

Message from Mayor Shawn Pankow on COVID-19

Since the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) a global pandemic two weeks ago, a lot has changed. The Government of Canada has asked Canadians to avoid non-essential travel outside of the country, the Ontario government has declared a state of emergency and ordered businesses to close, and coronavirus testing is ramping up across the country to help slow the spread of the virus. We are all facing tough decisions about what it means for our families and friends, our schooling and education, our jobs, our businesses, and our community.

While we all share these real and valid concerns, we also share the important responsibility of keeping ourselves, our families, friends and community safe. Now is the time to act on the advice of health experts. Here in Smiths Falls, we are working on the guidance of Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health for Leeds, Grenville and Lanark.

We need to follow social distancing requirements. We must all act as if we could be infected and risk infecting others, and as if others are infected and could infect us. It is not uncommon for carriers to show no, or mild symptoms. That is why it is important to limit, postpone or cancel social gatherings, and stay home if you feel un-well. Work from home if you can, and self isolate if you have returned from international travel, including the United States, for 14 days. If you are not self isolating and need to leave home to get groceries or essential supplies, sanitize or wash your hands when entering and exiting buildings, avoid long lineups, and keep a distance of two metres from others. For those working in essential positions who continue to report to work – thank you. We appreciate the important work you are doing to help support the community during this critical time.

The coming weeks will be difficult for all of us, and may be more difficult for the elderly and people living with health challenges. If you can, please check in (over the phone preferably) on others who may become more socially isolated or may not have the ability to pick up groceries, prescriptions, etc. Reach out to your local businesses as well, and support them however you can. This is also an important time to be patient, to show compassion, and to be kind to those around us.

Please continue to stay informed by following official and credible sources of information, including the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada.

Smiths Falls is a community with heart and resilience. We have overcome challenges before, and we will do it again. Economic, financial and social supports are coming at the federal and provincial level, and we are taking steps here in Smiths Falls to try and ease the burden.

Shawn Pankow,
Mayor of Smiths Falls

For more information

Town of Smiths Falls: www.smithsfalls.ca/public-safety/COVID-19-coronavirus/
Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit: www.healthunit.org/coronavirus
Government of Ontario: www.Ontario.ca/coronavirus
Government of Canada: www.canada.ca/coronavirus