

Patrick Brown:

Good morning and welcome. I'm Mayor Patrick Brown, and I'll be your moderator today. I want to thank you for joining our first Seniors Telephone Town Hall. This was planned so that seniors, and community groups, and organizations that support seniors have access to the latest updates on COVID-19 and learn about the resources available to you. Today, I'm joined by Ruby Sahota, MP, from Brampton North, who will be talking about the new federal seniors benefit. We have the co-chairs of this task force, Councillor Pat Fortini and Gurpreet Dhillon, who are working hard as co-chairs of our Senior Support Task Force. We have Dr. Lawrence Loh, who's the medical officer of health for Peel Region Public Health. Dr. Loh is one of the sharpest medical minds in the country. And no matter what your question, he can answer it today. We have Ruth Crammond, the VP of Community Investment and Development at the United Way Greater Toronto.

Patrick Brown:

The federal government has done their support for seniors through the United Way. And so on how it breaks down locally here in Brampton, they could speak to that. To ask a question, please press star three on your phone, star three at any time if you have a question. COVID-19 is an unprecedented situation. We know it is a matter of concern for everyone, medical, social, financial, and frankly the mental wellbeing. The purpose of today's town hall is to share with you information about supports and resources that are available to Brampton seniors. We also want to hear from you about what your needs are and how we can work collaboratively to overcome these challenging times.

Patrick Brown:

If you identify for us a challenge you may have, today's town hall's an opportunity for us, how we can figure out together how we can get around it. While we continue to make essential services, such as fire, transit, and enforcement available to all residents, we've also taken significant measures to control the spread of the virus in our community. In the last few weeks we declared a state of emergency, made significant changes to services, and programming. City facilities and all parks have been closed until further notice. We provided residents and businesses an opportunity to defer taxes for up to five months with no interest or penalty.

Patrick Brown:

We made a number of changes to our transit service, including waiving fees, introducing rear boarding, and half capacity buses, to encourage social distancing. We are carrying stricter enforcement to regulate physical distancing. And more on a personal note, both my parents are in their 70s. My grandmother is 106, and I realize that our loved ones are most vulnerable. And Dr. Loh will speak later about the provincial announcement, and our local announcement, that if you're over 70, you should stay in your own home. But my parents love seeing my new son, it's one of their big joys. But I've told my parents, "I can't see them right now while this virus is spreading." And I love my parents.

Patrick Brown:

I went to get their groceries. They didn't want me to, but I insisted. And I think, frankly, this is what we need to do with our loved ones, making sure that they don't have exposure. And I want you to know the city of Brampton has no patience for people who are being reckless. We announced a new bylaw that has physical distancing fines that range from \$500 to \$100,000. On the first night that the bylaw was in place, we got a call, someone was having a backyard party. A 27-year-old thought it'd be a fun time to

invite 20 friends over to have drinks. Let me say, this is not the time for keg parties or tailgate parties. If people get together in big numbers, the virus will spread faster. So, that individual got a big fine.

Patrick Brown:

The police and bylaws showed up, and now there's going to be a court date in the spring, and he could face a fine of up to \$100,000. So let me repeat to anyone in the city, we have no patience for people being reckless with public health. Now, today, I'm grateful that we have so many impressive speakers who are going to share their work and their updates. And we're going to start with Councillor Pat Fortini, who is the co-chair of our Senior Support Task Force. And he'll be followed by Councillor Gurpreet Dhillon. Councillor Fortini?

Pat Fortini:

Yeah, thank you, Mr. Mayor, well said. And I know it's very hard for the seniors to practice and stay home, the social distance that we have, but we have to protect them all. Walking in my area, Wards seven and eight, and I know a lot of [inaudible 00:04:44] Pete Dylan's in nine and 10, a lot of the seniors use the parks and our facilities, and we have to shut them all down. But we do this also for the safety of them. And you said it absolutely right, if you have your loved ones close by, let them do the groceries.

Pat Fortini:

But someone that's by themselves, that's why this task force was set up. We're willing to step up and help in any way we can to help get groceries, or day-to-day medicine, or anything they need. We've got a lot of volunteers on standby. I know we have something to talk about. We have some complaints that says 48 hours, trying to bring it out 24 hours, that way we could accommodate everyone. But if they need any help, they could call 311 or the covid19support@brampton.ca. Also, the region also has a region.clerk@peelregion.ca. And, also, they could visit our website at www.brampton.ca. Just click on Senior Taskforce, and we'll hook them up in any way they need and any help they need for groceries or day-to-day chores that they have. So thank you.

Patrick Brown:

Thank you, Councillor Fortini. So you've heard Councillor Fortini say that if you need help getting your medications or groceries, you can call 311. If you don't have a son or a daughter that you can enlist to go out and do it, like my parents have, know that the city of Brampton is able to step up. Because some families have loved ones that don't live in the same city, or live far away, so it's harder. And that's why with the leadership of Gurpreet Dhillon and Councillor Fortini, we've made this service available. You just need to call 311. So onto Councillor Dhillon, the co-chair of the task force.

Gurpreet Dhillon:

Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor, and thank you, Councillor Fortini. In this unprecedented time, information is everything. And so our task force is focused on compiling important resources and information about groceries, pharmacies, as well as support in mental health resources. And, as well, collaboration is something that's going to be very key, going forward, to many organizations, seniors clubs, and places of worship that we're already doing great work with. And the city's been reaching out to these groups to ensure they have the right information on where to go to for support. And so today is a really important thing that we're doing, getting everybody together, and really listening to what the community has to say and, particularly, our seniors.

