

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 13, 2020

It's Not Worth the Drive Up North Right Now

Lake Simcoe – As the weather gets warmer, communities across Ontario are facing a potential influx of visitors seeking outdoor activities after weeks of staying inside due to COVID-19 restrictions. To help reduce the spread of the virus, municipalities surrounding Lake Simcoe and area—including the City of Orillia, Towns of Georgina, Innisfil and Bradford West Gwillimbury, and the Townships of Brock, Oro-Medonte and Ramara and the County of Simcoe —are urging everyone to skip the daytrip and not make the drive up north right now.

While making the journey might seem harmless, it could heighten the chances of both spreading and contracting COVID-19—especially when stopping for gas or food during the trip. Those deciding to forgo warnings and take the trip will be disappointed to find that the outdoor amenities they were looking forward to are not available during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Under the Province of Ontario's emergency order, access to outdoor recreational amenities such as playground structures, sports fields, picnic sites, and more will be closed or restricted until further notice. In addition there may be local closures or restrictions of beaches and boat ramps.**

It is crucial that all Ontario residents follow the advice of public health experts to limit the opportunity for community transmission of COVID-19. Lake Simcoe municipalities are urging the public to curb travel and carefully consider the impact an out-of-town visit will have on other communities, critical services and healthcare networks. Ontario has made steady progress to overcome COVID-19, but the virus has not yet been contained. Everyone must work together to continue flattening the curve in order to protect the health and well-being of all communities.

The municipalities surrounding Lake Simcoe are beautiful places to visit, but now is not the time. If you choose to not follow this request and decide to go up north, please keep these recommendations in mind:

- Visit the website of the municipality you plan to visit for local updates. You may find that beaches, boat launches, public washrooms, and other park amenities are closed or restricted.
- Supporting the local economy is extremely valuable, but please bring what you need with you to limit exposure and community transmission of the virus.
- Visitors and seasonal residents are asked to practise physical distancing and self-isolation as required.

As public spaces begin to gradually reopen across the province, it will take time for municipalities to ramp up operations. Municipalities will follow the province's framework for reopening Ontario, which involves a careful stage-by-stage approach to protect the health and safety of the public and workers.

Quotes



“The Town of Innisfil is listening to our public health officials to ensure we support the health and well-being of our community. I strongly encourage all visitors to do the responsible thing and stay home. We look forward to welcoming everyone back and celebrating when it is safe to do so.” – Mayor Lynn Dollin, Town of Innisfil.



“Georgina is a popular destination for many – but right now, as with many other communities, it is not ‘business as usual.’ In our efforts to protect the health of residents and visitors, we are asking those planning a day trip to put their visit on hold for now. We certainly understand that people want to get outside, but driving here now with your family, with everything closed, including our restrooms, it’s just not worth the trip. Once it is safe to do so, we all will be able to enjoy our beautiful lakefront once again.” - Mayor Margaret Quirk



“The health and safety of our communities continues to be our top priority. Orillia is a great place to visit, but not during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the time being, please listen to the advice of our public health officials and stay home. We’re all in this together and we will get through this together. When we do, we look forward to welcoming you once again to the Sunshine City.” – Mayor Steve Clarke.



“To limit the spread of COVID-19, the Premier encourages people visiting their cottages to follow the advice and guidance of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, stock-up on supplies needed before heading to cottage country, and go directly to their properties without stopping on route in other municipalities. The Township of Oro-Medonte fully supports direction provided by the Province, and looks forward to welcoming people to the community when it is safe to do so.” – Mayor Harry Hughes, Township of Oro Medonte



“The Township of Brock is taking advice from the Public Health Officer of Ontario and the Premier of Ontario, the Township of Brock is requesting that everyone please stay at their primary residence due to the current COVID-19 pandemic for the health and safety of everyone. We look forward to welcoming our seasonal residents and tourists back when it is safe to do so.” – Mayor Debbie Bath-Hadden, Township of Brock



“The County of Simcoe strongly encourages residents to follow public health guidelines and avoid unnecessary travel of any kind. As our communities and economy begin the guided process of reopening, it’s vital that we take a cautious approach, avoid gatherings, stay home as much as possible in our primary residence and do all we can to support our recovery. We have a beautiful region, but for now please experience Simcoe County from home through an abundance of available online opportunities, including our experience.simcoe.ca portal.” – County of Simcoe Warden George Cornell.

Media Contacts

Johnny Keogh,
Communications Lead
Town of Innisfil
705-436-3740 Ext. 2424
jkeogh@innisfil.ca

Tanya Thompson
Communications Manager
Town of Georgina
905-476-4301 ext. 2446
tathompson@georgina.ca

Jennifer Ruff
Director of Business Development and Communications
City of Orillia
T: 705-325-8929 C: 705-238-9209
jruff@orillia.ca

Jenny Legget
Communications and Public Relations Officer
Township of Oro-Medonte
705 487-2171 ext. 2138
jlegget@oro-medonte.ca

Becky Jamieson, Municipal Clerk/Communications
Township of Brock
Bjamieson@townshipofbrock.ca
705-432-2355 ext. 240

Collin Matanowitsch, Manager, Public Relations
County of Simcoe, Service Simcoe Branch
705-734-8386 (mobile)
Collin.Matanowitsch@simcoe.ca