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GEORGINA Post

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FREE ISSUE

Face coverings mandatory for indoor public spaces on July 17

By MIKE ANDERSON

York Regional Council voted unanimously on July 9 to make non-medical masks and face coverings mandatory for all indoor public spaces to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The vote approved a mandatory instruction, issued by Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Medical Officer of Health, requiring operators of indoor public spaces to have a policy in place prohibiting people from entering if they are not wearing a face mask or covering.

The public spaces include all retail stores, grocery stores and shopping malls, as well as community centres and places of worship.

The instruction is effective Friday, July 17, and is scheduled to remain in place until Monday, November 30.

Children under the age of five, people with certain health conditions and employees in designated areas protected by a physical barrier are exempted from wearing a mask or face covering.

Outdoor settings and indoor spaces not open to the public are also exempted. And restaurant patrons won't have to wear a mask or face covering while eating on a patio.

"York Regional Council remains committed to our residents' health and safety," said York Region Chairman and



MAUREEN CELEBRATES HER MOTHER ELSIE'S 93RD BIRTHDAY

Family visits resume at River Glen Haven

By MIKE ANDERSON

It was a sweltering 32 degrees Celsius on River Glen Haven's garden patio last Thursday afternoon, but that didn't keep Maureen McDermott from celebrating her mother Elsie's 93rd birthday with balloons and buttercream cupcakes.

After all, it was the first time they'd

been together since mid-March when the Sutton LTC home went into lock-down as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19.

"It was like somebody just took a fuel tank and filled me right up again," said Ms. McDermott, who wore a mask and sanitized

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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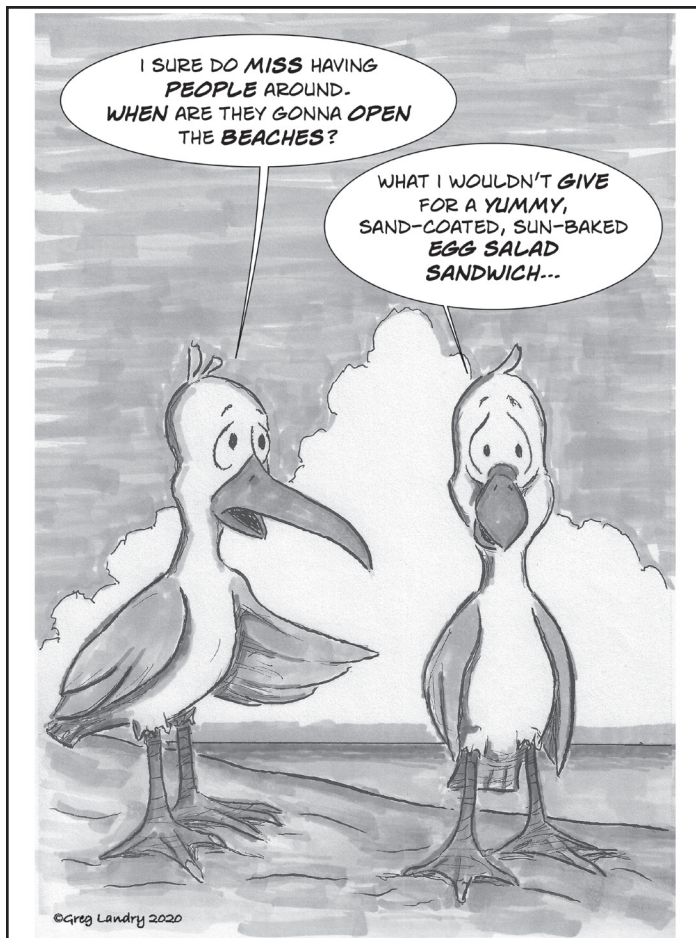
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MASKS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

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“Businesses open to the public have worked diligently to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Face masks or coverings will play a key role in the continued successful re-opening of the economy and to safeguard our residents and visitors.”

Mayor Margaret Quirk is supportive and urges residents to adapt to the new normal.

“We know that wearing a mask is not always comfortable, or even popular with many. But these unusual times have required us to take actions that we typically wouldn’t have considered before,” said Mayor Quirk in an email to The Post.

“This was a lengthy discussion at Regional Council, and we hope that with increased education and awareness, people will support this. Keeping the public safe has always been our number one priority, and every bit that we are each able to do will put us another step closer to fully re-opening.”

Despite some negative comments on social media, most Georgina residents appear to be supportive of the decision.