Gurpreet Dhillon:

I also want to add that we're seeing an outpour of public volunteers who are eager and willing to support our seniors in this trying time. Just to see the community come together and mobilize, it's something that I'm proud to say, that this is what Brampton is about, this is what Bramptonians are about. And so on behalf of Councillor Fortini and I, we've been speaking to a number of different groups, seniors groups, as well as a number of different volunteers. So we're very eager to continue to help, but, more so, we're more proud of how Bramptonians have reacted.

Patrick Brown:

Thank you, Councillor Dhillon. MP Ruby Sahota we'll have speak next. And one of the beautiful things right now in this adversity, I can tell you, all three levels of government are working closely together. I'm on a weekly call with Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, and our local MPs have been eager to help. And I was really encouraged by the announcement the federal government made with the United Way. So, Ruby, if you could let Brampton seniors know about this new announcement the prime minister made this week. And I would note, we now have almost 1,000 Brampton seniors on this tele-town hall, so that's modern technology. It really is incredible. Ruby, over to you.

Ruby Sahota:

Thank you, Mayor. And I would echo the sentiment, I'm truly impressed by the level of dedication all levels of government have shown to reach out and work with each other and operate, at this time. So [inaudible 00:08:54] on the call today. Good morning, it's my pleasure to be here at this tele-town hall today. During the global COVID-19 outbreak, the government of Canada has been working hard to help Canadians, including seniors. The prime minister recently just announced measures to support vulnerable Canadians to help cope with the health and social economic impacts of COVID-19. The government of Canada will provide immediate essential services to Canadian seniors impacted by COVID-19 by contributing \$9 million through the United Way Canada for local organizations to support practical services to Canadian seniors. These services can include the delivery of groceries, medications, or other needed items, or personal outreach to access individual's needs, and to connect them to community support.

Ruby Sahota:

I had just recently talked to the Minister of Seniors yesterday and found out whether this money is starting to flow to the United Way. Apparently, the agreements have been signed. So United Way should have gotten this money, and it should be starting to flow to all the regional chapters of the United Way. I know that our seniors rely on some of these resources. And even those that haven't had to rely on these resources before, the need is great. And there's many other local small organizations on the ground that can reach out to the United Way and try to get access to these funds. So this is not just for the United Way, to use on their own, independently. Of course, they're going to need help from our [inaudible 00:10:34] local organizations. So if they're organizations, in the past have worked with the United Way, they'll probably reach out to you, because you're already a part of their network.

Ruby Sahota:

If there's other great organizations that are doing good work on the ground, just like our Councillors have mentioned, they too should reach out to the GTA United Way and see if they can be supported during this time, while they're doing some great work in our community. In addition to that, I have had many phone calls and emails. Our office is still operating to the best of its ability with the social

distancing measures in place, we are taking calls, we are taking emails. Unfortunately, walk-ins and appointments are not possible at this time. But continue to email us your feedback, and continue to call us during business hours, or leave a message. We're returning all calls at voicemail left. There're additional supports, as well. I know that many people have been reaching out and giving us feedback, as to the support seniors would like to see.

Ruby Sahota:

So one thing I can make you aware of right now is that the GSP credit that seniors get, those with modest income, that will be boosted. And you'll receive close to \$400 per adult for the next payment, and close to \$600 per couple. So we boosted that, and I'm hoping that seniors will be able to use that money in this time. There's also additional flexibility that's been provided for those with registered RRIF accounts. Those that have RRIF accounts will see there's extra flexibility. There were mandatory amounts that needed to be withdrawn. We have reduced that withdrawal amount by 25%. There're other things we are also considering at this time. Finance is hard at work in trying to figure out other ways we can support you. And I guess, in the end, I would like to say that there're many good options that have been presented in our daily meetings that we have with our caucus and, we find, give us that feedback. Thank you so much.

Patrick Brown:

Thank you so much, MP Sahota. And I think now would be a perfect time, given the fact we were talking about the United Way... I believe we have on the call, Ruth Crammond, who is the vice president of Community Investment and Development, United Way Greater Toronto, to speak about what this means for Peel. Ruth, are you on the line?

Ruth Crammond:

I sure am. Thank you for including us and giving us a chance to follow up on MP Sahota's remarks, which is great. First of all, I just want to say that I'm so incredibly impressed with the Councillors in Brampton, the Mayor's office, the task force, and the way in which our governments are truly stepping up in this time of emergency. But we also know that government, that community service agencies, and United Ways, and all of the volunteers, and all of our communities are also having to step up and work together with government, because government can't do it all.

Ruth Crammond:

So I think you are all exhibiting that spirit already, off the ground, in all kinds of fantastic ways. So I also want to say that United Way does support a number of organizations, wonderful organizations in Brampton, that are on the ground, even before any of this government money comes through. Places like Knight's Table, which have adjusted their services so that they're providing takeout food hampers and different ways to get resources out for seniors. Carefirst is providing Meals on Wheels. Langar meals provided by Punjabi Health, and in the Punjabi community, has now rebranded itself as Langar on Wheels. So there are all kinds of incredible organizations on the ground that have adjusted their services to these difficult and remarkable times.

Ruth Crammond:

And I would encourage any seniors on the call to, also, if you have internet access, you can go to, not only 311, but you can also go through 211, for example. And type in Meals on Wheels, or food, and put your postal code in, and the programs and services that are available to you in Brampton will come up

that way, as well. So the federal money that's coming out, good to hear. We haven't yet got a contract signed at the local level. And we don't exactly know when the funds will flow through to our local United Way, but our intention will be to move those out onto the ground as very quickly as we can. And I will tell you that we will probably start.

