

From: Brad Saunders, CEO

Date: July 24, 2020

Re: Extension of COVID-19 Measures to September 8, 2020

Over the past few months, Community Living Toronto (CLTO) has taken rapid and necessary steps to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of these changes came about as a result of information that has been updated or amended as we have adapted to the crisis. We have extended these measures a number of times since March.

The provincial government is preparing to allow emergency orders to continue beyond the Declaration of Emergency, which is scheduled to end on July 24. CLTO and the rest of the developmental services sector is subject to a number of these orders. To continue to ensure the safety of the people we support and our staff, we are extending our COVID-19 measures to September 8, 2020.

The progress we have made so far both as a province and as an organization is very impressive. Case numbers and testing capacity show that our efforts are working, such that Toronto has joined much of the province in Stage Two of the reopening plan. Despite our success to date, news reports confirm that the fight is far from over. This is especially true in congregate living settings, such as group homes and long-term care facilities. So far, we have managed to keep COVID-19 out of most of our sites and have ensured people are as safe as possible. The measures we have put in place since March and the hard work of our staff have produced this result.

We also know that we are living and operating in a highly dynamic environment, with frequent updates from government and public health authorities. While we are extending our measures to September 8, we will adapt measures prior to September if able or needed to better support our community.

Group Homes

We have realigned our work to focus all our efforts on keeping the people we support and our staff safe from COVID-19. Active screening measures are in place in all our sites and staff have been required to limit their employment in the vulnerable people sector to CLTO.

Backyard, porch, and park visits began on June 18, 2020. We are preparing to allow visitors to also visit inside our sites and take their loved ones home for essential overnight absences. These visits are guided by detailed Government of Ontario restrictions around self-isolation, physical distancing, and cleaning. Visits will continue under the current restrictions until we are instructed otherwise by the province.

Day Programs

Day programs across CLTO were suspended in accordance with Public Health guidance around physical distancing and limiting journeys outside the home to essential needs only. This measure is extended until September 8, 2020.

Respite

Our respite programs have been suspended to protect both individuals in support and staff from exposure to COVID-19. This closure has been applied across CLTO respite programs, including Lawson, McMillan, TREADD, and Ennerdale. This was necessary to protect the health of everyone involved. In accordance with advice from Public Health authorities, respite services across the Association will remain closed until September 8, 2020.

CLTO Offices

CLTO has taken steps to significantly limit the number of people entering our administrative offices across the city, including our Head Office at 20 Spadina and all regional offices. Only essential staff are permitted entry to our offices, and anyone entering must wear a mask and be actively screened before proceeding into the building. All in-person training remains suspended across the Association. These measures will remain in effect until September 8, 2020.

Individualized Supports, LIGHTS, APSW, and Supported Independent Living

Many individuals supported or affiliated with CLTO live independently in the community with some or infrequent services from CLTO. We have recommended that people living independently take measures to limit the number of visitors entering their homes and that they practice physical distancing as much as possible. We have provided PPE to households or visiting staff where physical distancing is not possible.

Events Across CLTO

On the advice of Public Health authorities and in compliance with City of Toronto restrictions on gatherings and permitted events, we have cancelled all scheduled in-person events across the organization. Our flagship event, Community Rocks, has been postponed from November 2020 to November 2021.

Employment Supports

As much as possible, our employment supports continue to match individuals seeking work. We also continue to support individuals who are working in a CLTO-facilitated placement.

Shadow Lake

In accordance with provincial direction and public health guidance, all Shadow Lake sessions scheduled for this summer are cancelled. Refunds for those who have already registered will be issued automatically. The Shadow Lake team is offering virtual camp until the end of August, which includes small and large group programming and kits that will be mailed home with camp gear such as a t-shirt and activities. Please consult the Shadow Lake Centre Facebook page for the latest.

Virtual Offerings

We are working hard to develop online offerings to help ease the pain of social isolation at home during the pandemic. Every day, we host fun activities on Facebook Live from our Community Living Toronto page. Highlights include stretching sessions with Batman and Wonder Woman, cooking classes, and movie of the week recommendations. We are also hosting virtual programming to help fill the void left by our closed day programs. Beyond these measures, we are ensuring that all our group homes have the technology they need to keep the people we support happy and connected to their families and friends. Please contact your supervisor to arrange phone calls, Facetime chats, or other virtual connections with your family member.

We must remain vigilant and cautious as our province begins to reopen. The safety of the population we support and our staff remains our top priority. We expect many of the Emergency Orders governing our work to continue well past the end of the Declaration of Emergency due to the vulnerabilities of the community we support. In practical terms, this means that many of the government-ordered restrictions on our services will continue as many regions and sectors across the province reopen and relax restrictions.

While we cannot say exactly what will happen beyond September 8, we know that we will not be able to reopen our services as we know them right away. Unfortunately, there is no way to determine exactly when that will be possible. We are working on a staged plan to loosen some restrictions when the time is right. We enacted the first stage of this plan last month by starting to schedule backyard and porch visits on June 18. We will shortly allow indoor visits in our homes and essential overnight absences from our sites. We will update you frequently over the coming weeks. Thank you for your patience and understanding.