Still, there are some concerns that front-line workers will have to enforce the new rules.

Steve Jacobson, chair of the Jackson’s Point BIA, says it’s unfair to ask part-time employees to police customers who don’t want to wear a mask.

“I’m scared for these people,” says Mr. Jacobson, who also co-founded SOS Georgina, a

volunteer organization that sews cloth face masks for front-line workers and residents, with proceeds going to charity.

“I can see it already on Facebook. People are saying that they will not wear a mask. So you got this part-time employee standing at the front of Sobeys confronting these people. It’s not going to work.”

He also believes that the region hasn’t provided enough lead-time – just one week – for retailers and volunteer organizations, like SOS Georgina, to prepare for the rush on masks.

“Watch what happens. They’ll be out of masks in every store up here in 10 minutes. I’m not against what they’re doing. But you got to give people time. You got to give stores time to get inventory.”

To find out more about the new mask and face-covering rules, visit www.york.ca/mandatorymasks

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PUBLISHER | EDITOR

Mike Anderson
mike@georginapost.com

ADVERTISING | SALES

Mike Anderson
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Editorial: Resident-only beaches

Beach access in Georgina has become a case of the haves and have-nots. If you're a have, and own a boat or a waterfront property, you're probably enjoying one of the best summers on record.

But if you're a have-not, you can only watch through a fence as your fellow residents, the haves, frolic in the water, work on their tans, and generally have a grand ole time.

Despite recent musings from the Town's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) that a resident-only beach was being considered, that door has been slammed shut.

"It's not even on the table," said Mayor Margaret Quirk in an interview with The Post on July 3. "I get it that people are frustrated. They want to know about resident-only beaches. We can't do that from a legal point of view. We can't do it. It's just not going to happen."

Mayor Quirk and the EOC have repeatedly stated that the Ontario Municipal Act does not allow them to open a resident-only beach.

And by doing so, the Town could face a Charter challenge from a non-resident beach-goer deprived of their right to access a public beach. These arguments are questionable.

Why wasn't the Town of Innisfil

concerned about breaching the Municipal Act when it opened its beaches to residents only on June 19? And, to date, why hasn't the province moved to punish it for doing so?

And to argue that the Town will face a Charter challenge during a pandemic seems far-fetched.

Surely, protecting its residents from the potential spread of COVID-19 by restricting public beach access, in favour of resident-only access, meets the legal test of reasonable grounds.

This inequitable situation, between the haves and have-nots, is becoming hard to swallow for some. Especially as temperatures soar, and the active COVID-19 case count continues to plummet.

As of publication, there are only six active cases of COVID-19 in Georgina, with a population of some 50,000 people.

According to public health, those six infected people are legally required to stay at home and self-isolate; they do not plan a day at the beach.

Furthermore, the risk of contracting COVID-19 on a Town beach that adopts and enforces proper safety measures is relatively low. After all, you're less likely to catch the virus outdoors.

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FAMILIES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

her hands before sitting across the table from her mother. “We both cried. And she said, you know, this has been really hard not doing this.”

Ms. McDermott’s visit was one of 25 initial family visits that began on July 9; her next visit is scheduled for July 16.

Family members must follow strict visitor guidelines. They must attest to a negative COVID test in the past 14 days, undergo a temperature check, maintain physical distancing, wear a face mask at all times, use hand sanitizer and adhere to a strict 45-minute time limit.

The visits are carefully coordinated by RGH recreational staff, although physical distancing is sometimes a challenge as family members desperately want to hug their loved ones.

“They were very thorough in their questioning and their screening. It felt so weird being so supervised. But I love Susan, the recreational director that was out there. She’s incredible. But I don’t know how I would have felt if it was somebody I didn’t know,” Ms. McDermott said.

River Glen Haven experienced one of the worst LTC outbreaks in York Region. Over 66 days, 90 residents and 37 staff tested positive, and 36 residents died from COVID-19.

With RGH unable to contain the outbreak, which began on April 27, the province ordered Southlake Regional Health Centre to take over the LTC home from its operator, ATK Care Inc., on May 25 for 90 days.

Under Southlake’s leadership, the LTC home contained the spread of the virus, and public health declared the outbreak officially over on July 2.

Elsie was one of the lucky residents at RGH. Although she tested positive for COVID-19 on Mother’s Day, her symptoms were mild. She was able

to recover without medical intervention, despite having a series of underlying conditions, including Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Alzheimer’s and dementia.