Ruth Crammond:

I know MP Sahota talked about all the little organizations reaching out to United Way. We welcome you to do that, and we'll find a way on our website to be able to register that interest. But I think we will start with some of the larger, or medium-sized, already established organizations that can push things out very quickly. For example, really expanding the Meals on Wheels possibilities, because there's...

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:16:04]

Ruth:

...expanding the Meals on Wheels possibilities because there's some great volunteers out there and organizations. I'm also working with the task force that the Councillors Fortini and Dhillon have set up because we really want the services to get out as quickly as possible. So we'll start with those and then we'll also look at how we can connect with some of the smaller, wonderful, more grassroots organizations that are on the ground doing work as well.

Mayor Brown:

Okay. Well thank you so much Ruth. Our next speaker is [Dr. Loh 00:00:43]. He is our top doctor in [Peel region 00:00:43], and I know we're starting to get a list of people asking questions. You just press star three to ask a question. After Dr. Loh, We're going to open it up for questions, which is one of my favorite parts of these town halls, but you don't want to miss what Dr. Loh has to say. And Dr. Loh, if I could just ask, the advisory that you gave and the province gave yesterday about people over the age of 70, I found that particularly informative, and so in your remarks, if you could highlight the importance of that announcement. Dr. Loh over to you and thank you for your hard work keeping all of us safe.

Dr. Loh:

Thank you Mayor Brown and thank you to the rest of the panelists, all politicians and and our team here really serving the community. And it is actually an honor and a pleasure to be speaking to you as the interim medical officer of health appeal and specifically to the seniors of Brampton. I think I've given many remarks in different forums throughout the last few weeks, but I think for seniors there's a very different message that I really want to deliver. And I know that there's a lot of fear and concern, especially with news from outside and other jurisdictions. But I wanted to let you all know that in the midst of a pandemic for which there is a lot of concern around the health and wellbeing of seniors, there is a lot of stuff that we can do and that you can do to make sure that you are as protected as you can be in the midst of this.

Dr. Loh:

So just really quickly to speak to things. We do have what is called community transmission in the region of PLN throughout the greater Toronto area, and as of just yesterday with our updated case count this morning we now have 362 cases of COVID-19 in the region of Peel. Amongst that about 137 of them are Brampton residents, and then we break down the age group by the whole region. 65 of the cases have been in people over the age of 65, and that 65 and 65 is just a coincidence. But really I think when we

think about the issues with COVID-19 and transmission, the focus for senior populations is less about you folks being out there and transmitting the disease, although that is certainly something that you can also help by staying home, but really how you can protect yourself. Because we do know that that seniors have a higher risk of having more severe outcomes with covert COVID-19 infection, and that's not by virtue of anything. I know a lot of hardy seniors out there. I know there are a lot of seniors that are really strong, still well and healthy. It's just born out by the numbers that we're seeing that are coming in from other jurisdictions.

Dr. Loh:

So in my remarks, I just wanted to touch on a few things that you can do to reduce your risk of COVID-19 in line with the recommendation that Mayor Brown was speaking to you that our office issue yesterday, which is that people over the age of 70 should try to stay at home as much as possible and to really look at trying to organize other ways to work through their basic necessities in the midst of this outbreak and pandemic.

Dr. Loh:

So I think the first thing that I would say is, and I've framed it as a bit of rely on a bunch of things. So this is a time I think for you to rely on others to some extent. And so I know many seniors are still very independent, and certainly if you want to avail yourself of senior hours at supermarkets and pharmacies, you can certainly do so as you wish. But it's certainly encouraged, if you have the option, to have a family or a social support or, as mentioned, it sounds like, and Mayor Brown, you can confirm after my remarks, it sounds like 311 will also help out with with some of this stuff as well, [inaudible 00:04:40].

Dr. Loh:

Relying on others, relying on these targeted programs, relying on things like senior hours to reduce your interactions with the public will help to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, and as I've said, while transient interactions are not necessarily shown to spread the virus, we do know that prolonged contact is really what we're trying to prevent, and that can be as simple as a 10 or 15 minute conversation with a cashier or with someone in the community that may have COVID and they have really mild symptoms and not even realize that they have the disease. So to the extent that you can rely on others to get your basic needs met, that will help to reduce your exposure, and also to rely on certain supports like senior hours and also city supports as you need to.

Dr. Loh:

The other thing I would say is it's also time to rely on technology because I do know that many seniors, especially if you're at home self isolating, it can feel quite lonely. It can feel quite distant, especially if you're used to seeing grandkids, having a lot of folks around. But we live in a really great era nowadays where there's all sorts of technology, iPads, applications that you can use, and even if you don't have an ability to use or access to that technology, even a simple old style phone call, which seems a bit odd calling it old school nowadays, but even a phone call can go a long way to at least ensure that you're still having interaction virtually even if you're not necessarily having it while physically distancing and staying at home. So to the extent that you can rely on tech, both reaching out to loved ones, to friends, to your usual social groups that you might be playing games with or usually out with, really trying to rely on that tech to keep up those connections. I think it will be vital.

Dr. Loh:

And also when it comes to healthcare, right? I think this is another thing. So a lot of family doctors have moved their appointments to virtual. A lot of them can call in prescriptions. So to the extent that you can try to move many of your healthcare appointments to virtual, that would also help. Now I do recognize there are certain appointments like dental appointments, et cetera, which may need to be postponed, but certainly the ones that you can move virtually and rely on technology as well, that's another way to go.

Dr. Loh:

And finally, I think the last thing that I would suggest in terms of relying is also relying to some extent on routine, right? I think to the extent that you can keep up your regular routines, that will help with keeping you well, both physically and mentally, as well as keeping you connected with your loved ones and your community.

