



## MEDIA RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MR# 2020088**

**DATE: 7 December 2020**

**RE: Town of Amherst implementing a post-holiday “circuit-breaker” in the new year**

**AMHERST, Nova Scotia** – The Town of Amherst will implement a two-week, post-holiday “circuit-breaker” in the new year in an effort to help protect the health of town employees while maintaining municipal services.

During this two-week period, running from Jan. 4, 2021, to Jan. 15, 2021, designated staff members will be working remotely from home and there is a possibility the hours of operation at Amherst town hall will be reduced.

Noting the province is in the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, CAO Greg Herrett said the holiday season increases the risk that people may be exposed to transmissible illnesses, like the common cold, the seasonal flu or COVID-19.



A TWO-WEEK CIRCUIT-BREAKER WILL BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE TOWN OF AMHERST IN THE NEW YEAR. (TOM MCCOAG / TOWN OF AMHERST)

“In an environment where even the sniffles sends you home, these illnesses, when present in our workforce, have the potential to impair our ability to provide services,” Herrett said. “I believe that a brief post-holiday circuit-breaker may significantly mitigate this risk.”

The CAO praised the town’s employees for “doing their best” to adhere to the provincial public health orders and guidelines that have been put in place to prevent the contracting and



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transmission of COVID-19. However, he said there is no doubt people will have more exposure to visitors, relatives and friends during the holiday period.

“With workplace guidelines in place, as an employer the Town of Amherst can mitigate risk during working hours,” Herrett said. “However, we can’t control what employees do at home or during the non-working hours.

“All it takes is one or two of us picking up the cold, flu or worse, then bringing it to work after the holidays to both impact employee group health and the logistics of maintaining municipal services.”

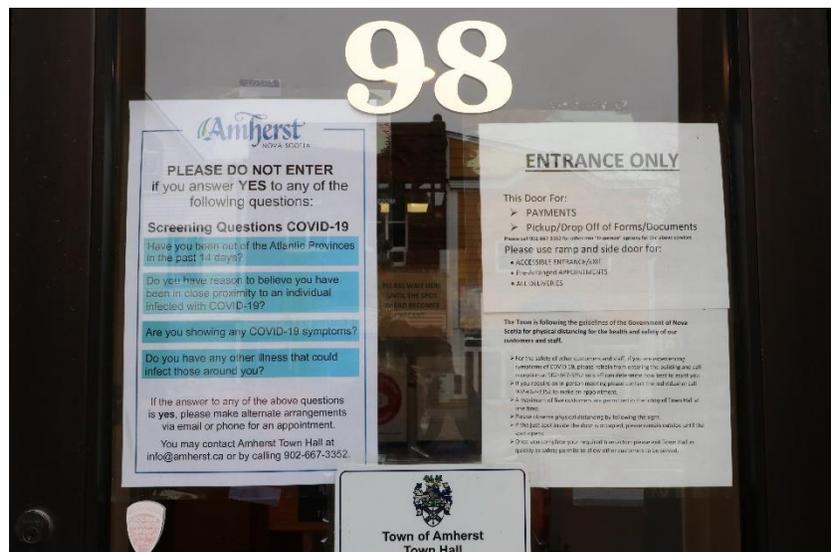
Implementing the circuit-breaker will enable the town to “significantly mitigate the risk that all employees would take on by working in close proximity to others,” he added.

The circuit-breaker will mostly affect employees working at the town hall. It will not apply to employees whose primary workplace is outside, such as those who are employed in the Public Works department, to those who operate facilities, such as stadium attendants, and first responders.

“I am very hopeful this initiative will have a significant positive impact on the health of our employees,” Herrett said.

Those working remotely will return to the workplace on Monday, Jan. 18, 2021.

The town is also asking its citizens to help ensure they and town staff remain healthy by refraining from entering town hall or other town facilities if they feel unwell. To that end, people will now see a sign on the entrance door to town hall asking them to not enter the building if they



THE SIGN ON THE LEFT HAS BEEN ADDED TO THE ENTRANCE DOOR AT AMHERST TOWN HALL. IT ASKS PEOPLE TO REFRAIN FROM ENTERING THE BUILDING IF THEY'VE BEEN OUTSIDE THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES, BEEN EXPOSED TO AN INDIVIDUAL INFECTED BY COVID-19, ARE EXPERIENCING COVID-19 SYMPTOMS OR HAVE ANY OTHER ILLNESS THAT COULD INFECT OTHERS. (TOM McCOAG / TOWN OF AMHERST)





are experiencing any of the COVID-19 symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose/nasal congestion, headache, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing.

They are also being asked not to enter town hall if they have been outside the Atlantic provinces during the past 14 days, have reason to believe they've been in close proximity with an individual infected with COVID-19 or have any other illness that may infect others.

Those entering town hall are reminded they must wear a mask, enter and exit the building through the designated doors that are marked with enter and exit signs and ensure physical distancing while inside the building. In addition, they are reminded that no more than five customers are permitted in the lobby at any one time.

Citizens seeking meetings with town staff are also reminded that these will only be done by appointment, which must be made in advance. Phone or video meetings are encouraged whenever possible.

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