“She’s here today. And that to me, that’s incredible because we thought if she got hit with COVID, we’d be saying goodbye,” said Ms. McDermott.

“I feel so incredibly privileged, and I’m just so grateful for Southlake. And that’s why we need Southlake to stay.”

Ms. McDermott has written a letter to Premier Doug Ford urging the province to extend Southlake’s management past the 90 days, which is due to expire on August 24, until a full inquiry can review how ATK Care Inc. and RGH administration handled the outbreak.

“Thirty-six lives have been lost during this first wave. Myself and several other families feel that we don’t have any confidence in the management/ownership of RGH for a second wave of COVID, which is being talked about as inevitable,” wrote Ms. McDermott in the letter, which was also sent to MPPs Caroline Mulroney, Christine Elliott and Andrea Howarth.

“Southlake Hospital and their team have increased communication, accountability, transparency, resident care, infection control, proper use of PPE, and ending the outbreak. Although the admin is still very present and active, they have continued to ignore our emails — just as they ignored our cries for help when this all began.

Please, tell your Health Minister, Minister of LTC, our Premier, to extend the stay for Southlake at River Glen. At least for another 90 days, if not permanently. The elder genocide that was responsible for losing 36 lives, and so many more around the province, must end — and never, ever happen again.”

Province provides \$4 million for Skilled Trades Institute

By MIKE ANDERSON

It was more good news for Georgina Trades Training Inc. (GTTI), as the province announced more than \$4 million in funding for its new Skilled Trades Institute on July 3.

This follows a \$2.6 million investment by the Town of Georgina, approved by council on June 24.

The institute, which will be located at 1614 Metro Rd. in Willow Beach, will train up to 200 students a year to build modular homes for affordable housing projects across the region.

The program, led by GTTI, will be run through SkillsOntario, which will help connect graduates with employers in the residential construction industry.

"This project shows how our government is partnering with local communities to address economic challenges and help more people find work in the trades," said Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development in a media release on July 3.

"Many communities have been hit hard by the pandemic. As we continue to reopen Ontario's economy, effective training initiatives will be an essential part of our efforts to get everyone back on the job."

York-Simcoe MPP Caroline Mulroney has been a supporter of the project from its inception and believes it will address two significant issues in her riding:



GTTI: JOHN DE FAVERI, BIL TRAINOR & PHIL ADAMS

jobs and affordable housing.

"We want to help people get the skills they need for jobs that we know will be there. We believe that construction and infrastructure building are going to be a key part of our economic recovery," said Ms. Mulroney, who also believes the project, though its partnership with Habitat for Humanity, will help address the chronic shortage of affordable housing in the region.

"The ministry is actually very excited about this model. And, I hope that they will look at extending it beyond Georgina to other places. And I think that if they do that, it will really put GTTI, and Georgina on the map."

The Town of Georgina is also a major partner, providing the initial upfront funding and leasing the land to GTTI to establish the new campus.

"This is stepping out of what

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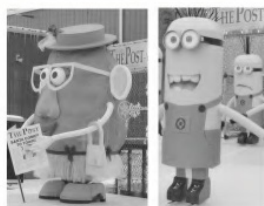
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SUTTON LEGION

COVID-19 threatens Legion and military museum closure

By MICHELLE POIRIER

Preserving Georgina's military heritage could prove challenging if the Sutton Legion and Georgina Military Museum are forced to shutter their doors forever. Both not-for-profit organizations are struggling financially after four months of being closed due to COVID-19.

And their major fundraising events have been either cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic.

Sid Giddings, Georgina Military Museum President, was forced to cancel Military Day this year, which is the museum's largest fundraising event.

"The Town gives us a grant every year. That only covers a part of our expenses. The rest is from attendance, donations and our Military Day. Any other funds have just dried up 100 per cent. We are getting a little concerned," he said.

According to Mr. Giddings, the museum is currently only spending money on rent, hydro and gas, but it is operating at a deficit.

And, despite Mr. Giddings and one other volunteer working on getting exhibits ready, he said it would be difficult to re-open on short notice.

"If we were told to open tomorrow, we couldn't because we're not ready. Within a week, we could be open with a sustained effort, but even then, there's a lot of concern from volunteers."

Mr. Giddings, and many of the volunteers, are within the age bracket considered more susceptible to COVID-19, and they are concerned about the risks involved with opening to the public.

"Museums are not open as of yet, but we have a decision to make once they are open between the fiscal and health concerns," he said.

The Sutton Legion Branch 356 is also facing financial struggles, after closing in March.