Dr. Loh:

Now we do recognize that a lot of the in-person things may go away, but let's say you used to have a normal social outing, playing a card game or a book club with some friends. You can move those online. Maybe you're watching movies with your grandkids, move those online, have watch parties on the internet if you're able. Even in terms of exercise, while I still recommend that you try to stay at home as much as possible, if you go into the really early morning hours where no one is out there, it helps to minimize your interaction, and you'll still be able to get some physical activity as well. And my encouragement to everyone, not just you as seniors, is to really try to stay in your neighborhood or in your block. But even if you just want to get a bit of fresh air, try going at a time where there's likely to be less people, and stick around your neighborhood and make sure you're doing it on your own just to keep that in your life as well.

Dr. Loh:

But essentially the message is, to the extent that you can stay home and rely on others and rely on tech and rely on some aspects of a routine to stay well, I'm certain that you'll be able to minimize your risk of transmission and hopefully stay well through this pandemic.

Dr. Loh:

So I thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I will be able to take calls and take questions in the rest of the call. I do have another meeting with some Mississauga seniors at 11 o'clock, but happy to hear from Brampton seniors at this time and pass it back to Mayor Brown.

Mayor Brown:

Thank you Dr. Loh. So we're going to open this up for questions now, and once again, to ask a question, it's star three. Our first question is from Olive. Can you hear us Olive?

Olive:

Yes. Yes, I can. Hello?

Mayor Brown:

Yes, you're live with a thousand of your neighbors. What question do you have for us today?

Olive:

I just want to know how can we survive this thing if we have no one around to go and get things for us. We have no computer, any things in the house that we can use to get around? HOw can we get around?

Mayor Brown:

Great question. And it is a challenging time for seniors. One service we've made available in Brampton understanding this is called 311. If you call 311, and it used to be 48 hours response, now it's going to be 24 hours. If you need help getting medications or groceries, we will help. Your health is more important to us than you taking a risk by going to the grocery store. So if you call 311 or email covid19seniors@brampton.ca, we are here to help. Thank you for that very appropriate question Olive.

Mayor Brown:

I'd also say it's a great time...I know it's difficult to have physical distance [inaudible 00:10:10], but it's a great time to reach out to friends or family using technology. My grandmother is 106, and I can't see her right now. I used to see her every week, so we're calling her. I wish I could teach her how to use Zoom, which is a new technology, but unfortunately she's lost her eyesight. But there's always different ways to stay in touch, and I'd say now's a great time for that.

Mayor Brown:

Our next caller is [Peter Horat 00:10:45]. Peter whose known as an activist amongst seniors in Brampton. Peter, thank you for joining us.

Peter Horat:

Thank you. My pleasure. I'm with Brampton [inaudible 00:26:50] with the Brampton Senior Citizens Council. My question is around capacity and it's twofold. One, Dr. Buchman was quoted recently, he's the president of the Canadian Medical Association that given the choice to give a ventilator to a 35 year old woman with three kids or a 65 year old who has led his life and completed it, he'd obviously go with the 35 year old. Smacks of ageism. Since then, the doctor has apologized, but nevertheless, the issue is there. Doctors have to triage in the cases of emergencies and multiple cases.

Peter Horat:

In this case, it has to do with ventilators, and part one of my question is how confident are you that we will have enough ventilators in Brampton when the surge hits to deal with everybody? So I think as you said, Patrick, at one point, we're all going to be in the boat.

Peter Horat:

The second capacity issue is a chronic one with Brampton and it's hospital beds. We have never had enough for the last probably two decades. Now we're facing a severe crisis and what are we going to do to add capacity so that again we can deal with the surge with respect to hospital beds. Thank you.

Mayor Brown:

So let me give the first stab at that, and I know Dr. Loh can add his input as well. Let me say first of all that we are preparing for all scenarios. If we're successful in the physical distancing measures that we're asking everyone to undertake, we're not going to see a New York type scenario in Brampton. And I think it's fair to say we're cautiously optimistic that we're going to be able to avoid a scenario like that. But we

are working on plans for worst case scenarios, and I can tell you I'm on a regional call each day where we're looking at where a new hospital site would be for additional beds and for additional capacity. All those plans are in the works that we could be ready for a surge. I think the details of that location are still a little bit confidential, but know that the preparations for a surge are well underway in case that happens.

Mayor Brown:

In terms of ventilators, I would note there's a bit of a good news story in Brampton. We have a company, O-Two Medical Technologies, that just got the contract from the provincial government to build 10,000 ventilators right here in Brampton, so made in Brampton solution for Ontario. I know our interim CEO at the hospital, Willie Moseler, Dr. Frank Martino has given us his list of what he needs. I passed it onto procurement officials in the province and in the federal government. He believes based on the list that he's asked for, they will have the capacity, they will have the supports so will not be put into scenarios that I never want us to be in. I never want us to be in a scenario where we have to choose between a 65 year old and a 35 year old like the situation you described. That's a false choice that I would never want a physician to have to make.

Mayor Brown:

So Dr. Loh, maybe you can share with us why you're a little bit optimistic that we're not looking at a New York scenario and how well prepared do you feel we are.

Dr. Loh:

Thank you so much Mayor Brown and thank you for the question. It's really what we talk about, and this is a good opportunity for me to really speak to the idea of flattening or planking the curve that we've heard out there. And to a large extent, when you have a virus like this that for which there's no cure, no vaccine available currently, the reality is that all of us are susceptible, and I think one of the things that has made COVID-19 so concerning has not been specifically the mortality rate per se. It actually, in most people in most age groups, it tends to be very mild. A different story for seniors which is why I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak today with all of you.

