

## **March 18, 2020 - Saskatchewan Declares State of Emergency**

*Released on March 18, 2020*

The Government of Saskatchewan today declared a provincial State of Emergency, giving the government broad powers to address the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes measures like the ability to limit travel to or from a community or region of the province and directing that property or equipment be deployed to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Health Officer, also made a number of new orders to reduce the risk to Saskatchewan people, prevent transmission and ensure that acute care services are preserved for residents most at risk for severe illness.

The following measures are effective immediately:

- Public gatherings larger than 50 people are prohibited.
- All restaurants, bars and event venues must limit their seating to 50 per cent of capacity or up to a maximum of fifty people, whichever is lesser. All must be able to ensure social distance of one to two metres between customers. Retail spaces including grocery stores, pharmacies and gas stations are exempted from this policy but must have processes to maintain a one to two metre separation.
- All gyms, fitness centres, casinos and bingo halls are ordered to close until further notice.
- Residents are advised to limit any non-essential travel outside of Saskatchewan, with the exception of people who live in border communities and are commuting for work.
- Any licensed restaurants and taverns in Saskatchewan will be permitted to sell alcohol as an offsale according to SLGA regulations indefinitely.
- All crown utilities will implement bill-deferral programs allowing a zero-interest bill deferral for up to six months for Saskatchewan residents whose ability to make bill payments may be impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions.
- All Government of Saskatchewan ministries, agencies and Crown corporations will implement a phased-in work from home policy effective Monday, March 23, applicable to employees deemed non-essential. This means that any employees able to work from home should do so immediately, while providing managers a period to plan for work-force continuity.

The Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) will be discontinuing all non-urgent/elective surgeries, procedures and diagnostics as of March 23. This action will allow the SHA the ability to redeploy nurses and other staff and ensure medical supplies and personal protective equipment are available when needed and reduce risk of further exposure to our care providers and patients.

The SHA will continue to provide services to patients who require emergent and urgent care. Cancer, urgent and emergent surgeries will continue as planned. Patients will be contacted regarding their scheduled service.

Parents with children in daycares should be preparing for further restrictions.

#### COVID-19 Information Online

Starting today, residents can go to [www.saskatchewan.ca/COVID19](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/COVID19) for the latest information reorganized to make it easy for residents to find what they need. It includes information on travel guidance and preventative measures as well as information for care providers.

Unsure of your symptoms?

Visit [www.saskatchewan.ca/COVID19](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/COVID19) and use the self-assessment tool to determine if you should contact HealthLine 811.

Note that any use of the former URL will redirect residents to the new site. Public inquiries may be directed to [COVID19@health.gov.sk.ca](mailto:COVID19@health.gov.sk.ca).

#### Virtual Appointments

A new option has been added for patients who would like to connect with doctors. A new payment code for Virtual care by secure video link is available as of today, with physicians who offer that option. This is in addition to virtual care by telephone, which provides residents with options for access to health care away from clinical settings during this time of elevated risk from COVID-19