"The biggest thing that we've survived on lately has been donations," said Mike Burton, the Legion's Immediate Past President.

During the closure, members have been renovating and cleaning the Sutton branch. And they are supporting local veterans as much as they can while following safety guidelines.

According to Mr. Burton, the Sutton branch only has to pay daily operating expenses, as

they own the building. But they don't have a significant financial reserve. And the majority of their income comes from the Legion's bar and hall rentals, which have been closed for four months.

While the Legion does raise money through its Poppy Fund, none of that money goes towards the branch; it's solely used to help veterans.

Though legally, the Sutton branch can open their patio at half capacity, it's not going to at this time, according to Mr. Burton, as it does not make financial sense.

"In all honesty, the province has put a lot of pressure on us with the amount of personnel that we would have to have working to be open, and that's where our costs come in. We've done a cost analysis on that, we know what our burden rate is, and if we open on a regular basis, just that income will not suffice," he said.

While Mr. Burton said the Sutton branch is not in danger of closing permanently as of now, it might become a reality if they are forced to remain closed for an extended period of time.

Fortunately, both organizations are eligible for a grant program approved by Georgina Town Council on June 24, to assist local not-for-profits and charities with their monthly lease or operational costs, up to \$1,000 a month for three months.

Mr. Burton said he would be looking into the grant, and Mr. Giddings is currently in talks with the Town.

Both Mr. Burton and Mr. Giddings said they and others within their organizations are working on new ways to raise money, but nothing has been announced as of yet.

Besides facing a loss of income, the Georgina Military Museum must also complete mandatory renovations by next year.

"We will run into some financial roadblocks next year,

large ones, which I don't know how we're going to get by. We need \$30,000 to do some major upgrades required by the Town, so the future may be in question," Mr. Giddings said.

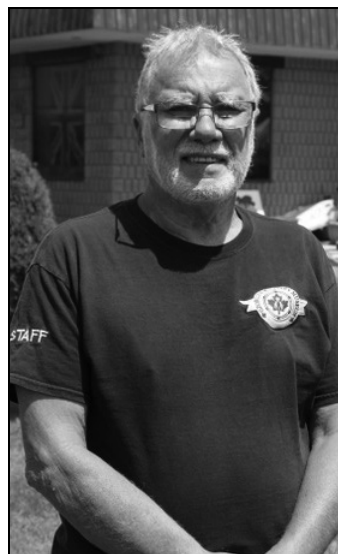
Though the Sutton branch is not currently in danger of closing, Mr. Burton, who is involved with 49 other Legion branches in this district, said some of the 124 branches facing permanent closures in Canada are in this district.

"At a district level, we try to work together with individual branches to help each other out," Mr. Burton said. "I've seen a lot of different branches that will most likely not be open at the end of this, which will be permanent. It's heartbreaking."

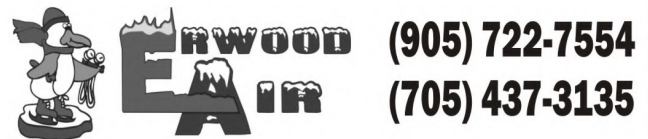
But, while the Royal Canadian Legion is hurting as a whole, Mr. Burton says the Sutton branch is determined to make it through the pandemic.

"Any help that the community can give us, or municipality, we would be very grateful. And hopefully, we will be back up and running very soon and be able to have our doors open for our members, our veterans and the public."

Contact Sutton Legion Branch 356 at (905) 722-8171 or the Georgina Military Museum at (905) 989-9900, if you would like to donate.



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Family of man who died at River Glen Haven files lawsuit

By MIKE ANDERSON

The family of Sing Tong Choi, one of the 36 residents who died during the COVID-19 outbreak at the River Glen Haven Nursing Home in Sutton, has filed a lawsuit against ATK Care Inc., the LTC home's owner, for \$1.45 million in damages.

The lawsuit alleges that ATK Care Inc. failed to protect the residents of the home, including Mr. Sing, "through inadequate preventative and responsive measures to the COVID-19 outbreak."

The plaintiffs, Mr. Sing's wife and children, argue that his death occurred as a direct result of negligence and a breach of fiduciary duty by ATK Care Inc., which owed a duty of care to Mr. Sing and the other residents.

According to Melissa Miller, the lawyer who's handling the case for Howie, Sacks & Henry LLP, a Toronto personal injury law firm, at least two other families will be filing lawsuits against ATK Care Inc. in the coming weeks.