Dr. Loh:

But the challenge with COVID-19 has been its contagiousness. It is a very contagious disease. It's certainly not the most contagious disease we've ever seen, but it's more contagious than something like the common cold or seasonal flu, and it also has a presymptomatic phase where people have really mild symptoms. They may not even know that they're sick and they're actually able to transmit it. So to a large extent, what we've been doing in public health and what you've heard on the media for a long time has been we need to flatten the curve, we need to flatten the curve, and the idea behind flattening the curve through measures like physical distancing is basically you're trying to throttle the tap. Rather than a whole bunch of cases coming in and overwhelming the health care system at the same time, people will continue to get infected, but essentially through the reduction of interaction, the speed at which it spreads throughout the community from person to person will be slowed down. And so the hope is that if we are successful with the physical distancing that we've seen, in the coming weeks, we will start to see a slowing down of new cases. We aren't going to see this slowing down new cases this week or next week. I can promise you that. These cases are going to continue to increase signif-

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:32:04]

Dr. Loh:

The cases are going to continue to increase significantly, oh probably until about mid-April, but the hope is that all the measures that have been taken in mid-March will start to be reflected in our case counts subsequent to that. Then hopefully when the healthcare picture also catches up, we will not be pushing at the capacity where difficult decisions like that need to be made.

Dr. Loh:

That said, and I'm not... I oversee the community, broader community control response, but I am in close contact with our hospital partners. I think Mayor Brown has highlighted it. I know that our folks in [inaudible 00:32:39] and Dr. [inaudible 00:32:40] and the rest of the team there have really been looking at this question, have really been gearing up and preparing for the eventual increase of cases that may be seeking care in healthcare facilities. I have no doubt that they will be ready.

Dr. Loh:

I think it really speaks to two things, the importance for all of us as a community to continue to limit our interactions and promote greater physical distancing, staying home as much as possible to flatten the curve. Then the advice that I gave earlier for seniors to, for themselves, to also try optometrist limit their in person interactions and rely more on text, on other people, and also on routines that keep them safe, but also reduce their risk of transmission. Thank you for the question.

Mayor Brown:

Thank you so much, Dr. Loh for that explanation. Our next question is Shay. Shay has a question about taxes. Shay, are you there?

Shay:

Yes, I am. Thank you. Good morning to all of you first of all. My question is regarding the taxes that you have [inaudible 00:33:52] and I have an automatic payment I'm making monthly, how will that help me? Do I have to apply? Or is it going to be automatically done with my bank? They don't have to pay something to be done. That's my question.

Mayor Brown:

If you have automatic deductions, what you can do is by April 15th, if you call 311, they will take care of you. You can go to Branton.state or call 311. Explain to them that you have automatic payments, and we will take you off automatic payments.

Shay:

Thank you very much.

Mayor Brown:

The goal is, and everyone on the phone, no matter how you pay your taxes, this is to help people through this period. I would not in Toronto, the deferral is 60 days. In Mississauga it's 90 days. Our five month deferral is one of the longest in the country because we know that this is a tough time, and if you need this help... If you can afford to pay your taxes, please pay, but if you need help right now, just call 311 and you will automatically get that deferral. Thank you for the question, Shay, and thank you to Councillor Fortini and Dhillon, by the way, who supported that initiative at the Council table. We can't

get anything done unless everyone agrees, and it was good to have champions like them supporting that.

Mayor Brown:

Our next question is Ann Marie Bennity. Ann Marie?

Ann Marie Bennity:

Hi there. Thank you so much for the call today. There's really great information and it's really nice to see what's happening here in Branton for our seniors. I had a couple of different questions, actually. I hope it's okay. The first being I understand the direction for seniors to be over 70 to stay at home and so on. I know that, and you're putting all of these great resources in place to help them, but in some circumstances, and I'm experiencing this with my own father actually, in terms of cognitively he's having a really hard time staying at home and not going through his routine of going to the store every day. It's been a real challenge just in terms of my mental health and his. I'm just wondering if there's any resources or best practices or any help for caregivers and for people that are really struggling in terms of that piece.

Ann Marie Bennity:

My other question is in terms of the, because I do have two seniors here at [inaudible 00:36:17], if one of them were to get sick, in terms of best practices within the home, how to protect each of them so that the other doesn't. I know that's difficult, and I'm just, again, looking for some best practices or resources that I could seek out to, with that being the case, if they could be shared with [inaudible 00:36:36] as well so that they could inform their patients as well.

Mayor Brown:

Dr Loh, do you want to take a stab at that?

Dr. Loh:

Yeah, I'm happy to take a stab. I'll start with the last question first, which is what do you do when someone at home contracts coronavirus. I think what the best advice we have right now, obviously recognizing that households are challenges places, is that self-isolation would ideally mean that someone that has contracted coronavirus stay in their own room. Ideally it has its own bathroom. We know that this is a luxury that is not necessarily afforded to many people, but if it's an option, that would be great, and essentially limiting the extent of their interactions to people in the rest of the household for the duration of time that they have symptoms, basically until such time that their symptoms resolve, and 48 hours after that, or for 14 days altogether. That's essentially the advice that we've had so far.

Dr. Loh:

They can interact with people. They just need to be downstairs, like if you're downstairs with someone else and all these all other people, you'll want them to wear a mask and you'll want them to be maintaining that critical two meter distance. For example, they could very well be hanging out in the kitchen dining area, but they're staying at the dining table and then also hang out in the kitchen, still having that interaction but making sure that they are masked because we do know that masks can help to reduce that.

Dr. Loh:

In terms of the other question you had, ongoing supports and routines, this has [inaudible 00:38:11]. I recognize this has upended everyone's routine, but I also recognize for seniors, and that's why I said rely on routines, routine is one of those big things that do keep seniors connected to the community and keep them well. I think it goes to the idea that if there are other alternatives, and I know that there are also a lot of groups on the call that may be working with seniors, if there's some way to change, as I mentioned, to a virtual kind of pieces, help lines, phone lines, online programming, these are ways I think everyone's trying to make it through with every other group.

Dr. Loh:

I think in terms of some of the supports we might offer in the community for our seniors, I imagine it really should be an approach that is entirely different. I encourage any of the senior groups around here to really think about how you can deliver your programming and services in a different way and keeping in mind that we do need to keep seniors safe. Thank you, and back to you, Mayor Brown.

Mayor Brown:

Thank you, Dr. Loh. Why don't we take our first poll? With modern technology, we can take a sample of 1,000 residents just like this. I've got a question for everyone. What are your top priorities that you'd like the city to work on. Press one on more help from volunteers. Press two for fitness opportunities. Press three for social interaction. Press one for more volunteer help. Press two for fitness opportunities. Press three for social interaction. I'll share the poll results with everyone a little bit later.

Mayor Brown:

We're going to our next question. We have Angela Carter who's got a question. Angela Carter, another well known senior activist in the city. Angela, are you there? Okay, maybe we'll go back to Angela after. We have Wanda there. Wanda, the president of the Nicebridge Seniors has a question for the United Way. Wanda, are you there? Can you hear us?

Wanda:

Yes, I am here, Mayor Brown, thank you. I wanted to address mine to Ms. Kramen, the first question to United Way. Are you folks, and this is nothing personal, you've had a very bad reputation at United Way for charging very high administrative costs. Will you be waiving your fee or at least reducing your fee for any work that you're doing with this program now that will be coming through from the government? That's my one question.

Wanda:

The second one is I want to thank Councillor Fortini for all the help he's given me. I've had some major concerns about the subsidized housing that's next door to Nicebridge Center. It's one Nicebridge, and in that area we have a lot of subsidized housing. He's helped me get in touch with peer housing who are looking after quite a few of my concerns that I had with the residents there, in particular with their food because they were coming to our snack bar, which is now closed.

Wanda:

A lot of them are physically disabled. They have no transportation. They have to go for regular physio or doctors appointments like drug tests and stuff like that. Is there any transportation that is afforded to

them? They're even unable to get to the bus stop. We're trying to help, but something like that can be getting transportation either free or at least reduced for this period in time.

Councillor Fortini:

Can I jump on that, Mayor Brown?

Mayor Brown:

Yes, please Councillor Fortini.

Councillor Fortini:

Thank you Wanda. I'm on the line with her. Trans Help is providing for rides. We cannot send volunteers because if you do, we don't practice the distance, so for anyone to go for medical or blood tests or something, Trans Help is willing to do it.

Mayor Brown:

And Deborah, did you want to add any comment?

Deborah:

Yeah, Diane, thanks for the question. It's always good to have an opportunity to clarify. I'm sorry that we have that reputation because I'm not quite sure where it comes from. We really try to keep our administrative fees low. We always do, very much. We do have terrific staff who are on the line with me here today who will be fielding the applications and making sure that money gets out where it is most needed and to organizations that are best able to really get out these critical services. We do have some staff who help with those efforts and who work on the ground with our agencies, but the administrative fees that we'll be receiving from these government grants would be nominal. I think we're talking maybe, I don't know, a very small percentage of the funds that would go to United Way to help move this money out into community.

Ruby:

I can probably check that one a little bit. According to, if you don't mind, according to the numbers we have, United Way is a great organization and actually performs better than industry standards compared to other not for profit organizations across Canada. Their average across the country is 85 cents of every dollar is spent towards going directly back to the community. That's better than most not for profits, and I can say that from the federal government, that United Way has obviously got a great network across the country, and that's why it's been the chosen organization. They're good at delivering most of all the proceeds back into the communities. 85% is the number that we have.

Mayor Brown:

Okay, thank you Ruby. Next question is Angela Carter. We're going to try to get back to it. We lost it before. Angela, are you there now?

Angela Carter:

Hi, hello, are you hearing me now/

Mayor Brown:

We can, Angela.

Angela Carter:

Okay, hi. Good morning. Thanks very much for the opportunity to speak and thank you for having this town hall from [inaudible 00:44:29] communicate services, and I have two questions. One is that central [inaudible 00:44:35] actually is asking all of the organizations that they fund for a capacity. I know that we use Chris Gibson for one of our programs with this, that we have this [inaudible 00:44:49]. I was wondering if they're in discussions with you regarding the use of rec centers for additional capacity. Just a question because they did ask us and wanted to know what capacity we have to take an emergency situation. That was just one of them

Angela Carter:

The other one is we have some seniors who have their taxes this year and they have to pay back taxes based on having to take money from their [inaudible 00:45:19] last year. This is a question for [inaudible 00:45:23]. Will they be looking at a waiver or even a reduction those seniors should have to pay back on the income tax this year?

Ruby:

What we have done for now is we have deferred the time for when you have to pay your taxes, which is to August 31st to this point. I assume the federal government has been making amendments for many things because we've been having to obviously come up with policy very quickly in a short period of time, and trying roll that out, and then obviously receiving feedback through the MP level and through other direct contact right to the federal government. We're open to doing many things, but as of right now, you don't have to file your taxes until June 1st and you don't have to pay your taxes until August 31st.

