

City of Wetaskiwin Declares State of Local Emergency Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

For immediate release
March 24, 2020

(Wetaskiwin, Alberta) - The City of Wetaskiwin declared a state of local emergency at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24 to further support provincial efforts to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19. By declaring a state of local emergency, the city can access resources needed to address a potential outbreak within the community, as well as enforce additional restrictions and closures required to contain the spread.

"The well-being of our community members remains our top priority, and this declaration is the next step the City has to take in order to effectively manage this public health event," said Wetaskiwin Mayor Tyler Gandam. "Declaring a state of local emergency is a legislated process allowing the municipality to act swiftly if needed in order to prevent the spread of the virus in Wetaskiwin. This includes ordering evacuations, conscripting people to help, and fixing prices for essential supplies."

Following Alberta Health Services' recommendations, the City of Wetaskiwin has also taken the following measures:

- Activation of the City of Wetaskiwin Emergency Operations Centre
- Closure of all city buildings to the public (essential services are being maintained)
- Cancellation of water disconnects and late charges for utility payments until June 30, 2020
- Postponing or cancelling all city events until further notice
- Enhanced cleaning protocols in all city facilities and public vehicles (including Wetaskiwin Transit)
- Protecting staff that must remain at work by implementing precautions such as cleaning high touch areas twice a day, taking staff temperatures twice a day, and utilizing appropriate personal protective equipment
- Imposing a mandatory 14-day self-isolation period for all staff who display symptoms and/or who have recently returned from travel
- Amended the Plastic Checkout Bag Bylaw to allow for the Director of Emergency Management to suspend enforcement of the bylaw when necessary to protect the public's health

"In an effort to safeguard our community by *flattening the curve*, we are all being called to unprecedented action," said Robert Osmond, City of Wetaskiwin Director of Emergency Management. "I ask that everyone renew their dedication to the measures being put in place by our federal, provincial, and municipal governments."

Visit www.wetaskiwin.ca/covid19 for more information and updates.

About the City of Wetaskiwin

Wetaskiwin is a secure, connected, and inclusive community home to a diverse population of 13,000 people. Located only 30 minutes south of the Edmonton International Airport, the City of Wetaskiwin provides a high quality of life through ample recreation opportunities, diverse cultural activities, and a modernized, business-friendly downtown.

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For more information please contact:

Ren Goode
PIO / Communications Manager
City of Wetaskiwin
780.361.4417

Backgrounder:

A state of local emergency is usually declared when a government—be it federal, provincial, or municipal—must take extraordinary measures to address a problem. Wetaskiwin City Council believes that extraordinary measures are now necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the City of Wetaskiwin.

Section 21 of Alberta's Emergency Management Act outlines the rules surrounding the declaration of a state of local emergency:

(1) A local authority may, at any time when it is satisfied that an emergency exists or may exist in its municipality, by resolution or, in the case of the Minister responsible for the Municipal Government Act, the Minister responsible for the Special Areas Act or a park superintendent of a national park, by order, make a declaration of a state of local emergency relating to all or any part of the municipality.

(2) A declaration of a state of local emergency under subsection (1) must identify the nature of the emergency and the area of the municipality in which it exists.

(3) Immediately after the making of a resolution for a declaration of a state of local emergency, the local authority shall cause the details of the declaration to be published by any means of communication that it considers is most likely to make known to the population of the area of the municipality affected the contents of the declaration.

A state of local emergency lapses seven (7) days after its making, unless it is cancelled beforehand, or renewed by the seven-day period. This means the City of Wetaskiwin's state of local emergency will expire on March 31, 2020 if not renewed by that date.