

## Breaking emergency orders? That will cost you

Individuals found to be flouting emergency orders during the COVID-19 pandemic will now face hefty fines in the Town of Aurora.

On Thursday, the Town announced it would begin the strict enforcement of provincial emergency orders as well as levy fines against those trespassing on municipal property ? such as parks ? closed in a bid to help flatten the curve.

Under Provincial guidelines, the Town will issue fines to those who do not comply with the following emergency orders:

No gatherings of more than five (5) people (inclusive of gatherings on private property but excluding family members who reside at the same address).

Trespassing in areas that are closed to the public (parks, tennis courts, skateboard parks, sports fields, baseball diamonds, basketball courts, playgrounds, Sheppard's Bush and the dog park).

Closure of non-essential businesses

Price gouging on necessary goods such as hand sanitizers and household cleaners

?Individuals charged with an offence under the EMCPA (Emergency and Civil Protection Act) will face fines starting at \$880,? said the Town in a statement. ?Failing to identify yourself upon the request of a Municipal Law Enforcement Officer conducting an investigation under the EMCPA will result in fines of \$1,250. Fines could also carry punishments of up to one-year imprisonment or a fine of up to \$100,000 for an individual and up to \$10,000,000 for a corporation.

?The Town of Aurora reminds residents to continue to stay at home, limit the number of people you come into close contact with, stay at least 6 feet apart from others when walking outside or in a grocery store and refrain from having social gatherings.?

Compared to other municipalities, Aurora was late to the game in fining those who are not in compliance with the orders, but the Town moved into action just in time for the Easter long weekend.

?We took an educational approach at first and we wanted to do warnings, educating people as we saw them,? said Mayor Tom Mrakas. ?The worry is that we need to ensure that people adhere to the rules and the guidelines that have been set by the Town, by the Province, so we can start to flatten the curve on this pandemic. It is not a joke, it is not a game, and we need everyone to realize how serious it is. We felt that with this long weekend

we needed to say, 'We're not going to be just warning anyone anymore. Now you're going to be fined.' It is going to be strict enforcement and we needed to get the word out so people understand how serious this is.'

While parks are closed, the Mayor stresses that this does not mean you can't use pathways through parks, as well as trails, for through traffic.

'As much as we encourage everyone to stay home, and I think everyone should try as much as possible to stay home, we don't want to stop people from getting fresh air, going for a small walk, as long as they follow the proper physical distancing protocols of two metres. As long as they do that, they can go for a walk through the paths, through our trails that are still open.

'If they are misused, we will be put in that position where we absolutely will have to shut down everything. No one wants to do that. You hear it from the Prime Minister, the Premier and all the way down that no one wants to institute those kinds of measures, but if some continue not to listen and don't take this issue seriously, then those measures will have to be put in place. While I hope everyone does enjoy going out and getting some fresh air, I would remind everyone to try their best and try to stay indoors as much as possible and limit their exposure outside and only do what is necessary and get some fresh air when you can.'

**By Brock Weir**