



April 14, 2020

Town of Halton Hills

Frequently Asked Questions

STATE OF EMERGENCY

Q1: What is a state of emergency and what does that mean for our Town?

A1: A state of emergency can be declared as per the Emergency Management & Civil Protection Act:

The Head of Council of a municipality may declare an emergency exists in the municipality or 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.

The Town declared a state of emergency on March 24, 2020. This declaration:

- Tells residents that we are taking this pandemic very seriously
- Reminds residents to follow recommendations from public health
- Removes “red tape” to allow Council to make decisions faster
- Brings partner agencies together to help with response efforts
- Gives volunteers WSIB coverage so they feel safe and secure
- May help the Town access financial aid

Q2: Is the Town going to implement a full-scale quarantine which requires people to stay in their homes?

A2: Any such decision will be made in concert with senior levels of government based on the advice of public health experts. This really needs to be a federal or provincial decision, where there is the authority to enact a measure of this nature that covers a broad geographical area.

The COVID-19 emergency is an emerging situation. Events and directives from senior levels of government evolve daily. The answers are current as of the date indicated on this document. As time permits, this document will be updated to reflect new information.

Q3: How long is this going to last?

A3: We do not know. We will continue to take information and advice from public health experts. Really this depends on all of us. If we don't take responsibility for stopping the spread of the virus and flattening the curve, this could go on for a much longer period of time.

Q4: Is there any way for the Town to specify the COVID-19 cases in Acton and Georgetown instead of the blanketed Halton Hills?

A4: Similar to the rest of the Greater Toronto Area, Halton Region is experiencing community transmission of COVID-19. This means that residents need to be vigilant and follow recommendations for physical distancing and hand hygiene no matter where they are located in Halton Region.

Providing a map of COVID-19 cases by neighbourhood could provide a false sense of security, and may suggest to residents that they do not need to take precautions in areas that do not yet appear to have a confirmed case on the map.

Due to delays in symptom onset, testing, and reporting, as well as the possibility of cases that don't develop any symptoms at all, there may be cases in areas that would not be represented on the map. Also, cases may visit many places in the community before becoming infectious; a map showing where they live would not necessarily show all the areas they may have visited. As cases recover from their symptoms, the map would quickly become outdated.

Halton Region Public Health is responsible for collecting and reporting on COVID-19 cases. Information is available on the [Halton Region COVID-19 webpage](#) where there is also an option to register to receive a regular surveillance report which summarizes cases.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

Q1: With Town Hill closed, how do I pay my taxes?

A1: The best way to pay your taxes is online through your banking institution. Property owners are also encouraged to enroll in the Town's pre-authorized payment plans; please contact tax staff at 905-873-2600, ext. 2622 to arrange enrollment. For those who wish to pay by cheque, there is a secure drop box available at the front of Town Hall.

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Q2: Will the Town be deferring taxes, including those for business?

A2: Tax relief measures were introduced on March 24, 2020. As part of these measures:

- The Town is waiving the late payment penalties from April 1st through to June 30th.
- Property owners who are on the pre-authorized payment plan or paying through post-dated cheques will be able to cancel their payments between April and June without penalty as long as they do so prior to the 15th of April. They can advise of cancellations by emailing tax staff at taxdepartment@haltonhills.ca or by calling 905-873-2600, ext. 2622.
- Taxpayers can also opt to make partial payments without incurring a late penalty until June 30.
- The Town is waiving any other administration fees between April and June including those associated with insufficient funds and arrears.

The final tax bill will be mailed out beginning of June as per usual; however, the final tax due dates have been postponed by one month to August and Oct.

Q3: I'm worried about being able to pay my taxes once the penalty grace period ends June 30. What are my options?

A3: After June 30th, taxpayers on pre-authorized payment plans can opt for extended payment schedules that include November and December.

For those facing financial hardship, they can contact the Property Tax Supervisor to discuss a reasonable repayment plan. The Supervisor can be reached through 905-873-2600 extension 2246 or through email at taxdepartment@haltonhills.ca

Once penalties are re-introduced after June 30th, the amount from July to December will be reduced to 1% from 1.25%.

Q4: Can we expect the Town to reduce taxes because service has been reduced?

A4: While service has been reduced, there have been unforeseen expenses. Staff will be assessing the impacts and providing an analysis to Council for their consideration.

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Q5: What is the Town doing to help small businesses during this difficult time?

A5: We are aware of the challenges being faced by the business community and to date we have:

- Waived late tax payment penalties from April to June to assist with the immediate cash-flow challenge
- Have encouraged tenants and landlords to work together to find solutions on rent payments
- Established regular communication with key stakeholders to coordinate our response. This includes the BIAs, Chamber of Commerce, Halton Region and RTO3;
- Created a dedicated webpage with resources and tools to assist businesses in mitigating COVID-19 impacts
- Launched a Business Survey to gather information on specific impacts and to help the Town develop the most effective response;
- Started developing a “Recovery Plan” to assist small businesses and to expedite economic recovery post-COVID19; and
- We continue to process funding applications for the Community Improvement Plan (CIP).
- We are also launching an “Economic Support and Recovery Task Force” to continue to communicate with the business community, identify challenges and supports, and to coordinate our response.

