

## Morningstar Mill closed effective immediately

**June 19, 2020** — With continued emergency calls to Morningstar Mill, and ongoing concerns about large crowds of people gathering at the site, the City has moved to close the location effective immediately.

The site has repeatedly drawn hundreds of individuals a day over the past month as more residents and visitors head outdoors with limited offerings due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Morningstar Mill, and its access to Decew Falls and the Bruce Trail system, has become a hot spot, with many individuals ignoring the advice of Niagara Region Public Health in terms of maintaining physical distancing. Additionally, some of these individuals are gathering in groups larger than permitted under current Provincial Emergency Orders.

Beyond the considerable risk of COVID-19 transmission the persistent crowds have generated constant safety concerns, with individuals refusing to stay on marked trails, or prepare appropriately for excursions on the trail system. Off-trail areas can pose considerable risk of injury to hikers via hazards such as unstable cliff edges. Since June 3, St. Catharines Fire Services has been called to the site five times to rescue injured or distressed hikers, tying up valuable emergency resources.

“This is really about protecting public health and safety,” said Deputy Chief Administrative Officer David Oakes, adding, “as we move forward with reopening facilities and spaces one of our guiding requirements will be continued protection of the public and mitigation of COVID-19 transmission. We understand many enjoyed this space and we are working to address the concerns, so we can reopen Morningstar Mill for everyone to safely enjoy.”

Adding to safety concerns many visitors have ignored direction against parking illegally on roadways, often lining nearby roads with parked vehicles, limiting sight lines and emergency access to the area.

As the City moves to effectively address these issues and protect public safety, the Morningstar Mill site is closed until further notice. The parking lot and gates will be barricaded and security persons will be on site seven days a week to deter trespassers.

The City of St. Catharines is working with the City of Thorold to address parking issues in the area. Parking enforcement on surrounding streets will be increased, alongside the installation of more no-parking signage along Decew Road and Cataract Road.

**Contact:**

David Oakes  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer  
[doakes@stcatharines.ca](mailto:doakes@stcatharines.ca)

Jeff McCormick  
Fire Chief  
[jmccormick@stcatharines.ca](mailto:jmccormick@stcatharines.ca)