orders as he or she considers necessary and are not contrary to law to implement the emergency plan of the municipality and to protect property and the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the emergency area."

An emergency declaration aligns the Town with the Province granting the Mayor the authority to take such action as she considers necessary to implement the Town's Emergency Response Plan.

"Declaring an emergency is the next important step the Town is taking toward slowing the potential spread of COVID-19 for the protection of our residents, businesses, and Staff. With hundreds of people returning to Niagara-on-the-Lake from winter travel, what we do over the next few days is critical. People must understand that self-isolation is absolutely essential," stated Lord Mayor Disero. "This declaration will better position the Town as we respond to this rapidly evolving situation. We must seize this opportunity in an effort to stop the potential for community spread."

When asked his response to the declaration, Nick Ruller, Fire Chief & Community Emergency Management Coordinator, explained, "The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake continues to take significant and important measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our community. Today's declaration is another example of the timely and decisive action that is required to flatten the curve and lessen the impact of COVID-19 in our community. Each one of us is responsible for the health and wellbeing of one another during this pandemic. When people are self-isolating, this crisis is contained. I applaud Lord Mayor Disero and Town Council for their commitment and leadership as we continue to take every necessary step to effectively reduce potential for spread of this virus throughout Niagara-on-the-Lake."

Lord Mayor Disero added that it is imperative that we work together to take care of one another during this unprecedented time.

"I would like to assure you, our valued residents that we are here for you. We will do everything in our power to help our community get through this health emergency. Please
remain calm and do your part by practicing social distancing and staying home as much as possible. If you have just returned to Niagara-on-the-Lake, go straight home and do not leave your house for 14 days. I know the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake are incredibly kind and helpful, and I have no doubt that we will work together to get through this trying time. Call a friend or a member of Council to help pick up whatever essential supplies you need."

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified that the COVID-19 virus infects people of all ages. However, their evidence to date suggests that two groups of people are at a higher risk of severe impact from the COVID-19 virus; older people and those with underlying medical conditions. With more than 50 percent of our population over the age of 50, this human health emergency presents a significant risk to Niagara-on-the-Lake. This means our unique tourism, agriculture, and business community will also be especially impacted.

"Our ECG continues to make timely, thorough, and informed decisions in response to the unfolding situation. This declaration will better position the Town as we continue to adapt and may provide access to additional resources and funding to help control the potential for spread of this virus," stated Sheldon Randall, Interim CAO. "Furthermore, the declaration is intended to align us with the Province’s position that strong action is needed to limit potential community spread and assist in heightening the importance of the messaging from Public Health Agencies."

“I want to thank my Regional colleagues and the Regional Chair for their leadership during this pandemic,” explained Lord Mayor Disero. “While it’s crucial that we take this next step by declaring a state of emergency, I understand that other Regional municipalities don’t face the same combination of risks as Niagara-on-the-Lake and therefore may not yet be in a position to declare. With our mature population, our unique agricultural, tourism, and business communities, the number of incoming migrant workers, as well as seasonal residents returning from winter travel, we are at a greater risk of a human health emergency.”

It is important to note that despite Niagara-on-the-Lake’s state of emergency, essential services such as pharmacies, grocery stores, other food providers intend to remain open to the public. Residents are strongly encouraged to consider alternative methods, such as drive-thru, delivery, and ordering online, to obtain items such as food and medication.

With the speed at which this pandemic is evolving, there is considerable risk to the community if we collectively fail to employ the recommendations outlined by Federal, Provincial, and Regional Public Health agencies. It is essential that everyone complies with preventative measures laid out by the public health agencies, including the practice of social distancing, and not overloading hospitals and health facilities. If you are experiencing symptoms, please call the Novel Coronavirus Info-Line first at 1-888-505-6074. Nurses are available to take your call between 9:00 AM and 8:30 PM Monday to Friday and between 9:00 AM and 4:15 PM Saturday and Sunday.

As a reminder, the following Town services and facilities remain closed to the public until further notice:

- Town Administration Buildings
• Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre
• Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library
• Queenston Library
• Meridian Credit Union and Centennial Arenas
• Niagara-on-the-Lake Courthouse
• All public washrooms
• All Town events and gatherings, including in-person Council and Committee meetings

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is working diligently to safeguard the health and well-being of all residents, businesses and Staff. We will continue to provide regular updates through social media and the Town’s website to ensure residents are well informed. To accommodate those residents who don’t operate online, important messaging from the Town will continue to be displayed at all local post offices.

To learn more about what it means to declare a state of emergency, review all Town updates related to COVID-19, read answers to frequently asked questions, and see up-to-date information on the status of Town services, please visit www.notl.com/COVID-19, or call 905-468-3266. Phones are being answered between the hours of 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM Monday to Friday, and online service requests remain available at www.notl.com. Town Staff will continue to assist and serve citizens online and over the phone.

Visit www.canada.ca/coronavirus for the most up to date information from the Federal Government.

For more information, please call:

Lord Mayor Disero
905-468-3266