

WELLINGTON ADVERTISER

VOLUME 53 | ISSUE 12

WWW.WELLINGTONADVERTISER.COM

THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2020

COUNTY FACES COVID-19

First positive case confirmed by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health

By Joanne Shuttleworth

GUELPH – Despite confirmation of the first positive case of COVID-19 in the area, it's still time to keep calm, practice good hygiene, and be good global citizens, says the Medical Officer of Health at Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH).

"There's no need to panic," said Dr. Nicola Mercer in a phone interview on March 16. "Most people who become ill have mild symptoms and recover at home. They don't need to be tested and they don't need to see a doctor."

On March 16, public health announced that a man in his 40s tested positive for COVID-19 after returning from Atlanta, Georgia. He was tested at Headwaters Health Care Centre in Orangeville, where all appropriate infection control precautions were followed.

He is now in self-isolation at home and is being followed by WDGPH.

"This does not change our protocols around containment of the COVID-19 virus in our area," Mercer said. "We are following up with any contacts of the individual and ensuring the public is aware and protected from the spread of this virus."

It has been a week of rapid changes on the COVID-19 front, with schools and daycare centres closed beyond March Break, recreation and community facilities closed at least until April, and international flights grounded for the foreseeable future.

Long-term care and retirement communities have stopped volunteer programs and visiting is cancelled at most facilities, except for palliative cases.

These measures were taken to contain the virus and keep it from spreading broadly in the community. If that happens, the health-care system will be overwhelmed.

SEE PUBLIC HEALTH » 37



Stranded travellers - A group of area residents was still stuck in Morocco on March 17 after leaving for a vacation on March 12, prior to the imposition of international travel restrictions. The federal government has been working to help them get home. From left are: Catherine Schwass of Priceville, Stacey Bell of Mount Forest, Emily Golem of Hanover and Lara Riehl of Mount Forest. See article on page 5. Submitted photo

Province declares emergency, orders closures

By Chris Daponte

WELLINGTON COUNTY – A danger of major proportions. Unprecedented times. Extraordinary measures. Uncharted territory.

Those are a few of the phrases used within the last week to describe COVID-19 and the reactions, locally and globally, to the pandemic.

On March 17, just five days after announcing all schools in the province would be closed for three weeks due to the coronavirus, Premier Doug Ford declared a state of emergency in Ontario.

"We are facing an unprecedented time in our history," said Ford.

"This is a decision that was not made lightly. COVID-19 constitutes a danger of major proportions.

"We are taking this extraordinary measure because we must offer our full support and every power possible to help our health care sector fight the spread of COVID-19. The health and wellbeing of every Ontarian must be our number one priority."

The declaration and associated orders forced the immediate closure province-wide of:

- indoor recreation facilities;
- public libraries;
- private schools;
- licensed child care centres;
- bars and restaurants (excluding takeout and delivery); and
- theatres, cinemas and concert venues.

The province has prohibited all organized public gatherings of over 50 people, including parades and church services. The closures and prohibitions will be in place until at least March 31.

Wellington County municipalities had, in the previous several days, announced the closure of many of the public facilities covered by Ford's March 17 announcement.

The closures include all lower-tier municipal offices, recreational facilities and all libraries across the

SEE BUSINESSES » 37

County shuts down offices, facilities as restrictions intensify

GUELPH – The county has decided to close its administration centre here in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As more information becomes available, the County of Wellington is making additional changes to slow the spread of COVID-19," states a March 17 press release.

Also closed to the public as of 4:30pm that day are:

- social services offices (for assistance call 519-837-6274);
- county garages; and
- county re-use centres (waste facilities will remain open but residents are encouraged to use the curbside collection instead of bringing waste to county facilities).

The changes are in addition to previous closures announced by the county.

On March 14 the county decided to cancel March Break programming at the museum as well as all programs at libraries across the county. The museum and libraries are closed.

On March 16 the county announced closure of all its child care and learning centres indefinitely, as of March 18.

SEE RESTRICTIONS » 39

COVID-19 tests not for everyone: public health

By Joanne Shuttleworth

GUELPH – Testing for COVID-19 is still being done through hospitals in Wellington County, but the province is now providing general guidance about who should be tested.

The focus is on those who are most ill and for whom testing would be most impactful in regards to public health management.

They include:

- those showing symptoms and who have had contact with people with confirmed cases;
- health care workers with an acute respiratory infection;
- people with acute respiratory infections in long-term care;
- people with acute respiratory infections in other institutions (as defined by local public health);
- people who are hospitalized and have acute respiratory infections;

- health care workers who are part of institutional outbreaks; and
- Indigenous people with an acute respiratory infection.

People with a fever or cough who have a travel history or who have been in close contact with someone with a respiratory illness should self-isolate at home until 24 hours after symptoms have been resolved.

SEE COVID-19 TESTS » 39