

March 13th, 2020

Chatham-Kent Medical Officer of Health orders measures to control spread of COVID-19

On March 11th, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic. In doing so, they called for communities across the world to take aggressive and urgent action to prevent the spread of the disease.

On the 12th of March, based on advice from Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, and the experts at the COVID-19 Command Table, the Minister of Education answered that call, issuing an order to close all publicly funded schools in Ontario for two weeks following March break. At which point, the situation will be re-assessed and further direction will be given.

Chatham-Kent's Medical Officer's of Health, Dr. David Colby is declaring a local emergency for Chatham-Kent. This measure allows for the redeployment of staff to assist where and when necessary.

"I would like to be very clear that declaring a local emergency is in no way meant to induce panic, and residents should not interpret it as such" stated Colby, "Rather, it allows us flexibility to use an "all-hands-on-deck" approach as we take the necessary preventative measures across our community.

Social distancing measures, especially school closures-before the virus is spreading in the community – have been shown to be one of the most powerful interventions to slow the spread of disease.

"When taken early, and when coordinated with additional efforts, these precautionary actions will help to prevent the impact that COVID-19 could have on Chatham-Kent residents" stated Colby.

"We all have a role to play, and it is imperative that we work together and do what we must, now" says Colby, "to ensure that we do not put ourselves in a position where increased and, quite frankly, impossible demands are placed on our healthcare system in weeks to come. The risk for the amplification or super-spreading within the community or a healthcare setting would be devastating, especially in a community such as ours where nearly 40% of residents are over the age of 55, and many more have serious, chronic medical conditions."

- all public and private schools to be closed from March 14th-April 5th
- all licensed childcare facilities to be closed from March 14th-April 5th (at this time, this does not apply to home-based childcare settings)
- the ban of all mass gatherings of 250+ people (included in that maximum is the number of staff in place to support the event)

Dr. Colby is also issuing the following orders for Chatham-Kent:

- anyone aged 0-17 years who has travelled internationally, including to the United States, will self-isolate for 14 days upon their return, and NO INDIVIDUALS returning home from international travel will be able to attend school or childcare for 14 days
- adults who travel internationally, including the United States, will be asked to self-monitor upon their return and isolate if they become ill

[A list of community based measures](#) to lessen the spread of the disease is also available.

Additional recommendations for social distancing include:

- limiting the distance between yourselves and another individual by **at least** one metre
- limit social interactions by avoiding large gatherings such as celebrations, sporting and entertainment events, religious services and entertainment venues.
- working remotely when and if possible
- minimizing direct contact with people such as handshaking

Any residents with questions pertaining to the abovementioned, or any other questions regarding COVID-19 are asked to visit our website at www.ckpublichealth.com/covid19 or email covid19@chatham-kent.ca