The Economic Development team continues to be available to support our business community. Please visit investhaltonhills.com for more information.

Q6: Will the Town be able to stay in good financial shape with the loss in revenue?

A6: While it is true that the Town has lost revenue from cancelled programs and reduced services in addition to lower returns on investments, the Treasurer has been closely monitoring the situation and adjusting our financial strategy accordingly

There are a number of changes that will help mitigate the impact on the Town’s cash flow:

- Part-time staff have been placed on Designated Emergency Leave due to the closure of facilities, the cancellation of programs and reductions in service requests, e.g. ActiVan
- Staff is only spending on non-discretionary items that support operations
- Staff is also carefully reviewing the capital program for possible deferrals
- Staff is tracking expenditures related to the impacts of COVID-19 in the event that financial assistance from other levels of government is made available
- If required, staff will use Town reserves which are intended to assist with maintaining long term financial stability

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Q7: Is the Town instituting some financial restraint measures in response to COVID-19 impacts?

A7: Expenditures will focus on non-discretionary items only. Staff will also be reviewing the capital program for possible deferrals and have already deferred capital projects valued at approximately \$4M. Further actions will be considered as required.

Q8: Will development charges be deferred? Can the indexing of development charges as of April 1 be postponed?

A8: Development charges will still apply, and indexing will occur as of April 1 as per the Town and Region's bylaw. However, in recognition of any delays the outbreak may have caused, developers at the building permit stage in April can enter into an agreement that will enable them to receive a pre-April 1 development charge rate.

Q9: I've signed up for a program (or rented a space or paid for theatre tickets), which is now cancelled. How do I go about getting a refund?

A9: Staff will be reaching out to each program participant and facility renter via email to advise of the spring session cancellations and reimbursement process.

Public inquiries regarding the spring session may be directed to the Recreation Hotline at (905) 873 2600 extension 2275 or e-mail recreation@haltonhills.ca

Staff will be asking for the public's patience as we process the high volume of reimbursement transactions in the coming weeks

In the case of paid Library programs that are cancelled, refund cheques will be issued and mailed.

HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

Q1: I've heard that a number of Town staff have been laid off? What is happening?

A1: On April 2, 2020, part-time staff was notified of their temporary Designated Emergency Leave (DEL) status as of April 6 due to the closure of facilities, including schools, the cancellation of programs and reduced requests for ActiVan service

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Q2: How many PT employees were impacted by this move?

A2: 276 part-time staff was put on Designated Emergency Leave

- 84% of all part time staff
- 45% of entire staff complement

Four departments were affected in varying degrees including staff from Recreation, the Library, as well as ActiVan drivers and crossing guards.

ENFORCEMENT ISSUES

Q1: How is the Town enforcing physical distancing and crowd control?

A1: The Town is reinforcing the message through ongoing communications and attending when a complaint is received

Q2: What do I do if I see people entering closed facilities like skateboard parks or basketball courts?

A2: Residents can call the COVID-19 hotline at 905-825-4722 if they have concerns about people entering closed areas

Q3: I saw my neighbour on the street and he just returned from a trip. Is that allowed?

A3: People returning from out of country are required to self-isolate for 14 days. If this is not being followed, residents are advised to contact the COVID-19 hotline at 905-825-4722. Local police are responsible for the enforcement of the *Quarantine Act*.

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Q4: How is parking enforcement being managed at this time? With so many people working from home, is the Town being more flexible about where people park and for how long?

A4: The Town has put a hold temporarily on parking enforcement operations due to the current circumstances of many households e.g., people working from home, students returning from post-secondary institutions

Only parking issues related to safety are being enforced such as blocked sight lines, sidewalks and fire hydrants and the unauthorized use of accessible parking spaces

Q5: I hear that monthly permit holders can now park for free in April. Is that true?

A5: The Town has suspended the collection of fees for municipal lots due to the current circumstances of many households including the need to also support more working from home.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Q1: What is an essential service or business?

A1: For clarification on what is an essential business, residents should utilize the Government of Ontario's website at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/list-essential-workplaces> or call the Stop the Spread Business Information Line at 1-888-444-3659.

Examples of essential businesses include grocery stores, pharmacies, takeout/drive through restaurants, pet food suppliers, laundromats and dry cleaners, liquor stores, banks and accounting services, and telecommunications providers.

Q2: How is the Town following up on non-essential businesses that are still open?

A2: Follow up is occurring as complaints are received and through observations made while patrolling the community

Q3: If essential businesses are not following physical distancing guidelines, what is the Town's response?