"These families deserve to have accountability and justice for themselves," said Ms. Miller, who has also brought lawsuits on behalf of 20 families against the Orchard Villa Retirement Residence in Pickering, one of Ontario's hardest-hit LTC homes and the subject of a scathing report by the Canadian Armed Forces.

"If all of these families are successful in proving that the nursing homes fell below the standard of care. It's going to be an indication to our government that they must do something about our system once and for all."

According to the 11-page claim, filed on June 12, Mr. Sing died from complications

of COVID-19 on May 14, after testing positive for the virus on May 6.

The claim alleges that River Glen Haven "did not properly physically distance residents as the outbreak spread from the second floor of the home to the third floor, where Sing resided."

There was also a lack of communication between the home and the family members, which, according to the Ministry of Long-Term Care, is required by ATK Care Inc's license:

"The home failed to communicate with Sing's family and did not promptly notify his family members about the outbreak at the home, that he was experiencing symptoms or his condition."

Another allegation against River Glen Haven is that "personal protection equipment (PPE) was not properly utilized by residents or the staff at the home."

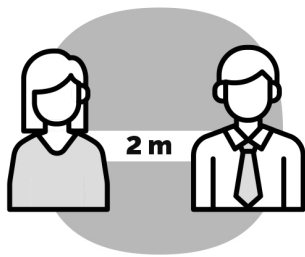
Moreover, the LTC home's owners failed to provide adequate PPE to staff and did not train them on its proper use.

"As part of the legislation and the regulations, homes are required to have an infection protocol. They're required to have someone who's trained. They're required to keep up with changing medical evidence," said Ms. Miller.

"Not only was training potentially an issue, but you also have people that are already overworked and understaffed. It's not the pandemics fault. It's not COVID-19's fault."

These claims have yet to be proven in court, and ATK Care Inc. has 20 days from the court filing to issue a statement of defence.

As more businesses and services reopen, and with social gatherings increased to 10 people, we all must continue our efforts to protect each other.



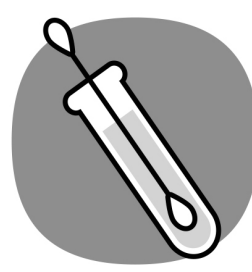
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SNAPPING TURTLE ON METRO ROAD

Watch out for turtles on the road this summer

By MICHELLE POIRIER

It's turtle nesting season, and female turtles are looking for places to lay their eggs, so keep your eyes on the road to avoid hitting one.

Gail Lenters, the founder of Shades of Hope Wildlife Refuge in Pefferlaw, said they have been getting calls about injured turtles on roads since the beginning of June.

"We see a lot of turtles hit by cars, sadly," she said.

"If people see a turtle that's been hit by a car, they should call us. Whether they think it's dead or just hurt, call us because the turtles could be females and could have eggs. So even if a turtle is dead, there is an opportunity to save all her babies."

Shades of Hope is one of 40 first response locations around the province that can provide emergency care if an injured turtle is located too far away from the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre in Peterborough.

"We take them in here, stabilize them, give them medication, and then send them to the professionals in Peterborough," Ms. Lenters said.

Dr. Sue Carstairs, Executive and Medical Director of the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre, said they have approximately 700 turtle taxi volunteers who can help to get

the turtle to them after the first responders have treated it

If you come across a turtle trying to cross a road, you can help it before it gets hit.

"If it's a very busy road, it would be too dangerous to stop. But, if it's a quieter road and no traffic is coming, you can pull over carefully, with all flashers on, and help the turtle across," Dr. Carstairs said.

"Always point the turtle in the direction they were heading, even if it doesn't make sense to you."

According to Ms. Lenters, snapping turtles necks can reach right around and bite you, so you've got to be very careful with them. You can use a box or anything you have in your car to slide under their behind and gently push them in the direction they are heading.

"If you're confident enough to pick up the back of a turtle, the back of its shell, and push them, you can do that," she said.

Dr. Carstairs also suggests using a car mat, shuffling the turtle onto it and then dragging the carpet across the road. She also said to wash your hands thoroughly after you help a turtle.

Haig Ampagoumian, a resident of Pefferlaw, found a large snapping turtle on his street.

"It was a big one, from its



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head to the end of its tail was two feet," he said.

He needed the help of his wife and father-in-law to direct the turtle into a blue bin; then, he was able to carry the turtle to the river.

While it did not bite him, Mr. Ampagoumian said it hissed at him. "It's a bit scary because you don't know what to expect," he said.

