

## **Remarks from Mayor Savage – March 17, 2020**

Thank you again for being here.

We are holding this session because we want to share as much information as we possibly can with our employees and our citizens.

We will continue to update you as the work continues.

We continue to take measures in concert with federal and provincial authorities; primarily public health officials.

The Province will be having an update at 3 o'clock.

Today we are seeing extraordinary actions from local businesses and citizens in response to COVID 19.

On St. Patrick's Day of all days, restaurants and bars are making difficult decisions to close down in order to support social distancing measures.

Dramatic action, but necessary.

I know it's not easy, but your efforts are helping.

This work must continue and we have to stay diligent for the foreseeable future.

On behalf of all my colleagues and councilors here at the municipality, thank you.

Our Emergency Operations team is meeting each morning at 8:30 a.m. with senior leaders and CAO Jacques Dubé.

Many are calling in from their homes and I will be having a conference call with Councillors following this meeting.

Our Councillors are doing their jobs, taking precautions but also supporting their constituents in any way possible.

We are seeing people step-up to offer their support to those most seriously impacted.

It is very heartwarming to see people and organizations reach out to help.

We mentioned yesterday, garbage collection will continue as normal but all recreation facilities, including the library are closed.

I know this makes it difficult for families during March Break, but we're hearing some great stories about the community coming together in this time of need.

Sometimes, difficult situations bring us closer together. I have really felt that strong sense of community these past few days.

As the situation continues to evolve, the team here is taking new steps.

Starting tomorrow, Halifax Transit will be implementing some new protocol to help further keep our operators and riders safe.

Transit Director Dave Reage will fill you in on those details momentarily.

I know a lot of you have reached out with concerns about transit service with these new changes, but I want to reassure you that with other adjustments, there is still room on buses, ferries and Access-A-Buses.

At present, ridership is down roughly 40 per cent for conventional buses, 70 per cent for Access-A-Bus and 50 per cent for ferries.

This is proof that community efforts for social distancing are working and we appreciate everyone making alternative travel arrangements or simply staying home.

The team here has also clarified policies around municipal employee compensation as some working conditions change in response to COVID-19.

Chief Financial Officer Jane Fraser is here to discuss details around this.

I want to express my deepest appreciation to all those who are putting peoples health first and foremost.

Public health officials and many others who are working hard.

Thank you to the team here at the municipality who I have the pleasure to work with on a daily basis.

I know I speak for Deputy Mayor Lisa Blackburn when I say how impressed I am with their professionalism and leadership.

I'm going to now pass it over to our CFO Jane Fraser on behalf of CAO Jacques Dubé to speak about some operational updates.

#### **Remarks from Jane Fraser, CFO – March 17, 2020**

I'm here on behalf of CAO Jacques Dubé, who is home with a slight head cold. I want to ensure you that this is unrelated to COVID-19, but we are all taking precautions.

This is an ever-changing time for our organization. As a message to all employee, payroll is continuing as normal and part-time/casual employees will be paid according to what has been scheduled for the upcoming two weeks

We are also continuing to process payments for vendors to ensure that there is no delay in paying our suppliers.

Our Human Resources and Finance teams are actively working with each business unit to review unique staffing and scheduling situations. Employees are being asked to reach out to their direct manager or supervisor if they have any questions about next steps, or any support that they require.

Business units are continuing to update their business continuity plans on a regular basis to ensure that we are responding to this rapidly developing situation in the most effective way.

We will continue to be transparent with additional information as our approach evolves.

All information on organizational impacts, and other employee information is now being shared publicly on our Employee Hub. A link to this can be found on [halifax.ca/coronavirus](http://halifax.ca/coronavirus)

Again, I want to thank all municipal employees at every level for their cooperation and patience as this situation evolves. We will continue to be transparent, and provide updates as they become available. Thank you.

### **Remarks from Dave Reage, Director of Halifax Transit – March 17, 2020**

Hello all. First, I want to extend a sincere thank-you to residents, transit operators and staff for their continued cooperation as we evolve our services to keep our community safe.

Beginning tomorrow, March 18, Halifax Transit passengers will be asked to use the rear doors for boarding and exiting. For those who require the use of a ramp for accessibility, the front door will continue to be used.

Regular boarding procedures will continue for our ferry service

Also, to support the municipality's commitment to exercising safe social distancing, Halifax Transit will suspend all fare collection on bus and ferry services as of tomorrow Wednesday, March 18.

It is important to point out that these changes in fare collection are in response to keeping the community safe from the spread of COVID-19, and are not intended to encourage increased use of transit services.

In addition to the change in fare collection, Halifax Transit has already taken a number of measures to help reduce the spread of disease, including:

- an increased frequency in wipe-downs of high-touch surfaces, making the first seat unavailable to riders on buses
- limiting passengers on buses to seated passengers only, and
- limiting the number of ferry passengers to 150 per trip.
- We are aware of the recent announcement from the prime minister on limiting gatherings to less than 50 people, and are currently reviewing how this will impact transit operations.

Our data indicates that ridership is down more than **40 per cent on conventional bus service, 50 per cent on ferry service** and **70 per cent on Access-A-Bus service**.

These numbers clearly reflect the important efforts of our residents to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

At this time, all transit services will continue to operate on a regular schedule. However, given the rapidly evolving situation we will continue to adapt as required.

Riders are asked to stay on buses and ferries for the duration of their trip only, and to please not loiter.

As a reminder, residents and visitors who are feeling ill are asked to avoid using all transit services until their health has returned to normal.

### **Remarks from Assistant Chief Erica Fleck – March 17, 2020**

The Emergency Operations Centre remains in constant conversation with our provincial and federal partners and we thank them for maintaining a close working relationship and continuing to share important information.

We will continue daily morning meetings with our senior leadership team including the Mayor to address risks, alter our plans, and recommend changes to how we operate as a organization while continuing to reduce risk to residents.

Our main focus here is to limit the spread of COVID-19 for both our employees and our citizens.

We continue to take the recommendations from my Emergency Management peers across Canada and around the world.

Thank you for your help and support during these times.

It is clear that preventative measures such as social distancing and good hygiene practices such as washing hands is effective in reducing the spread.

I want to thank residents for your cooperation during these challenging times and adjusting your lives to the ongoing situation.

The situation is still very serious and we're asking everyone to remain diligent in the recommendations from health officials.

Your health and safety remains our top priority.

Please make the health and safety of others your top priority by continuing to check on your neighbours.

We're all in this together, and together we will get through it.

Thank you.