Ruby:

Those seniors that do make income, they would qualify also for this service, the Canadian Emergency Response benefit. If you are an income earner and you have lost your income as of the last 14 days due to Covid-19, and you have at least made \$5,000 in the year prior, then you would be eligible to apply for this benefit, and you would receive approximately \$2,000 a month. You can apply for the benefit on the CRA website. If you don't have an account there, please go and sign up to create an account, create a portal, which is called my account, link your bank account to that, and then you can go from there once the applications are available on August 6th. Thank you.

Mayor Brown:

Thank you Ruby, and another question was rec centers. Let me say the city has offered to [inaudible 00:47:16] public health in the hospital. If they need to use any of our rec facilities for public health, absolutely. I know right now we have a rec center that's probably going to be used for an assessment center. Details on that are still to be announced, but right now we're all in this together. Our rec centers aren't being used, and whatever way we can pitch in to get through this pandemic, the city is 100% willing to do so.

Mayor Brown:

We started this town hall about 10 minutes late. I've asked the providers if we could go 10 minutes later, so we're going to go right until 11:10, but we have about 70 questions in the queue. We're not

going to get through all of them. Some of the more straightforward ones I'm just going to answer. We have Elma Williams. She's over 70. She wants to know if it's okay...

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [00:48:04]

Mayor Brown:

We have Alma Williams, she's over 70, she wants to know if it's okay to be in her garden. Absolutely. That actually got asked on our city tele-town hall and Dr. Lo talked about, it's absolutely safe to be in your garden. I noticed we have a few questions about that. We've got a few questions about going to the park and bike rides. Donna, why don't I give you a chance to ask that and we can have Dr. Lo answer. Donna are you there?

Donna:

I am here. Can you hear me?

Mayor Brown:

I can.

Donna:

Yes. And I think Dr. Lo did answer that when he said it's okay to go out early mornings or when it's not busy. And I think that's a really important message because friends are telling my 71 year old husband he has to absolutely stay in the house whereas getting out and biking for 10, 30 kilometers keeps him healthy. But I would like to take the opportunity to go back to the question about the Central West LHIN, which the previous caller asked, and are they involved with all of this emergency preparedness because I don't hear anything about them on these calls?

Mayor Brown:

Maybe Dr. Lo, if you could speak to any interactions and conversations you've had with the LHIN and their level of preparation.

Dr. Lo:

Yeah, actually I'm happy to answer and I will say Mayor Brown and all, I apologize, I will need to leave shortly after this answer to join another town hall that I'm scheduled for, but I did want to say that in fact the Central West LHIN actually technically no longer exists as I understand it or at least in respect to the COVID-19 response. There's been a number of Ontario Health Regional Tables that have been developed and as you know, they recently created a brand new provincial agency called Ontario Health and folded a bunch of LHINs into a number of different regions. Peel Public Health sits at the Ontario Health Central regional table. And that is meant to coordinate sort of broader efforts between the healthcare system as well as Peel Public Health and all those other pieces.

Dr. Lo:

Their focus really has been on ensuring that there is both the testing as well as the treatment capacity. Of course, Peel Public Health is there in a supportive role, just sort of bringing our understanding of the impacts of the pandemic in our community along with the other, there's seven other health units that are working with the Ontario Health central table to just sort of inform them and also provide

recommendations. But I do know that the focus that has really been on sort of all the hospitals within the Ontario Health central region and perhaps at a future town hall, it maybe good to see if they might be able to be here to answer some questions as well because I do know that home care and other pieces are certainly things that we want to see continue obviously as much as we can to ensure that people with immediate health needs are with the health needs [inaudible 00:50:52] those are taken care of, but obviously with appropriate precautions taken. Those are pieces that I am unfortunately unable to answer, but I imagine someone from Ontario Health would have some insight as to the discussions that have been happening at the broader regional tables.

Dr. Lo:

With that, I will thank everyone for the opportunity to address today and I'll pass it back to Mayor Brown while signing off. Thank you.

Speaker 3:

Thank you for joining this access live event with the city of Brampton, the call will resume momentarily, please stay on the line. Again, thank you so much for joining this access live event with the city of Brampton. The call reason momentarily.

Mayor Brown:

Do we have [inaudible 00:51:40] there? [inaudible 00:51:46], can you hear us?

Speaker 4:

Yes, I could hear you.

Mayor Brown:

Sorry for that slight technological issue, Crystal Bell, you've got a question?

Speaker 4:

Yes, I got a question. This is regarding actually I'm a member of the Brampton Tamil Seniors Association, but I live in a senior in a building [inaudible 00:52:07] living building. Actually it was called senior building, but last week on Tuesday we heard that one of our tenants is quarantined for COVID. We heard this news. I didn't hear it directly, I heard it from the friend of mine, so it is on our floor on the fifth floor where I am residing. I spoke to the supervisor, he said everything is taken care of, but we asked him what category he is, did he go out and get it or some people said he was in the hospital and some said that he came from the hospital and he was quarantine. We are clueless because we are seniors, we would like to know what precautions the building super has to take. We are trying to find some facts because we use the common laundry and the common mail room. At least once a day or once a week we go to the laundry and every day we go to the mail. There is no notices put out and no preventative messages, what we have to take has not been outlined to us. Is there a way that you could give us feedback to see what has to be done, please?

Mayor Brown:

[inaudible 00:00:53:31], thank you for the question and I would note the government has now put in place serious fines for people not abiding by the quarantine. So that individual who's in quarantine, they're not allowed to leave their apartment, not for the communal laundry, not for any of the

communal areas in the apartment building. If the person is ignoring the advice of public health, ignoring the advice of the government, please call 311 and we will have bylaw or police speak to that individual. But rest assured, as long as the person's quarantined, there is no risk for you. Just by being on the same floor, you're separated by walls, you're more than six feet apart. You should not be concerned.

