

Aurora marks one year since State of Emergency

Over the last twelve months, 42 Aurora residents have lost their lives due to COVID-19.

It has been a year since our world was forever changed by the virus and a year of pivoting and rebuilding.

There have been lessons learned, adjustments made, and programs launched to help the most vulnerable ? and these are the successes the Town looked back on Friday to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the municipality's state of emergency declaration.

?This has been a challenging year in any number of ways and I think it is appropriate to mark one year to the day since enacting a State of Emergency ensuring we had the ability to effectively support residents and staff through the pandemic,? said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. ?Over the past year, despite operating remotely for an extended period of time, the work didn't stop and we safely maintained a large number of services and programs to residents by focusing on remaining agile and keeping the overall wellbeing of the community top of mind.?

Among the actions taken by the Town to respond to the pandemic were a deferral of tax payments to assist residents experiencing a loss of income due to the pandemic and advocating for local businesses; reimagining traditional Town events like the Santa Under the Stars parade and Concerts in the Park programs so they could continue, albeit very differently, in accordance with Provincial guidelines, resulting in the Town hosting the very first in-person concert experience in Ontario since the start of the pandemic; to granting patio extensions to give area restaurants a boost.

Additional measures included the expansion, continuation and invention of virtual programs for all ages, including cooking lessons, creative projects, exercise and fitness programs and ensuring outdoor skating in parks could continue as planned and anticipated.

Regular work also continued at Town Hall including the reconstruction and resurfacing of more than 10 lane kilometres of roads and the issuing of 990 building permits in 2020 alone.

?Our goal since declaring the State of Emergency has been to balance quality of life and livelihood with the health and safety of our staff and citizens,? added Mayor Mrakas. ?Now that we see light at the end of the tunnel, our ability to maintain this balance is a testament to the team effort of the entire community. On behalf of Council, I want to recognize our residents' and business owners' resilience throughout this pandemic. We have all been impacted by the pandemic to varying degrees. Most importantly, our thoughts are with those who have lost friends, family, or livelihoods in the last year.?

Added CAO Doug Nadorozny: ?This has been an unusual year for Aurora, as it has for municipalities across the country. Through it all, I have been proud of the compassion, commitment, and adaptability of our staff. I want to thank all of our employees ? those working from home and those on the frontline ? for their hard work and dedication.?

Since the start of the pandemic, Aurora has seen a total of 1,066 cases of COVID-19 as of March 23.

There have been 980 recoveries and 42 confirmed deaths attributed to the virus.

The 42nd fatality was reported by York Region Public Health on Monday, this time a 90-year-old woman who lost her fight against the virus on March 18. She died at Southlake Regional Health Centre after experiencing her first symptoms on March 13 and a positive test the following day. Her exposure was found to be a close contact.

44 cases remain active.

Of the active cases, 37 are attributed to local transmission or close contact, 4 to workplace cluster, and 3 to institutional outbreak.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter