



MAYOR'S REPORT

MARCH 8, 2021 COUNCIL MEETING

COVID-19

On March 1st Niagara moved to Red-Control, as described in the Keeping Ontario Safe and Open Framework.

This has had some impacts for City programs and services.

Rink 2 will open and welcome back skaters and will be available to permit holders only. Adhering to the Provincial Framework in Red - Control, the maximum number of participants is 10. One parent/guardian per participant under the age of 18 years old is permitted within the facility to supervise.

At this time, the YMCA will not be resuming in-person programs at any of the YMCA of Niagara Health and Fitness locations. They are offering virtual programs and information is available on their website.

The Walking Track will remain closed until further notice. A requirement in Red-Control is that participants must pre-register for all activities. City staff are working on a registration tool to allow individuals to book one-hour time slots. Once the Walking Track is open, it will be communicated to the public.

City Hall will continue to serve residents by appointment. In-person appointments will be scheduled for essential and time sensitive services. Where possible, services will be provided through remote means. To access City services, please call our customer service representative team at 905-835-2900.

The Museum is booking 45-minute appointments of no more than four guests, with sanitization taking place in between each appointment. Services include guided tours, heritage research, gift shop browsing, artifact donations and membership renewals.

The Library continues to offer curbside pick-up including several art projects for children. No in person services are yet available.

Essential City services, including but not limited to, road maintenance, snow removal and water and wastewater operations will continue.

We emphasize the need for social distancing, hand washing and face coverings where social distancing can't be maintained or where required by the Region's face covering by-law.

We are also waiting for our supply of vaccines for the general public.

In the City of Port Colborne, we will be using the gymnasium at the Vale Health & Wellness Centre as our vaccination site.

Individuals will have to register to receive a vaccine.

Residents are reminded that Public Health is not currently booking vaccination appointments, and they should not call at this time.

While not yet available, the clinic schedules will be well publicized through all forms of media, including the newspaper, social media, local radio, municipal websites and community groups.

As the demand for vaccines is exceptionally high, and the situation is constantly evolving, vaccine locations and details are subject to change.

On Friday Niagara Health advised that they will begin booking appointments to vaccinate patients who are 80 years of age and older and are currently admitted to a hospital bed or have been admitted and stayed overnight in the last six months. This will include patients at all sites of Niagara Health and at Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre.

In addition, they will continue to vaccinate healthcare workers. Thus far, a total of 16,660 vaccines have been administered at the clinic to patient-facing healthcare workers such as long-term care and retirement home workers, hospital staff and physicians, primary care providers, dentists and other specialists, as well as medical first responders (paramedics, police and firefighters).

I ask that you please be patient and kind when speaking with staff about your concerns. We will let you know immediately when any new information is received.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteer roles are available to support Niagara Region Public Health and Emergency Services staff with immunization clinics.

Please check out the News section of our website for details.

LOWERING OF FLAGS ACROSS NIAGARA

I would now like to read you An Open Letter from Niagara's Mayors and Regional Chair

Dear Niagara Residents,

As we reflect on the anniversary of the first case of COVID-19 in Niagara, we acknowledge both our community's journey, and what still lies ahead.

We recognize those who have lost their lives as a result of this pandemic. At present, COVID-19 has claimed the lives of 369 residents, leaving a lasting impact on their families, friends and caregivers alike. For these residents, the legacy of COVID-19 will be ever-present as they remember lives well lived by their loved ones.

We also acknowledge the impact of COVID-19 on the collective mental health of our community. Many of us struggle with feelings of isolation, anxiety, depression and stress. The pandemic has also profoundly affected our economy, with many losing their jobs and some businesses closing forever. The uncertainty created by the pandemic has led many in our community to feel confusion, frustration and even anger – we all must continue to be patient and kind to each other.

But we can all take some comfort in knowing the end is in sight. With four vaccines having now been approved, it is our hope that the journey will not be much longer. Residents should know that we have a plan and we are ready to administer as many vaccines as possible once supply is made available.

