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Region, Town declare Emergency as Aurora announces tax relief

The Town of Aurora is pledging tax relief for residents and businesses alike in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Aurora announced new measures on Friday, just three days before the Region of York followed the Province ? and the Town's ? lead in declaring a State of Emergency.

The move at the Regional level came Monday as local health services grappled with the first positive case of COVID-19 acquired through local transmission (defined as individuals who did not have close contact with a travel-related case or any known case of COVID-19), as well as the first York Region case that ultimately proved fatal ? a travel-related case of a female from Markham in her 70s.

?During these times of uncertainty and rapid change our top priority has always been, and will remain, the health and safety of those who call York Region home,? said York Region Chair Wayne Emmerson. ?We are in unprecedented territory, but rest assured your government continues to take decisive and meaningful action to protect citizens, businesses and our Regional staff.

?York Region provides vital services to 1.2 million residents. To help mitigate the spread and ensure residents continue to receive critical public services, all non-essential Regional employees who can work remotely will do so. Services essential to residents will continue. We are in changing and challenging times, but together we can flatten the curve and keep our communities safe. When we all come together, we are stronger.?

The continued measures to help flatten the curve, including the Province's decision to close all workplaces not deemed essential on Monday afternoon, have proved challenging, and further measures at the municipal level are intended to help ease the burden.

?During this difficult time, I have regularly been in touch with our community to listen and learn about the concerns that we now face due to the COVID-19 crisis,? said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. ?We recognize that options need to be made available to ease the financial burdens on families and businesses. We are providing our residents and businesses the option to suspend their tax payments, to give them the opportunity to assess their finances and budget accordingly. We will continue to assess the COVID-19 crisis and ensure that all stakeholders are informed of any changes or updates.?

The second installment of the residential interim tax bill that was due on Tuesday, April 21, 2020 will be deferred for approximately two months to Tuesday, June 23, 2020.

Penalties on taxes will be temporarily suspended until

June 30, 2020. The Town will also offer the same two-month deferral to those on a pre-authorized payment plan.

?If your property taxes are paid by your mortgage company, it's important for you to forward your property tax bill to your mortgage company for payment,? said the Town.

Commercial tax bills may be deferred by approval from the Treasurer. Commercial clients can email their request to info@aurora.ca and must demonstrate in writing that they have passed on this leniency to their tenants. These requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

?For commercial properties?they must demonstrate they are passing that leniency onto the tenant,? says Mayor Mrakas. ?Many times, what we're seeing is the businesses that are being affected by this and are having to shut down and they're not making any money, they are not the owners of the property. They are paying rent and we want to ensure that there is some kind of way to ensure that they have some relief because they are being hit real hard and we want to ensure when we get past this they will still be around and their businesses will be able to get back up and running.

?This was one of the measures we wanted to make sure that whatever relief we did provide to property owners on the commercial side that they do pass that along to their tenants as well.?

By Brock Weir