

# City closes non-essential services, staff to ask for 'lame duck' authority

*Sarah Sobanski*

Kawartha Lakes announced the city is working on shutting down non-essential services and closing city spaces to public access amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

[Council held a special meeting March 17](#) after meetings with the city's internal emergency pandemic response and emergency control groups earlier this week.

CAO Ron Taylor told council there are more than 1,200 staff helping to deliver more than 200 programs and services city-wide. He said the city was moving forward through the COVID-19 crisis with three priorities in mind: health and safety of everyone in the city, maintaining essential services and constantly looking forward, making sure that business isn't disrupted.

Mayor Andy Letham touched on the state of emergency declared by the province. In addition to closures directed by the province, the city is closing public access to all city properties until April 5 when the situation will be reassessed. This includes service centres, landfills, all museums, all community halls and centres as of the end of the day March 17.

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Mayor Andy Letham

"This is today, tomorrow is tomorrow... We as a community have to make these sacrifices to protect the more vulnerable in our community," Letham said.

"Most of us won't get sick, or show symptoms even if we do, that doesn't mean we don't have a responsibility to try and protect everyone.

Human services offices are also closed. All Ontario Works and children's services will be available for contact by phone. Rent for subsidized housing will still be collected. Those involved are asked to call and schedule payment.

All committees, boards and meetings are canceled until further notice. Council's regular meeting planned to happen March 24 has been moved to March 19 to wrap up existing council business. All planning, committee of adjustment, committee of the whole and council meetings are canceled through to the end of April.

Taylor said staff would be asking council to give it authority to act to keep the city running in council's absence, the same as it would if there was an election happening.

Council will not be attending any public meetings or events. In the case where council needs to meet, it is exploring options of video conference or teleconference but needs to look into provincial legislation. The mayor noted the province may need

to relax some of its policies for council meetings amid outbreak restrictions.

Essential services will continue, the mayor said. This includes ensuring water safety, road service, spring flood management and curbside pickup.

Lindsay transit and the city's limo service will also stay on the roads for now. The mayor said the bus service is seeing enhanced cleaning and fees are being waived to protect drivers. The limo service will be available for priority medical calls only.

"Some will say we are overreacting, I sure hope they're right," Letham said. "I would rather be criticized for overreacting than waiting and as a result someone's mother or father falls ill or worse. We will get through this. I have full confidence in the teams we have in place and our healthcare workers are stepping up to the plate."

Fire chief Mark Pankhurst also attended the meeting on behalf of the city's emergency control group. He said the group was now meeting on a weekly basis. He added they had no plans to declare a state of emergency.

"Basically when you declare an emergency it's really when our local resources are exhausted, there's going to be great costs associated, you'll be relying on provincial assistance," Pankhurst said. "That's usually the trigger point."

Pankhurst added that should the city need those additional partners and resources, he was confident the group could declare an emergency in time.