Throughout this pandemic, we have continued to hear amazing stories of residents supporting one another. By staying home, you helped to keep many others safe. By wearing a mask, you showed that you care more about your neighbour than your own comfort. By practicing

physical distancing, you made a meaningful sacrifice that has slowed the spread of the virus. Many of you also stepped up and supported local businesses during this challenging time - we have never been more proud of our community.

In recognition of this first anniversary, all of Niagara's municipalities will be lowering their flags to half-staff from March 12-14. Rest assured that we will come together as a community when this is over to reflect on our experiences, but for now we all need to keep doing our part to keep one another healthy.

Although everyone's experience through the pandemic is personal, it is our hope that we continue to build a stronger and more resilient community. We want to express our most sincere thanks and appreciation for everything each resident and each family has done.

FREE MASK GIVEAWAY

As part of a generous donation from MedSup Canada to the Niagara Health Foundation, Niagara Region received more than five million non-medical masks for the community.

Port Colborne Fire Fighters will be handing out one free box per household on Tuesday, March 9th from 4-6 p.m. at the Fire Hall at 3 Killaly Street West.

Non-perishable food donations will be accepted for the Food Bank.

FREE FOOD GIVEAWAY

On Saturday, March 6th there was a free food giveaway sponsored by Bethel United Church and Forkes Road United Church. This group of volunteers managed to source high quality food for our residents. I would like to thank them for their hard work and time in making this event a great success.

Thanks also goes out to Cst. Maggie Chisholm from the Niagara Regional Police who was on site handing out other items of need sponsored by the Socks for Change Program, and to Tom Cartwright, Scott Lawson and Maggie Lawson who delivered boxes of non-medical masks to each vehicle.

WATER SAMPLE PICKUPS

I am pleased to advise that we will again be accepting rural water samples at City Hall to be sent to the lab for testing. This service will commence on March 15th.

Exact details of pick up dates will be determined later this week. Please watch our website and social media platforms for more information.

This is great news for our rural residents.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Today, we honour women pioneers who have made significant contributions throughout history advocating for women's rights and gender equality. These women have paved the way for future generations to be empowered and have more opportunities to prosper.

We mark the celebration of womankind, their contribution, and how far they have come.

It is also a time to recognize that advocacy is still needed to continue breaking down barriers until equality is achieved for all women worldwide.

Together we persevere, Together we stand, together we strive.

I would like to thank the South Western Insurance Group for this quote as we celebrate International Women's day today.

OPENING OF THE WELLAND CANAL

The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation has announced that the Welland Canal will open on Friday, March 19th.

Our traditional Top Hat Ceremony will take on a virtual approach this year.

We are encouraging children to PORTicipate by stopping by the library to pick up their Top Hat Craft Kits, like this one, and make your own Top Hat. Take a picture and send it to us.

On Sunday March 14th at 7 p.m. St. James and St. Brendan's Church will be live-streaming their annual Mariner's Service on their Facebook page. This service is an opportunity to wish our seafaring workers safe travels in 2021.

The Museum will be posting a history video and on March 19th we will have a virtual message from the Town Crier and myself, welcoming the first downbound vessel into the canal and celebrating the start of the 2021 shipping season.

The Fair Trade Committee will also have a message for the community in lieu of their traditional pancake breakfast.

Hopefully next year we will be back in Lock 8 park with the fire going, hot coffee and pancakes, and the community celebrating together again.

REMEMBRANCE OF OUR SERVICE PERSONNEL

The week we will be hanging yellow ribbons on the lamp posts in front of City Hall, as we have done every year since 2009, when Corporal Tyler Crooks lost his life in Afghanistan.

These yellow ribbons symbolize our remembrance not only of Tyler and his ultimate sacrifice while serving his country, but of all past veterans and current personnel serving our country.

I would ask everyone to bow their heads for a moment of silence as we remember.

Bow head for one minute.

Thank you.