Mike Anderson, publisher of The Post, had a similar experience on Metro Rd. in Willow Beach.

"I couldn't believe how big the snapping turtle was. And it kept trying to bite me," he said.

"So, I called my daughter for help. She grabbed a shovel from the cottage, and we were able to push it into a neighbour's blue bin and move it to a marshy area off the road, where it swam away."

"It was a bit stressful, but it felt great to save it from being run over," he said. According to

Ms. Carstairs, seven of the eight species of turtles in Ontario are currently listed as at-risk, and federally that number jumps to eight out of eight. She'd like to see us all work together to protect turtles.

"They are a large part of the necessary biodiversity in our wetland habitats. Wetlands are the source of much of our drinking water, and the wetlands act as a filter for this water. Turtles have been around for over 200 million years, far longer than dinosaurs. Humans have been the cause of the declines, and so it makes sense we should also try and save them," she said.

If you come across an injured turtle, you can call Shades of Hope at (705) 437-4654 or the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre at (705) 741-5000. The Centre has resources for ways you can help turtles on their website, www.ontarioturtle.ca



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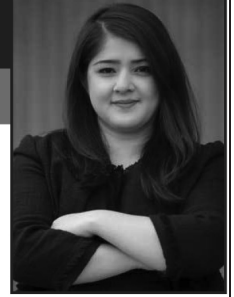
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Ask The Expert

with Rose Sharifi



Q: I have been terminated by my employer, what are my rights?

A: An employer in Ontario can terminate an employee for any reason as long as it is not illegal and the appropriate notice and severance (if eligible) is provided.

The relationship between an employer and employee for businesses that are under provincial jurisdiction, (and not federal), are governed by the Employment Standards Act, 2000 (the "ESA").

The ESA sets out your minimum entitlements if you are terminated from your employment. An employer can provide you with written notice prior to a termination or payment in lieu of notice. The minimum notice periods are as follows:

Period of Employment	Notice Required
Less than 1 year (but at least 3 months)	1 week
1 year but less than 3 years	2 weeks
3 years but less than 4 years	3 weeks
4 years but less than 5 years	4 weeks
5 years but less than 6 years	5 weeks
6 years but less than 7 years	6 weeks
7 years but less than 8 years	7 weeks
8 years or more	8 weeks

Under the ESA, when an employer has a payroll of at least \$2.5million, employees who have been employed or five years or more are also entitled to severance pay. Severance pay is calculated by multiplying the employee's regular wages for a regular work week by their number of years of service.

While the ESA speaks to your minimum entitlements, there is also a concept in law called common law reasonable notice, which takes into account other factors such as your age, character of employment, length of service and the availability of similar employment. It is a fact specific inquiry and is determined on a case-by-case basis. Another relevant factor is whether you have signed an employment contract and whether there are terms in the contract that speak to your entitlements. You cannot contract out of your minimums in any event.

There have also been some changes to the law due to COVID-19 and it is unclear how the courts will treat certain terminations because of the unique challenges COVID-19 has brought.

If you have been terminated and have questions, you should consult a lawyer to discuss your options and your entitlements.

Rose Sharifi

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GTTI CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

normally is our mandate. But if you look at our mandate as being economic development, this feeds right into it; the education, the affordable housing, the eyes on Georgina in such a positive way is huge to us," said Mayor Margaret Quirk.

"I see it as a real catalyst for bringing other businesses to the town and other affordable housing ideas."

John De Faveri, Chair of GTTI, is excited about the potential benefits a new Skilled Trades Institute will bring to

Georgina and hundreds of young people thinking about a career in the trades.

"It's a great opportunity that we've worked hard on since our inception. We'll be able to go out into the community to recruit students in a way that we never have before," he said.

"We do great training, and we just want to make it available to more students. Being able to put through 200 students a year, just in this one program. It's what we've been dreaming about."



BOATERS SWIM OFF WILLOW BEACH

EDITORIAL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

barbecues, and forcing beachgoers to sit in defined areas, spaced two metres apart, is entirely doable. It just takes the political will to do so.

Innisfil opened its beaches to residents only, why can't Georgina? Yes, Innisfil has experienced issues of late: illegal parking, overcrowding and beachgoers not wearing face coverings. However, there

have been no reports about a spike in COVID-19 cases. And, these issues can be addressed with enhanced education and enforcement.

No one is saying that opening resident-only beaches would be without challenges. But don't the have-nots, who also pay taxes, deserve to swim in Lake Simcoe this summer too?

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