A3: Enforcement staff will first educate the business on the EMCPA Orders and provide guidelines on safe practices e.g., signage, queuing up of patrons, etc.

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Q4: Are there any changes to garbage pickup or recycling due to COVID-19?

A4: At this time, garbage pickup remains the same with the exception of bulk item pick up which has been temporarily suspended. Waste and recycling collection is a Halton Region service, please check the Regional website or call 311 to confirm the latest pick-up schedules.

FIRE SERVICES

Q1: During the burn ban, who do I call to report someone who is burning material outside?

A1: Residents can call Fire Dispatch using the 911 number. General inquiry questions should be forwarded to the Fire Department's general line at 905 877-1133

Q2: How long will the burn ban last and how will I be notified when it is lifted?

A2: The ban is in place until further notice. Staff will continually review relative to the COVID-19 situation as well as the fire risk and will rescind the ban when appropriate

Notification will be done via social media, media release and the Town's and Fire Department web pages.

Q3: What is included in the ban?

A3: The ban forbids all open air burning with the exception to the need to cook food on a BBQ/grill/spit or to use appliances approved by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority.

All current permits are suspended and the Fire Department will no longer be processing permit renewals or new applications until further notice.

Failure to follow this burn ban may result in invoices for our response and including charges under the Ontario Fire Code with fines up to \$50,000.

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Q4: How is the Fire Department positioned for PPE?

A4: The Fire Department has a robust supply of hand sanitizer, face shields, gowns and gloves with several months' supply of N95 fitted masks

PUBLIC AMENITIES

Q1: What public open spaces are still available for us to enjoy?

A1: As directed by the Province, green spaces in parks are open to the public to enjoy for walks. Park amenities including playgrounds, skate parks, sports courts, leash free areas, sports fields and ball diamonds, outdoor exercise equipment, community gardens and picnic shelters are closed in order to reduce active transmission of the virus and social gatherings

Q2: Can I still go for a walk with my family?

A2: Residents are able to go for walks in their neighbourhoods or local parks but must maintain physical distancing of 2m from others at all times

BUILDING/PLANNING SERVICES

Q1: Are site plan/zoning amendment/ building permit applications still being accepted? How is submission of applications being handled?

A1: Planning

New development applications and re-submissions are still being accepted.

Plans can be dropped off at Town Hall on the table inside the front doors. Pertinent information regarding the procedure can be found on the Town's website under [Planning](#).

Building Services

Plans can be dropped off at Town Hall on the table inside the front doors. When ready, permits can be picked up in the same location. Detailed information is available [here](#). While most staff are working from home, they have the required technology to do the review and discuss with applicants.

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Q2: What about other Planning activities such as public information meetings, Committee of Adjustment meetings and projects?

A2: No public meetings and Committee of Adjustment hearings are being scheduled at this time. Work on long range policy projects continues to be done remotely

Q3: Is the Town still doing building inspections?

A3: Yes, building Inspections (including inspections of construction without permits) are being conducted either in-person or virtually depending on the occupancy of the building.

Q4: Is ActiVan still operating and what precautions are being taken to ensure the safety of passengers and drivers?

A4: Eligible clients can book their trip and use the service free of charge.
Please note: this fee waiver does not apply to Taxi Scrip or Youth Taxi Scrip

- Bookings can be made by calling ActiVan at 905-702-6435, Monday through Friday 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Any unused tickets can be retained for future use and at this time, ActiVan bookings are restricted to essential travel only.
- The Town has increased the cleaning and sterilization schedule of our vehicles to a minimum of three times a day
- In addition, at all times, there will be a maximum of two passengers in the vehicle to maintain physical distancing. The drivers have their own personal hand sanitizer and gloves, and are encouraged to use them at all times.
- Riders are encouraged to carry their own personal disinfectant when travelling, such as hand sanitizer or wipes, and to wash their hands often
- ActiVan will continue to monitor the evolving situation and take further precautions as necessary to help keep our staff and riders safe and our buses and facilities clean.

Q5: Will scheduled road construction projects be deferred?

A5: With the announcement last Friday from the Provincial Government, the Town is currently reviewing the construction program. Existing work on critical infrastructure is continuing in a manner consistent with the recommendations from the Medical Officer of Health

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COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Q1: How can I help support the community during this difficult time?

A1: The Town has developed a system to combine and streamline the efforts of municipalities and agencies to meet community needs as they arise during the pandemic

Several key areas have already been identified such as: food security, isolated older adults, housing, well-being and community safety.

If you know someone, or require help yourself, please contact Service Halton Hills at 905-873-2600; they have been set up to receive, direct and manage calls for support of offers of assistance

Q2: Where can I donate medical supplies to front-line medical workers?

A2: Please contact Service Halton Hills at 905-873-2600 to register your information and they will help direct your donation

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