Mayor Brown:

I noticed we have a lot of questions. I'm going to try to once again to answer some of the more straightforward ones because I feel bad we're not getting to all of these. Property tax deferral, the five months, yes, you just need to call 311 for the property tax deferral. That's a question from [inaudible 00:06:31]. He also asked if we can get seniors Starbucks. I don't think that's a service we can provide, but thank you for the question.

Mayor Brown:

We have a question from someone asking about going to the Mac's Milk 10 minutes away. They wanted to know whether it's safe and they're 82 years old. I want you to know that if you can get someone else to go to the Mac's Milk for you, that's better. There is a going to be a risk of exposure if you'd go to the Mac's Milk. I know it must be a nice walk, but even to go get milk and we do have this service with 311 with our seniors task force, we can help you get that milk. I wouldn't be taking risks right now.

Mayor Brown:

A question about prescription renewals. We can help with that, too. Alex asked that question. We can certainly send someone to go get your medications. Right now, everyone is trying to adapt and frankly, if there are questions about your medication, that's what Telehealth Ontario is for as well.

Mayor Brown:

There's question about volunteer activities. Are there volunteers that we need right now? Obviously, the task force need volunteers, so don't hesitate to reach out to our task force. They're all on the city website. If you want to donate food, I know Regeneration and Knights Table will appreciate it. I know the hospital is doing a campaign for personal protective equipment. If you want to make a donation, there's lots of ways that people can chip in to help out.

Mayor Brown:

We have a question from [inaudible 00:08:01]. She asked a question, will there be a supplementary increase for seniors? Ruby Sahota mentioned the GST rebates going to be increased. There are programs available and we're working with our provincial and federal partners to make sure everyone knows what you're eligible for.

Mayor Brown:

We probably have time for one more question and then we'll do a wrap up with the Councillors. For our last question, I want to go to David. David, the floor is yours.

David:

Yes, I'm David, president of Brampton Tamil Seniors. First of all, I'd like to thank the Mayor and the Councillors for taking initiative towards the seniors in Brampton. And one question from me is because I am concerned [inaudible 00:56:49] I am living with my wife in only my house and my children are living

in Camden, so I don't want to bother them to purchase groceries for us. So my question is purchasing of groceries, I was told that we can order it online and pay through the credit card and the [inaudible 00:57:05] you'll be able to pick it up and a delivery. But the problem, the practical problem, what [inaudible 00:57:10] is only two places we can order groceries online. One is Walmart, other one is Costco. But Walmart, the pickup window is about seven to eight days. There's a practical problem with that. But with Costco, we cannot order groceries, we can order only items which are on their online list. Groceries like vegetables, fruits and things like that [inaudible 00:09:31]. I like this idea that if we can order our groceries through 311, we can give the credit card details to you all, you all can purchase it and charge it on our credit cards, so there'll be no delay. So your volunteers will be able to deliver it to us in time. This is my [inaudible 00:09:53]. I like to hear about it. Thank you.

Mayor Brown:

Well David, great question. I'm going to ask [Daniella 00:57:59] to respond to that. Daniella is working on our seniors task force. Daniella, can you explain how the process works and how we can help seniors get those fresh fruits and vegetables?

Daniella:

Thank so much, Mayor Brown and thank you David for that question. Yes, we are working towards helping seniors [inaudible 00:58:17] process of grocery purchases online. At this time if you are able to provide you information to us, then we can arrange for that information to be provided directly to the store. What we're doing is we're deploying volunteers and having [inaudible 00:58:36] with and you can provide that information to the store and that allows the volunteer to pick up the items without your information [inaudible 00:58:44] delivered to you. We are also working to put a system in place. We're working with our finance department that allows for [inaudible 00:58:55] purchase items and then the resident would be able to reimburse the city through an invoicing system. We're hoping that within the next few days we will have that process easier for seniors who aren't tech savvy and aren't able to order their groceries online. Thank you for that.

Mayor Brown:

Just to repeat, you can call 311 and we can help with that. David, we want to make sure you get those fresh fruits and vegetables.

Mayor Brown:

We've now exhausted our time with the provider. I know there's lots of questions we didn't get to, so we've got a great team here that will respond to all the questions. We'll get back to everyone who did not get that, be able to ask us a question. [inaudible 00:59:33] Catherine are here at the emergency operations center with me and we're making a list of all the questions.

Mayor Brown:

But we'll do one last poll before we wrap up, just asking everyone the question, what's the most important service for you? Grocery and pharmacy delivery, mental health resources or medical resources? Press one for help with groceries and pharmacy delivery, press two for mental health resources, and press three for medical resources. Which resource is most important for you. And as you put that in, it looks like it's a resoundingly grocery and pharmacy delivery. That's good feedback for us to have.

Mayor Brown:

I want to thank Councillor Fortini and Councillor Dhillon for their ongoing hard work as chairs of this task force. I know Councillor Dhillon, you didn't hear a lot from him today, but he's doing a lot of work in the South Asian community in East Brampton, working with Punjabi seniors and we're grateful for all the hard work that Councillor Dhillon is doing. Councillor Fortini, his office has been phenomenal. Ingrid, his assistant, she's practically a saint. She's doing so much work and Councillor Fortini, I'm grateful for how you've really stepped up. We're all in this together. We are all in this together and we're going to get through it as a city and as a country. We'll try to do these calls on a regular basis to keep you informed. We live in an amazing city and an amazing country and if anyone can get through this, it's Canadians and everyone, keep optimistic and if there's anything we can do at the city of Brampton to help, know that we are here to help. We serve you. Thank you so much for being on our first seniors tele town hall.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:01:22]