



For Immediate Release

March 19, 2021

Georgina marks one year since declaration of emergency for COVID-19 pandemic

Georgina, ON – One year ago today, Mayor Margaret Quirk issued a declaration of emergency in response to COVID-19 in the Town of Georgina – the first time the Town had done this.

“This unprecedented global pandemic has brought great change to our Town – for residents and businesses. It has also meant loss. We have lost members of our community due to COVID-19, and stand by those families in their grief, and offer our condolences. We have been through lockdowns and reopenings, and we have seen the tremendous impact the pandemic has had on our community and local economy,” said Mayor Margaret Quirk. “This past year has been difficult but it has also showed the resiliency of many as we adapted and changed to our new normal. The safety and wellbeing of our community has always been, and will continue to be, our number one priority. We’ve come a long way and made a lot of progress. From the day I signed the declaration to less than a year later, we have a vaccine and people receiving it in our community. That is something to be proud of.”

Placing the safety of staff and the community at the forefront, the Town responded by closing facilities, cancelling programs and redeploying staff to priority areas. The Town also moved to support residents impacted by the pandemic by offering property tax deferrals for property owners in 2020 and again this year. To support transparency and accountability, Council meetings moved online and were accessible for public participation. From communications and business support to recreation and online services, the Town has worked with its municipal and provincial partners to respond and adapt to this evolving situation.

Communications

Throughout the year-long emergency, the Town has worked hard to provide consistent, effective and timely communications to the community through its website including a new popup feature on the homepage for urgent messages, social media channels, newspapers, online advertising, the use of community signs and the award-winning [Jack animation video](#) series.

Business support

COVID-19 resulted in many challenges for businesses and the financial burden continues to be felt. In response, the Town introduced a number of programs to support the local business community.

- The Pivot Planning Squad was launched in October 2020. It was developed to help with recovery efforts, and assisted 21 local businesses with one-on-one consultations to provide marketing support and link them with available programs.
- The Temporary Patio Program and Grant was launched in June 2020 to assist restaurants throughout the Town with recovery efforts.

- The Community Improvement Plan Grant was created to help with recovery efforts by business owners in the Keswick, Sutton or Jackson's Point Business Improvement Areas to address operations during the pandemic.
- The Development Rebate Building Permit Fee Program was created to provide additional assistance to the business community and to help with business recovery efforts by providing a rebate for building permit fees.
- The Georgina Chamber of Commerce, with support from the Town, launched a shop local campaign to stimulate local spending.
- The 2020 Field to Table event moved online where visitors could access farms, enjoy tours and educational experiences, and interact with local farmers.
- With the assistance of Municipal Law Enforcement, awareness was generated by providing education to local businesses to ensure they were adhering to provincial guidelines.

Recreation

- The [Recreation at Home](#) program was developed to provide activities, games, recipes and workouts for the community.
- Virtual recreation programs and workshops were developed for children and adults, as well as drop-in summer programs at Town parks which were modified to ensure health precautions were followed.
- The Canada Day celebration was transformed into a successful virtual event and broadcast on Facebook.
- The Town won a Festivals and Events Ontario (FEO) award for its Drive-thru Parade of Lights. This reverse-style parade saw vehicles travel along the ROC parkway while experiencing a magical holiday tribute with festive lighting, community floats, and a visit from Santa Claus and his reindeer.
- The Town successfully opened De La Salle Beach and park in summer 2020 with resident parking, reduced capacity, restrictions and safety measures that allowed the public to enjoy this popular attraction.

Online services

- A number of new [online services](#) and forms were developed for residents, including resident parking passes and marriage licences.

Vaccination clinic

On March 8, 2021, the Town opened a [COVID-19 vaccination clinic](#) at the Georgina Ice Palace that is available for York Region residents. York Region Public Health, in partnership with local hospitals, continues to follow the province's three-phased Vaccine Distribution Plan. The Town is currently in Phase 1 of the plan.

For the latest information, news and updates on COVID-19 in Georgina, visit [georgina.ca/COVID-19](https://www.georgina.ca/COVID-19).