

State of Emergency lifted nearly 18-months on

After nearly a year-and-a-half, the Town of Aurora has lifted the State of Emergency declared in March of 2020 at the outset of the global pandemic.

Mayor Tom Mrakas announced the move on Tuesday, July 27.

"This is a huge milestone for our community, signalling the light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel," he said. "I declared the State of Emergency to give our staff and organization the agility and flexibility to address the unprecedented nature of the challenges posed by the pandemic. I am thrilled that with high vaccination rates in our community, resulting in a drop in case numbers and reduced stress on our health care system, we are able to make this next step towards a state of new normal."

The move to rescind the emergency orders comes just over a month after questions were raised around the Council table on just how long it would be in place.

"These are unprecedented times that call for extraordinary measures," said Mayor Tom Mrakas at the outset of the declaration. "The Town acknowledges that this is a fluid situation that we are continuously monitoring."

But, 18 months later, the situation was less fluid and Councillor Rachel Gilliland questioned how much longer these emergency measures will be in effect.

"I am curious as to our State of Emergency and whether or not you have considered when to be lifting the State of Emergency in Aurora before moving forward, as we are more vaccinated now than obviously ever before," she asked at the last Council meeting before their summer recess. "Are you considering some sort of preparedness or steps to lift the State of Emergency here as we move along in this vaccination process?"

Mayor Mrakas didn't have a particular date in his response, but indicated he is reluctant for Aurora to lift the State of Emergency on its own.

"The GTHA Mayors and Chairs have had conversations in this regard and I will keep everyone up to date," he said. "We're debating on what we're going to do moving forward. We would like to do something in combination with the whole area. I will keep everyone informed as we move forward and let everyone know once we decide to make a decision on that."

This led to more questions from Councillor Gilliland who pointed out not every municipality in the group has declared a State of Emergency.

"Do we have a plan in place, or is there something written in our emergency preparedness or a process and the boxes we check to say, "Okay, I think it is time to lift the State of Emergency in Aurora?" she asked.

Replied the Mayor: "Yes, and we're having those discussions currently. Once we decide whether we're going to lift the State of Emergency, I will let Council know once it is made public."

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter