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Town of Halton Hills  
Office of the Mayor

April 20, 2020

## An Open Letter to the Community

I know this is an unprecedented and stressful time. I also know that residents are looking for answers; that the people in this community want to have reliable, trustworthy sources to get information that is honest and accurate. I want this too. That's why I have decided to write this letter and I do so, on behalf of Town Council.

Last week, I reported on local COVID cases based on information the Town had received from Halton Region Public Health. Over the weekend, the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) released new information – we on Council received this information at the same time that it was made public. Let me be clear, the Town has no jurisdiction over public health. Information is released at the discretion of the MOH and Town Council is not informed in advance of the community.

In the subsequent media release issued by Halton Region on Saturday, April 18, Dr. Meghani, Medical Officer of Health states that *"I have received clarification from the Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner and as a result, we are releasing this information"*. The release goes on to report that *"As of April 17, 63 residents and 18 staff have been confirmed as COVID-19 cases, with some lab results still pending. As of April 17, Public Health has been informed of 8 deaths of Mountainview residents who tested positive for COVID-19. The majority of cases at Mountainview are asymptomatic and have been isolated."*

The Town and Halton Region have separate and distinct responsibilities. During this health crisis, Public Health – a department of the Region led by the Medical Officer of Health is the lead agency for collating and reporting on COVID-related data. The Medical Officer of Health has no accountability to Halton Hills Town Council.

Halton Region Public Health reports on the COVID case statistics and the challenge lies both in providing accurate information (as numbers change quickly) as well as balancing the release of this information with the need to protect the privacy of individuals who may be infected. I think it is important to note that tracking the statistical breakdown of cases is only one part of the work Halton Region's Public Health Department performs; staff is working to protect the health and safety of the community by isolating community spread and ensuring that infection control measures are in place at commercial residences and care facilities.

My heart goes out to the families that have been impacted by COVID-19 and to anyone who is infected, I do wish for you, a speedy recovery. This is a difficult time for everyone but certainly the stress is greater on those who have been directly impacted.

For Town-related COVID-19 updates, visit: [haltonhills.ca/COVID](https://haltonhills.ca/COVID) . For public health-related information, visit: [halton.ca/COVID](https://halton.ca/COVID).

Mayor Rick Bonnette

**1 Halton Hills Drive, Georgetown, L7G 5G2**

905-873-2601 | 1-877-712-2205 | [haltonhills.ca](https://haltonhills.ca)